

Contemporary Leadership Approaches of Principals and the Management of Crisis in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how principals' contemporary leadership approaches relate to effective crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised and four null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The study focused on four contemporary leadership styles: transactional, transformational, charismatic and servant. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised 7,676 teachers in 270 public secondary schools, from which 562 teachers were sampled using multistage sampling. Data were collected using the researcher-developed instrument titled 'Principals' Contemporary Leadership Styles and Crisis Management Scale' (PCLSCMS), which was validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha which yielded 822 and .908 for Principals contemporary leadership styles and crisis management respectively. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used for data analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between transactional, transformational, charismatic and servant. The study concluded that contemporary leadership styles are important determinants of effective crisis management in public secondary schools. Integrating contemporary leadership competencies can enhance principals' capacity to prevent, manage, and resolve crises. The study recommends continuous leadership development, and comprehensive professional development programmes for principals to strengthen crisis preparedness, response, and management and promote a stable, cooperative, and safe learning environment in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Contemporary Leadership styles, Crisis Management, Public Secondary Schools, Principals

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely regarded as the cornerstone of national development and social transformation because through education, societies transmit knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for individual growth and collective progress. Within the educational system, the secondary level of education occupies a strategic position because it provides a continuum from the basic education as well as prepares the learners for higher education, vocational training and the world of work. However, the realization of the objectives of secondary education depends on curriculum delivery but appears to dwell the more on the stability and safety of the internal school environment.

Consequently, public secondary schools are expected to experience a reasonable level of peace, orderliness, and harmonious relationships among members of the school community. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground seems to be the contrary, despite government intervention through the ministry of education and State secondary education board and other education stakeholders. The effectiveness of crisis management which entails the processes of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery adopted by school principals during crisis in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State remains a concern. These concerns points to the weaknesses in both proactive and reactive dimensions of crisis management Observations suggest that some principals adopt reactive and punitive approaches to crisis situations. A major concern is that incidents of school crises are not

only increasing in intensity, but also in complexity. The problem becomes even more notable within the context of contemporary school environments with today's learners who are technologically exposed, socially and digitally connected, more expressive, more conscious of their rights as well as being sensitive to issues of fairness.

It is assumed that when such learners are managed through rigid leadership styles that ignore dialogue and participation, tensions often build up and may eventually lead to crisis. It may therefore not be misplaced to suggest that this mismatch between contemporary student characteristics and the outdated leadership styles adopted by most school principals may possibly be responsible for the recurring incidents of school crisis. It is not also wrong to speculate that contemporary leadership styles could influence crises management in public secondary schools; contemporary leadership styles are the modern leadership styles that emphasises collaboration, flexibility, fairness, open and transparent communication etc.

There are several contemporary leadership styles that principals may adopt in managing crises within secondary schools. However, transformational, transactional, charismatic and servant leadership styles appear to be among the most relevant in contemporary educational administration. These leadership styles constitute the dimensions of focus in this study since each possesses distinct characteristics that may influence crisis management in public secondary schools. Transactional leadership style is a leadership style that is based on structured exchanges between leaders and followers, relying on rewards and sanctions to maintain order and achieve organizational goals. This leadership style emphasizes supervision, discipline, performance monitoring, rewards for compliance, and corrective measures for misconduct or poor performance. Leaders operating under this style focus on maintaining stability, ensuring that rules are followed, and promoting efficiency through clearly defined expectations and responsibilities. In the school system, principals who adopt transactional leadership often maintain order through established regulations, disciplinary measures, and structured administrative procedures. They closely monitor teachers' and students' performance, enforce school policies, and apply sanctions where necessary to ensure compliance. At the same time, commendations, incentives, or recognition may be given to teachers and students who perform well or demonstrate commitment to school rules and objectives.

