ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue XXVI October 2025 | Special Issue on Education



Bridging Theory and Practice: Lessons from Leading Through Crisis

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0658

Received: 20 October 2025; Accepted: 25 October 2025; Published: 14 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This article critically examines the intersection of leadership theory and practice through the lens of crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using secondary data and a real-world leadership case drawn from the portfolio management sector, it analyzes how leaders mobilized transformational leadership principles, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and strategic communication to navigate volatile and uncertain conditions. The discussion highlights the adaptive leadership behaviors that emerged when theoretical models proved insufficient for rapidly evolving challenges, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) contexts. Findings reveal that static, one-size-fits-all leadership frameworks often fail to account for contextual complexity, emotional strain, and organizational interdependencies that arise during crises. In response, the article advances a more fluid, context-responsive approach to leadership development, emphasizing experiential learning, reflective practice, and cross-functional collaboration. By integrating academic frameworks with documented organizational responses, the study offers practical recommendations for educators, managers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen crisis readiness, resilience, and decision-making capacity in future disruptions.

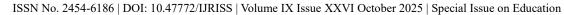
Keywords-Crisis leadership; transformational leadership; emotional intelligence; experiential learning; adaptive strategy; COVID-19 response; portfolio management; SME resilience

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a profound disruption in organizational life, challenging leaders to navigate uncertainty, emotional strain, and operational volatility. Across industries, managers were thrust into high-stakes environments that demanded rapid adaptation, empathetic engagement, and strategic improvisation. These conditions exposed a persistent gap between leadership theory and practice, particularly in how conceptual models address the emotional, communicative, and innovative demands of crisis contexts. Traditional leadership frameworks, such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), and process innovation (Davenport, 1993), offer valuable insights into motivation, adaptability, and organizational change. However, their application during the pandemic revealed limitations. Visionary leadership often faltered in the face of prolonged ambiguity; emotional intelligence, while essential, was inconsistently cultivated; and innovation under duress rarely followed linear models. These tensions raise critical questions about the relevance and responsiveness of established theories when confronted with real-world complexity.

Recent scholarship has begun to interrogate these gaps. For example, Goleman and Boyatzis (2020) argue that "holding behaviors," including empathy, presence, and emotional containment, are more effective than charismatic messaging during a crisis. Similarly, the OECD (2021) highlights how SMEs adopted agile innovation strategies that diverged from conventional change management. Yet, much of this literature remains fragmented, with limited integration between theoretical critique and practitioner insight. This article contributes to that integration by examining how leadership theories were applied, adapted, and challenged during the COVID-19 crisis, using secondary data and a documented case from a portfolio management team. The case illustrates how emotional intelligence, agile innovation, and sensemaking communication became central to effective leadership, often in ways that stretched or reinterpreted existing models.

The article proceeds in five parts. First, it reviews key leadership frameworks relevant to crisis contexts, highlighting their conceptual strengths and limitations. Second, it outlines the methodology, including the use of





secondary data and thematic synthesis. Third, it presents a case narrative of crisis leadership within a portfolio management team, mapping practice to theory. Fourth, it proposes bridging strategies for leadership development, emphasizing experiential learning, emotional intelligence training, and adaptive communication. Finally, it concludes with implications for educators, managers, and researchers seeking to prepare leaders for future disruptions. By bridging theory and practice, this article aims to advance a more context-sensitive model of leadership, one that is emotionally attuned, operationally agile, and grounded in lived experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Theories in Crisis Contexts

Leadership during a crisis demands a synthesis of strategic agility, emotional intelligence, and communicative clarity. While numerous frameworks offer conceptual tools for understanding these demands, their application in volatile environments often reveals limitations. This literature review examines four dominant theories: transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and organizational communication, highlighting their relevance, critiques, and evolving interpretations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transformational Leadership: Vision Under Strain

Transformational leadership, as articulated by Bass (1985), emphasizes four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. It has long been associated with change-oriented leadership and is frequently cited in crisis literature for its capacity to mobilize teams and foster resilience (Avolio & Bass, 2004). However, recent scholarship questions the sufficiency of transformational leadership in prolonged crises. Goleman and Boyatzis (2020) argue that visionary messaging may lose efficacy when uncertainty persists, and that "holding behaviors", empathy, emotional containment, and presence, are more critical. Furthermore, Tourish (2020) critiques the model's reliance on charisma, suggesting it may obscure the emotional labor and ethical complexity of crisis decision-making. In the context of COVID-19, transformational leadership required recalibration. Leaders had to balance vision with vulnerability, and inspiration with emotional support, an intersection not fully addressed in traditional formulations.