Transformational leadership style is a type of leadership style that emphasizes vision, inspiration, and shared values as key drivers of organizational growth and stability. In the school environment, this leadership approach is closely linked with fostering trust, strengthening relationships, and promoting positive behavioural change among staff and students. Rather than focusing only on immediate disciplinary actions, transformational leaders seek to identify and address the underlying causes of recurring crises and conflicts within the school system. Principals who adopt transformational leadership encourage teamwork, innovation, active participation, and collective responsibility in decision-making processes. They motivate teachers and students by creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where individuals feel valued and committed to common goals. Through open communication, mentorship, and collaboration, transformational leaders can reduce tension, improve interpersonal relationships, and create a more peaceful school climate. As a result, this leadership style may contribute to effective conflict resolution, higher staff morale, and improved overall school performance.

Charismatic leadership style is another leadership practice where the leader inspires confidence, admiration, trust, and emotional attachment through strong interpersonal qualities, vision, and persuasive communication. Principals with charismatic leadership qualities often motivate teachers and students through their enthusiasm, courage, and ability to communicate clear direction during challenging situations. Such principals may easily gain the cooperation and loyalty of staff and students during difficult periods, thereby helping to reduce panic, tension, fear, and resistance during crises. In the school setting, charismatic leadership can promote unity, commitment, and positive interpersonal relationships, which may enhance effective crisis management and overall school stability.

Servant leadership style is equally a leadership style and it focuses on prioritizing the welfare, needs, and development of others. Principals who practice servant leadership often demonstrate empathy, humility, listening skills, fairness, and genuine concern for the well-being of students and staff. Such principals usually encourage teamwork, mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful relationships within the school environment. During periods of crisis, servant leaders may provide emotional support, ensure open communication, and involve

teachers and students in decision-making processes. This leadership style can help to reduce tension, build trust and unity, and promote effective crisis management and stability in secondary schools.

It is important to mention that several measures have been introduced by the government at the national, state and local levels, as well as the school authorities, to promote peace and stability, especially in public secondary schools. Again, strategies like the enforcement of school rules and regulations, establishment of guidance and counselling units, provision of security personnel, supervision and monitoring of schools, teacher recruitment, infrastructural development, and encouragement of parental involvement through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have been implemented. Despite these efforts, crises incidents continue to occur in many schools, suggesting that leadership-related factors may be a major contributor to this problem.

The researcher observed that most scholars attributed school crises to factors such as indiscipline, peer influence, cultism, poor funding, parental background, and social media exposure, but little attention appears to have been given to the relationship between contemporary leadership styles and crisis management in public secondary schools, particularly in Akwa Ibom State. This creates a knowledge gap which this study seeks to fill. Therefore, this study titled “Contemporary Leadership Styles and Crisis Management in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria” is designed to investigate the extent to which transformational, transactional, charismatic and servant leadership styles relate to effective crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between principals’ contemporary leadership styles and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the nature of relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. ii Determine the nature of association existing between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Determine how charismatic leadership style relates with crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
4. Establish the nature of relationship existing between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the relationship between principals’ contemporary leadership styles and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The scope of the study is therefore limited to selected contemporary leadership styles, namely transactional, transformational, charismatic and servant leadership styles, and how these styles relate to crises management which entails the processes of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery adopted by school principals in handling crises situations. The geographical scope of the study is restricted to public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprises teachers in these public secondary schools. The study was conducted within the 2025/2026 academic session.

Research Questions

1. What type of relationship exists between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the nature of relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What type of relationship exists between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
4. What is the relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- i There is no significant relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii Transformational leadership style does not significantly relate with crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii There is no significant relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- iv There is no significant relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be beneficial to school principals, teachers, students, educational policymakers, teacher training institutions, researchers, and the general public. Teachers would benefit because effective leadership and crisis management promote a positive school climate. When principals adopt appropriate leadership styles such as transformational or servant leadership styles etc., communication, collaboration, and mutual trust are strengthened, resulting in fewer disruptions to teaching and learning and improved job satisfaction. Students would benefit from improved crisis management practices that create a safer, more orderly, and more conducive learning environment.

Effective leadership is expected to minimize crises that disrupt academic activities, thereby enhancing students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and overall development. Educational Policymakers and Government Agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and the State Secondary Education Board, may benefit from the findings by obtaining empirical evidence that can guide educational policies, leadership development programmes, and the appointment, training, and evaluation of school principals. The General Public, particularly parents and community members, would benefit indirectly because improved leadership and effective crisis management are expected to create safer schools, reduce disruptions to learning, and strengthen public confidence in the secondary school system.

Theoretical Perspectives

Two theories are going to be reviewed in this paper. There are;

Contingency Theory by Fred Edward Fielder (1967)

Contingency Theory was propounded by Fred Edward Fielder (1967). The theory posits that there is no single leadership style that is universally effective in all situations. Rather, leadership effectiveness depends on the extent to which a leader's style matches the demands of a particular situation. According to Fielder, successful leadership is contingent upon factors such as leader-member relations, task structure, position power, organizational environment, follower characteristics, and the level of uncertainty surrounding a situation. The theory emphasizes that leadership should be responsive to situational demands, especially in dynamic and unpredictable organizational environments.

The theory is built on several assumptions. First, leadership effectiveness is situational rather than universal, implying that a leadership style that is effective in one context may not produce similar results in another. Second, leadership outcomes depend on the interaction between the leader's style and situational variables such as the nature of the task, organizational structure, environmental conditions, and follower characteristics. Third, effective leadership requires an appropriate match between leadership style and situational demands. When such alignment exists, leadership effectiveness is enhanced; when it does not, performance is likely to decline. He identified two dominant leadership orientations: task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership. Task-

oriented leaders focus on achieving organizational objectives efficiently, whereas relationship-oriented leaders emphasize interpersonal relationships, cooperation, and team cohesion.

In the school system, principals operate within complex environments involving continuous interaction with teachers, students, parents, communities, and government agencies. These interactions often generate different forms of crises that vary in nature, intensity, and underlying causes. Consequently, crisis management cannot rely on a uniform leadership approach. Instead, principals are expected to assess each situation carefully and adopt leadership behaviours that are appropriate to the specific crisis. This suggests that effective crisis management depends on selecting leadership styles that fit the prevailing circumstances.

For example, crises involving examination malpractice or financial misconduct may require leadership characterized by integrity, fairness, and accountability. Technology-related crises such as cyberbullying or misuse of digital devices may require strong digital leadership competencies, while conflicts involving students or staff may demand servant, transformational, or quiet leadership approaches that emphasize empathy, dialogue, collaboration, and trust building. These examples illustrate that different crises require different leadership responses. In the context of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, where crises are often multifaceted and unpredictable, principals are required to adopt leadership approaches that are responsive to changing circumstances.

Contingency Theory of Crisis Management by Amanda Elizabeth Cancel, Glen Tracy Cameron, Lynlee Marie Sallot and Michael Anthony Mitrook (1997),

This theory is based on the following assumptions; (i) Crises are unpredictable and complex. Crisis situations vary widely and cannot be managed using uniform strategies. (ii) Organizations must balance competing interests. Leaders must weigh organizational protection against stakeholder expectations. (iii) Decision-making is influenced by internal and external factors. Organizational responses are not made in isolation but are shaped by environmental pressures. (iv) Flexibility enhances effectiveness. Adaptive and responsive strategies yield better crisis outcomes than rigid approaches. (v) Leadership judgment is critical. The effectiveness of crisis response depends largely on the leader's ability to interpret situations and act appropriately. The major tenets of this theory include; (i) Continuum of organizational stance. Crisis response exists on a continuum ranging from pure advocacy (defending the organization) to pure accommodation (fully yielding to stakeholders). (ii) Situational Flexibility. There is no single best crisis response strategy; actions must be adapted to the specific crisis situation. (iii) Influence of Multiple Variables. Crisis response is shaped by numerous internal and external variables (e.g., severity of crisis, organizational history, legal constraints, stakeholder pressure, and cultural context), (iv) Dynamic response adjustment. Organizations can shift their position along the continuum as the crisis evolves, (v) Context-driven decision making. Effective crisis management depends on analyzing contextual realities rather than applying fixed models.