Emotional Intelligence: From Soft Skill to Survival Skill

Emotional intelligence (EI), popularized by Goleman (1995) and refined by Mayer & Salovey (1997), encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI has gained traction as a predictor of leadership effectiveness, particularly in emotionally charged environments (Cherniss, 2010). During the pandemic, EI emerged as a core competency. Leaders were tasked with managing not only operational disruption but also the psychological well-being of their teams. Ogunyemi et al. (2023) found that strategic HR practitioners with high EI were more likely to fulfill psychological contracts and retain talent during a crisis. Similarly, Anvari et al. (2023) reported that EI training improved team cohesion and reduced burnout. Despite its growing prominence, EI remains under-integrated in formal leadership development. Critics argue that it is often treated as a peripheral "soft skill" rather than a foundational capability (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). The pandemic underscored the need to reposition EI as central to leadership practice, especially in contexts of sustained uncertainty.

Process Innovation: Agility Beyond the Blueprint

Process innovation refers to the redesign of organizational workflows to improve efficiency, adaptability, or value creation (Davenport, 1993). In stable environments, it follows structured methodologies such as Six Sigma or Lean. However, crisis conditions demand improvisational agility, rapid pivots, decentralized decision-making, and digital transformation. The OECD (2021) documented how SMEs adopted agile innovation strategies to survive COVID-19 disruptions, often bypassing formal change models. These findings challenge traditional assumptions about innovation as a planned, linear process. Instead, innovation under duress was reactive, emotionally driven, and context-dependent. Scholars such as Pisano (2015) advocate for "adaptive innovation" frameworks that accommodate uncertainty and emotional complexity. Yet, leadership literature has been slow to integrate these perspectives, leaving a gap in how managers are trained to lead innovation in crisis.

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Organizational Communication: Sensemaking in Chaos

Organizational communication plays a pivotal role in crisis leadership. Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory posits that individuals construct meaning through communication, especially in ambiguous situations. Daft & Lengel's (1986) media richness theory further suggests that the effectiveness of communication depends on the medium's capacity to convey nuance and immediacy. During the pandemic, remote work and digital platforms disrupted traditional communication channels. Leaders had to reimagine how to convey urgency, empathy, and clarity without physical presence. Gartner (2020) found that emotionally resonant messaging increased trust and alignment in remote teams, while IABC (2021) emphasized the need for strategic communication competencies in leadership development. These shifts reveal a broader transformation in leadership communication, from directive to interpretive, from transactional to relational. Yet, many leadership models still treat communication as a technical skill rather than a strategic and emotional process. This literature review establishes the theoretical foundation for the case narrative and the bridging strategies that follow. It highlights the need for leadership models that are not only conceptually robust but also emotionally attuned and contextually flexible.

To illustrate how these leadership frameworks converged and diverged in real-world crisis conditions, Table 1 provides a comparative analysis of their core principles, pandemic applications, limitations, and adaptive reinterpretations.

Table 1 – Comparative Analysis of Leadership Frameworks in Crisis

Theoretical Framework	Core Principle	Crisis Application	Observed Limitation	Adaptive Insight
Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985)	Vision, inspiration, individualized support	Mobilized morale early in the pandemic	Vision fatigue during prolonged uncertainty	"Holding behaviors" (empathy, presence) replace charisma as a stability mechanism
Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995)	Self- awareness, empathy, regulation	Stabilized morale and trust under stress	Often sidelined as a "soft skill"	Must be repositioned as a strategic core competency
Process Innovation (Davenport, 1993)	Workflow redesign for efficiency	Enabled operational pivots and digital shifts	Traditional models assume linear progress	Adaptive innovation accommodates emotional and contextual fluidity
Organizational Communication (Weick, 1995; Daft & Lengel, 1986)	Meaning- making and message richness	Constructed a shared understanding during remote work	Legacy models ignore digital dynamics	Sensemaking communication fosters psychological safety and cohesion

Note. Table developed by the author based on the synthesized literature.