In the context of this study on principals' contemporary leadership styles and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, the Contingency Theory is highly relevant. It supports the idea that effective crisis management is situational, requiring school principals to adapt their leadership styles, whether transformational, transactional, or servant leadership, based on the nature of the crisis. For instance, a principal may adopt an advocacy stance in addressing false allegations against the school but shift to accommodation when dealing with student safety concerns.

Research Method

Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised the 7,676 teachers in all the public secondary schools across Akwa Ibom State (Source: Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, 2026). A sample size of 562 teachers were selected using a multistage sampling technique comprising stratified sampling and simple random sampling done in four stages.

For this study, a well-structured researcher-designed questionnaire titled: "Principals' Contemporary Leadership Styles and Crisis Management Scale (PCLSCMS)" was used to gather primary data on the independent sub-variables and dependent variables respectively. Principals' Contemporary Leadership Styles and Crisis

Management Scale (PCLSCMS) was divided into two major sections, and the items' statements in the two sections of PCLSCMS was presented in a positive frame of reference for ease of coding, analysis and interpretation. It was coded as; SA for Strongly Agree = 4, 'A' for Agree =3, 'D' for Disagree 2= and 'SD' for Strongly Disagree =1. The instrument was rated by the teachers.

To ensure face validity, the draft of the questionnaire was validated by three experts and the internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The analysis yielded reliability coefficients of .979, .897, .774, .780, for the transactional, transformational, charismatic, and servant, leadership style subscales, respectively, with a composite average reliability coefficient of .857 for the Principals' Contemporary Leadership Styles Questionnaire. The Crisis Management Questionnaire recorded a reliability coefficient of .908. These coefficients indicate that the instrument possessed satisfactory internal consistency and was therefore considered reliable for the study. The instrument was administered to selected respondents across the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State: Akwa Ibom North-East, Akwa Ibom North-West, and Akwa Ibom South. Research assistants who were properly briefed on administration of the instrument, collection of data, retrieval process, and public relations assisted the researcher in data collection. 551 out of 562 questionnaires were properly filled and returned for analysis, making it 98.04%. 11 out of 562 questionnaires could not be accounted for making Attrition rate to be 1.96%.

The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), was used to determine the relationship between each of the seven leadership styles (transactional, transformational, charismatic, and servant) and crisis management effectiveness. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Correlation Strength Guide

± 0.90 to ± 1.00: Very high / very strong relationship

± 0.70 to ± 0.89: High / strong relationship

**± 0.40 to ± 0.69: Moderate relationship

± 0.20 to ± 0.39: Low / weak relationship

± 0.01 to ± 0.19: Very low /negligible relationship

0.00: No relationship

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What type of relationship exists between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

To answer this research question, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistics (r-value) was used to examine the relationship existing between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State (Table 1).

Table 1: Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between Transactional Leadership Style and Crisis Management in Public Secondary Schools (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	Decision/Remarks
Transactional leadership style	22.01	1.91		
			.363	Moderate positive relationship
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

Researchers Field work

The information in Table 1 shows a weak positive relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is because the linear correlation coefficient r is .363 indicating a weak positive relationship. This finding implies that improvements in principals' transactional leadership practices, such as setting clear expectations, monitoring compliance, and providing appropriate rewards or corrective actions, are associated with better crisis management in public secondary schools. Although the relationship is weak, transactional leadership contributes meaningfully to effective crisis management but is unlikely to be the only factor influencing it.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of relationship that exists between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

To answer this research question, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test (r -value) was used to examine the relationship existing between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, (Table 2).