The comparative analysis in Table 1 reveals that while each leadership framework offers distinct advantages during a crisis, none alone fully addresses the complex emotional and structural challenges organizations face under uncertainty. This observation underscores the need for an integrated approach that merges visionary leadership with emotional intelligence, agile innovation, and adaptive communication. To illustrate this synthesis, Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework that unites these dimensions into a cohesive, context-sensitive leadership model.

Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework: Bridging Theory and Practice

Building on the comparative insights presented in Table 1, Figure 1 introduces a conceptual framework that integrates these theories into a context-sensitive model of crisis leadership.

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Figure 1 A Context-Sensitive Leadership Framework Bridging Theory and Practice



Note. Figure created by the author to illustrate the integrated leadership framework.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the integration of transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and organizational communication creates a context-sensitive leadership framework suitable for crisis environments. This conceptual model builds upon the comparative insights presented in Table 1, where each framework demonstrated unique strengths yet required integration for sustained organizational adaptability. The diagram illustrates how the interplay between emotional and cognitive competencies enhances leadership effectiveness in uncertain situations. Collectively, these dimensions provide a foundation for analyzing how leadership behaviors were applied in the portfolio management case examined in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual methodology grounded in secondary data analysis. The aim is to examine how established leadership theories were applied, adapted, or challenged during the COVID-19 crisis, using documented organizational responses and practitioner insights as empirical grounding. The approach is interpretive, drawing on thematic synthesis to bridge scholarly frameworks with real-world leadership practice.

Research Design and Rationale

Given the article's focus on theory-practice integration, a qualitative design was selected to enable nuanced exploration of leadership behavior in crisis contexts. Secondary data analysis was chosen for its ability to access diverse, credible sources without the constraints of primary data collection during a global disruption. This design supports the article's dual goals: (1) to critique and extend leadership theory, and (2) to distill actionable insights for educators and practitioners. The study is situated within the broader tradition of conceptual scholarship in management, which emphasizes theoretical refinement through reflective synthesis (Weick, 1989; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). It also draws on practitioner-oriented inquiry, recognizing the value of lived experience and organizational documentation in shaping leadership discourse (Bartunek, 2007).

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Secondary data were drawn from four categories of sources:

• Peer-reviewed academic literature on transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and organizational communication

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- **Industry reports** from McKinsey, Deloitte, Gartner, and SHRM, focusing on leadership and organizational adaptation during COVID-19
- **Policy publications** from the OECD and AACSB, addressing SME innovation and business education reform
- **Practitioner essays and case studies** from Harvard Business Review, offering firsthand accounts of crisis leadership

Sources were selected based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to leadership in crisis or uncertainty
- Credibility and institutional authority
- Publication date between 2020 and 2023 to ensure contextual accuracy
- Diversity of organizational contexts (e.g., SMEs, corporate teams, educational institutions)
- A total of 18 documents were reviewed, with 5 selected for direct integration into the article due to their thematic alignment and analytical richness.

Analytical Strategy

Thematic synthesis was employed to identify recurring patterns across the selected sources. This involved three stages:

- 1. **Initial coding** of leadership behaviors, challenges, and adaptations described in the data
- 2. Categorization of codes into thematic clusters aligned with theoretical constructs (e.g., emotional intelligence, innovation, communication)
- 3. **Interpretive mapping** of themes to a documented leadership case from a portfolio management team, enabling comparison between theory and practice

This strategy enabled both deductive analysis (applying existing frameworks) and inductive insight (identifying emergent leadership strategies). The case narrative was used not as a generalizable sample, but as a reflective anchor to illustrate how theory was operationalized under crisis conditions.

Limitations and Delimitations

As a conceptual study, the article does not claim statistical generalizability. The use of secondary data limits access to granular organizational dynamics and individual-level experiences. However, the breadth and credibility of the sources mitigate this constraint, offering a robust foundation for theoretical reflection and practical recommendations.