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	R	Decision/Remarks
Transformational leadership style	21.13	1.58		
			.357	Moderate positive relationship
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

Researchers Field work

The results in Table 2 shows that a weak positive relationship exists between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that the nature of relationship existing between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is positive but moderate in strength. This is because the linear Pearson's r is .357 indicating a moderate positive relationship. This finding suggests that principals who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours, including inspiring staff, promoting innovation, and motivating teachers toward shared goals, are more likely to achieve better crisis management outcomes. However, the weak magnitude of the relationship indicates that other factors also contribute to effective crisis management.

Research Question 3: What type of relationship exists between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

To answer this research question, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r -value) was used to examine the relationship existing between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, (Table 3).

Table 3 Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	Decision/Remarks
Charismatic leadership style	20.77	2.32		
			.51	High positive relationship
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

Researchers Field work

Table 3 reveals that there is a moderate positive relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, as shown by the Pearson's r of .51. This result

indicates that charismatic leadership has a relatively moderate association with crisis management than the preceding leadership styles. It suggests that principals who possess vision, confidence, and the ability to inspire trust among staff are better positioned to manage crises effectively in public secondary schools.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

To answer this research question, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis (r-value) was used, (Table 4).

Table 4: Pearson 's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	Decision/Remarks
Servant leadership style	20.49	2.61		
			.357	Moderate positive relationship
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

Researchers Field work

The information in Table 4 shows that the relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is positive and weak. This is because Pearson's r is 0.357. The finding implies that principals who prioritize serving, supporting, and empowering teachers tend to manage school crises more effectively. Although the relationship is weak, servant leadership remains an important leadership approach for enhancing crisis management in secondary schools.

Test of Hypothesis 1: The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

To test this null hypothesis, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to correlate principals' transactional leadership style and their crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The result is as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	p-value
Transactional leadership style	22.01	1.91		
			.363*	0.000
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance

Researchers Field work

The result in Table 5 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State ($r = 0.363$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The finding indicates that the observed relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management was not due to chance. This implies that principals who effectively apply transactional leadership practices are significantly more likely to achieve better crisis management outcomes in public secondary schools. Therefore, transactional leadership constitutes a significant factor associated with effective crisis management.

Hypothesis Two: Transformational leadership style does not significantly relate with crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

This null hypothesis was tested by correlating transformational leadership style with crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis as reported in Table 6.

Table 6: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	p-value
Transformational leadership style	21.13	1.58		
			0.357*	0.000
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance

Researchers Field work

The information in Table 6 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State ($r = 0.357$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The result implies that transformational leadership style has a statistically significant influence on crisis management. Consequently, principals who inspire, motivate, and encourage innovation among staff are more likely to enhance crisis management in public secondary schools. The significance of the relationship confirms that transformational leadership is an important correlate of crisis management.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to correlate charismatic leadership style and their crisis management in public secondary schools as reported in Table 7.

Table 7: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	p-value
Charismatic leadership style	20.77	2.32		
			0.51*	0.000
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance

Researchers Field work

The results in Table 7 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State ($r = 0.51$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. This finding demonstrates that charismatic leadership style is significantly associated with crisis management and that the relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. It suggests that principals who exhibit confidence, vision, and the ability to inspire commitment among staff are more likely to manage crises effectively in public secondary schools.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to correlate servant leadership style and their crisis management in public secondary schools as reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management (N = 551)

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	p-value
Servant leadership style	20.49	2.61		
			0.357*	0.000
Crisis management	69.51	6.60		

*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

Researchers Field work

The results in Table 8 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State ($r = 0.357$; $p = 0.000$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The result further implies that servant leadership style significantly contributes to crisis management. Principals who demonstrate concern for the welfare, growth, and empowerment of teachers are more likely to foster an environment that supports effective crisis management in public secondary schools.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this study were based on the research questions answered and the hypotheses tested on the relationship between Principals' Contemporary Leadership Styles and Crisis management in public Secondary School in Akwa Ibom State. The findings are summarized as follows:

1. There was a weak positive relationship between transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State ($r = 0.363$). The relationship was statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.
2. There was a weak positive relationship between transformational leadership style and crisis management ($r = 0.357$). The relationship was statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.
3. There was a moderate positive relationship between charismatic leadership style and crisis management ($r = 0.510$). The relationship was statistically significant; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.
4. There was a weak positive relationship between servant leadership style and crisis management ($r = 0.357$). The relationship was statistically significant, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' contemporary leadership styles and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The outcome of the study is discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Transactional Leadership Style and Crisis Management

The findings of the study revealed a statistically significant weak positive relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria ($r = .363$, $p < .05$). This indicates that principals who demonstrated higher levels of transactional leadership tended to exhibit better crisis management practices. The weak strength of the relationship suggests that

transactional leadership contributes meaningfully to crisis management but does not independently determine the effectiveness of managing school crises.

The finding is understandable because transactional leadership emphasizes clear expectations, supervision, accountability, rewards, sanctions, and compliance with established procedures, which are also essential for maintaining order during crises. Principals who consistently monitor school activities, enforce regulations, clarify responsibilities, and hold teachers and students accountable are better positioned to identify emerging problems and prevent minor disciplinary issues from developing into major crises. In Nigerian public secondary schools, where principals operate within structured administrative systems, these practices are particularly relevant to maintaining discipline and coordinating responses to emergencies.

However, the weak relationship also reflects the complexity of contemporary school crises. Problems such as bullying, cultism, drug abuse, examination malpractice, violence, social-media rumours, parental interference, and psychological challenges cannot always be resolved through rewards and sanctions alone. Effective crisis management may additionally require communication, counselling, collaboration with parents and community stakeholders, reconciliation, and timely decision-making. Excessive reliance on transactional leadership may also discourage teachers and students from reporting emerging problems if they fear punishment or criticism.

The finding is consistent with Ali (2021), who reported a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership and crisis management in educational institutions in Sana'a, Yemen. It also agrees with Purnomo et al. (2021), who found that transactional leadership positively influenced crisis management, although its contribution was weaker than that of transformational leadership. Similarly, Effiong (2023) reported a moderate positive relationship between transactional leadership and crisis management among secondary school administrators, while Nwankwo (2022) found transactional leadership effective in maintaining discipline and organisational control but less effective in addressing the emotional and psychological dimensions of school conflicts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that transactional leadership remains an important approach to crisis management because it promotes order, accountability, supervision, discipline, and compliance with school regulations. Nevertheless, its weak relationship with crisis management indicates that it should not be applied in isolation. Principals should complement transactional leadership with transformational, ethical, servant, digital, charismatic, and quiet leadership approaches to address the diverse social, emotional, technological, and organisational dimensions of contemporary school crises. Such an integrated approach is more likely to promote safe, peaceful, and productive school environments and enhance sustainable crisis management.

Transformational Leadership Style and Crisis Management

The findings of this study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' transformational leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This indicates that principals who inspire teachers, communicate a clear vision, encourage innovation, motivate staff, promote teamwork, and support professional development are more likely to manage school crises effectively. The finding suggests that transformational leadership strengthens teachers' commitment, resilience, cooperation, and willingness to work collectively during periods of uncertainty.

The finding is understandable because effective crisis management requires more than enforcing rules or responding to emergencies after they occur. It requires leaders who can inspire confidence, motivate staff, encourage participation, and promote creative solutions to emerging problems. Principals who involve teachers in decision-making and appreciate their contributions are more likely to gain the cooperation necessary for preventing and managing crises. This is particularly important in Nigerian public secondary schools, which face challenges such as student indiscipline, examination malpractice, insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and financial constraints.

Transformational leadership also promotes innovation and collective problem-solving. For instance, when examination malpractice increases, a transformational principal may involve teachers, counsellors, and parents in identifying its causes and developing preventive strategies. Similarly, where insecurity affects student attendance, such a principal may collaborate with parents, community leaders, and security agencies to restore

confidence and maintain school activities. These practices demonstrate how shared vision, collaboration, and innovation can strengthen crisis preparedness and response.

The finding agrees with Trust and Whalen (2021), who found that transformational leadership significantly enhanced crisis adaptability and organisational performance by strengthening teachers' psychological capital. Their finding supports the present result because motivated and psychologically resilient teachers are more likely to remain committed and adaptable during difficult circumstances. However, the finding differs from Money (2022), who reported that knowledge of transformational leadership did not significantly improve school management outcomes where implementation was weak. This difference may be attributed to variations in leadership practice and institutional context. While knowledge of transformational leadership may not produce results when poorly implemented, its consistent application through motivation, communication, empowerment, and teamwork can produce positive outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that transformational leadership is an important approach to effective crisis management in public secondary schools. By inspiring teachers, promoting a shared vision, encouraging innovation, strengthening communication, and building resilience, principals can create school communities that are better prepared to prevent, manage, and recover from crises. Nevertheless, the contrasting evidence suggests that transformational leadership is most effective when principals genuinely practise its principles and when the school environment provides adequate support for its implementation.

Charismatic Leadership Style and Crisis Management

The findings of this study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' charismatic leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This implies that principals who inspire confidence, communicate a clear sense of purpose, motivate teachers, and build trust are more likely to manage school crises effectively. Charismatic leadership therefore contributes to creating a school environment in which teachers and students are willing to cooperate with school authorities during periods of uncertainty.

The finding is understandable because effective crisis management requires more than enforcing rules; it also requires leaders who can provide reassurance, direction, and confidence when people are anxious or confused. Principals who remain calm, communicate clearly, and inspire hope are better positioned to maintain stability and mobilise teachers and students during crises such as student unrest, staff conflicts, examination malpractice, insecurity, and community disturbances. Strong interpersonal relationships established before crises also enhance trust and make it easier for principals to secure cooperation when emergencies occur.

The finding agrees with Vicente et al. (2024), who reported that charismatic leadership enhanced cooperation, communication, confidence, and organisational resilience during crises. It also supports Momoh and Marchie (2023), who found that charismatic leadership significantly influenced conflict management among principals of public secondary schools in Edo State. Similarly, Ntale (2024) reported a significant positive relationship between charismatic leadership and crisis management, while Bhatti et al. (2021) found that charismatic leadership enhanced organisational commitment, employee confidence, and effective crisis response through inspirational communication and emotional reassurance. These findings collectively suggest that trust, confidence, communication, and the ability to unite people behind a common purpose are important components of effective crisis management.

However, the finding differs from Wegge et al. (2021), who argued that excessive reliance on charismatic leadership may discourage followers' initiative, weaken shared decision-making, and create dependence on the leader. This difference may be explained by contextual variations. In the structured administrative environment of Nigerian public secondary schools, principals occupy a central coordinating role; consequently, confidence and clear direction may strengthen rather than weaken collective crisis response. Nevertheless, charisma should not be equated with personal popularity or domination. It is most effective when combined with competence, integrity, fairness, communication, consultation, and empowerment of teachers and students.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that charismatic leadership is an important approach to crisis management in public secondary schools. Principals who inspire confidence, communicate effectively, build trust, motivate

staff, and promote collective responsibility are better positioned to prevent, manage, and recover from crises. However, charismatic leadership should be exercised responsibly so that followers are empowered to participate in problem-solving rather than becoming excessively dependent on the principal. When supported by competence, fairness, and shared responsibility, charismatic leadership can strengthen school resilience, cooperation, and sustainable crisis management.

Servant Leadership Style and Crisis Management

The findings of this study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' servant leadership style and crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This indicates that principals who prioritise the welfare of teachers and students, demonstrate empathy, encourage participation, build trust, and provide support are more likely to manage school crises effectively. Servant leadership therefore contributes to a peaceful school environment in which members of the school community are willing to cooperate in preventing and resolving crises.

The finding is understandable because effective crisis management depends not only on authority and rules but also on trust, mutual respect, communication, and collaboration. Principals who listen to teachers and students and respond to their concerns are more likely to identify emerging problems early and prevent them from escalating. In the Nigerian and African context, where communal support and concern for others are highly valued, principals who demonstrate humility, fairness, compassion, and service are likely to gain greater cooperation from teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders.

The finding agrees with Okezie et al. (2022), who found that servant leadership enhanced crisis readiness through stewardship, communication, trust, and community building. It also supports Clarence et al. (2020), who reported that servant leadership strengthened organisational commitment, employee empowerment, and trust. These findings reinforce the view that when teachers feel respected, supported, and empowered, they are more willing to share information, contribute ideas, cooperate with administrative decisions, and make additional efforts during periods of crisis. Such relationships also encourage teachers and students to report emerging problems before they develop into major crises.

However, the present finding differs from Xie et al. (2020), who reported that servant leadership did not significantly improve organisational performance during highly uncertain situations because consultation and consensus-building could delay urgent decisions. The difference may be explained by contextual variations. While rapid decision-making may be particularly important in some organisational environments, school crisis management often requires the cooperation of teachers, students, parents, counsellors, and community stakeholders. Consultation, therefore, can strengthen commitment to decisions when it is combined with timely and decisive action.

The findings further suggest that servant leadership creates a positive school climate that can prevent crises before they occur. Principals who genuinely care about the welfare of staff and students encourage openness, making teachers and students more comfortable reporting issues such as bullying, drug abuse, cult activities, examination malpractice, conflicts, and other emerging problems. Trust established before a crisis also makes it easier to mobilise stakeholders during emergencies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that servant leadership is an important approach to crisis management in public secondary schools. By promoting empathy, trust, participation, teamwork, empowerment, and concern for the welfare of others, principals can strengthen cooperation and create school environments that are more resilient to crises. Nevertheless, servant leadership should be balanced with timely and decisive action, particularly during emergencies where immediate intervention is required. When concern for people is combined with effective decision-making, servant leadership can contribute substantially to sustainable crisis management.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that principals' contemporary leadership styles are important determinants of effective crisis management in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The study

established that principals who effectively demonstrate transactional, transformational, charismatic, and servant leadership behaviours are better positioned to prevent, manage, and resolve crises within the school system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Since transactional leadership style had a positive though weak, and significant relationship with crisis management, school principals should maintain and sustain the effective transactional leadership practices already contributing to crisis management. In particular, they should continue to communicate clear expectations, monitor compliance with school rules, provide appropriate feedback, and ensure consistent implementation of administrative procedures. This will help sustain discipline, accountability, and effective responses to crisis situations.
- ii. Since transformational leadership style had a positive, though weak and significant relationship with crisis management, teachers should actively support and participate in transformational leadership practices within their schools. They should cooperate with principals in implementing innovative approaches, embracing positive changes, motivating one another, and working collectively towards school goals during crisis situations. Such cooperation will help sustain the positive relationship between transformational leadership and crisis management.
- iii. Since charismatic leadership style had a moderate positive, and significant relationship with crisis management, educational policymakers and administrators, particularly the Ministry of Education and the State Secondary Education Board, should sustain and strengthen leadership development programmes that promote effective charismatic leadership competencies among school principals. Such programmes should emphasise effective communication, confidence building, motivation, interpersonal relations, and the ability to inspire stakeholders during crisis situations.
- iv. Since servant leadership style had a positive though weak, and significant relationship with crisis management, students should be encouraged to participate responsibly in school activities and decision-making processes where appropriate. School management should provide opportunities for students to express their concerns, contribute to discussions on issues affecting them, and cooperate with school authorities during crisis situations. This will help sustain the participatory, supportive, and collaborative environment associated with servant leadership. Educational policymakers should use the findings to strengthen principal appointment, training, and evaluation policies; teacher training institutions should incorporate contemporary leadership and crisis-management competencies into their programmes; researchers should undertake further studies to explain the differential contributions of the leadership styles, while parents and community members should cooperate with school authorities in implementing crisis-prevention and management strategies. This collaborative approach will help sustain and improve crisis management in public secondary schools.

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