The case narrative focuses on a mid-sized portfolio management team, which may not reflect all organizational contexts. Nonetheless, the insights are transferable to similar leadership environments, particularly within SMEs and service-oriented sectors.

Applied Case Narrative: Leadership in a Portfolio Management Team During Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an acute leadership challenge for a portfolio management team operating within a mid-sized organization. Responsible for strategic asset oversight, client engagement, and cross-functional coordination, the team's success depended on stability, trust, and structured communication. The onset of the pandemic fractured these foundations, requiring immediate adaptation in leadership style, emotional engagement, and operational strategy.

Table 2 – Case Overview: Portfolio Management Team

Variable	Description
Organization Type	Mid-sized firm specializing in asset and portfolio management

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Team Composition	12 professionals across strategy, finance, and client engagement		
Leadership Structure	Team leader with 2 deputy managers; collaborative decision-making model		
Pre-Crisis Leadership Orientation	Transformational vision-focused, supportive, innovation-driven		
Crisis Onset (March 2020)	Shift to remote operations; client uncertainty; emotional strain		
Key Adaptations	Emotional intelligence emphasis, agile workflows, and digital communication		
Outcome	Sustained client trust, improved team cohesion, and accelerated innovation capability		

To ground these theoretical insights in a real-world setting, Table 2 outlines the characteristics of the portfolio management team examined in the case analysis and the crisis conditions they navigated.

Overview of the Portfolio Management Team and Crisis Context

Pre-Crisis Leadership Orientation

Before the pandemic, leadership within the team reflected transformational principles. The team leader emphasized vision-setting, individualized support, and intellectual stimulation to foster innovation and accountability. Decision-making was collaborative but structured, and communication followed predictable rhythms. The organizational culture was characterized by high autonomy, psychological safety, and shared performance goals. This leadership orientation aligned with Bass's (1985) model of transformational leadership, which emphasizes idealized influence and inspirational motivation. However, the stability of the pre-crisis environment masked latent vulnerabilities, particularly in emotional preparedness and adaptive capacity.

Crisis Onset: Emotional Intelligence as a Stabilizing Force

With the emergence of COVID-19, the team experienced immediate disruption. Remote work protocols, client uncertainty, and personal health anxieties converged to create emotional volatility. The leadership response shifted from strategic oversight to emotional stewardship. Empathy, psychological safety, and transparent communication became central to team cohesion. Weekly check-ins replaced formal performance reviews, and decision-making became more inclusive and emotionally attuned. This shift reflected the core dimensions of emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman (1995), particularly self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management. It also aligned with findings from Ogunyemi et al. (2023), who observed that emotionally intelligent leadership was positively correlated with psychological contract fulfillment during a crisis. The leader's ability to contain emotional distress and foster connection mirrored Goleman and Boyatzis's (2020) concept of "holding behaviors," which emphasize presence and emotional containment over visionary rhetoric. This adaptation marked a departure from traditional leadership scripts and highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence as a vital survival skill.

Figure 2 – Timeline of Leadership Adaptations During Crisis

Timeline of Leadership Adaptations in the Portfolio Management Team (2020–2021)

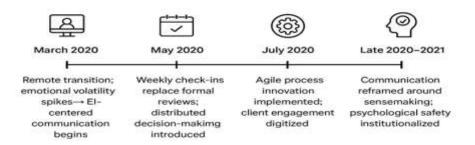
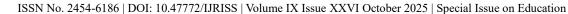


Figure 2 Timeline of Leadership Adaptations in the Portfolio Management Team (2020–2021)





By mid-2020, leadership practices within the portfolio management team began shifting from hierarchical decision-making to adaptive, emotionally intelligent frameworks designed to sustain cohesion and performance during the remote transition.

As shown in Figure 2, the evolution of leadership responses across 2020–2021 demonstrates a clear transition from reactive communication to proactive sensemaking, emphasizing emotional intelligence, agility, and psychological safety. This progressive shift in leadership dynamics underscores the importance of adaptive communication and emotional intelligence as continuous processes rather than isolated responses, setting the stage for the subsequent discussion on how these behaviors were institutionalized within the organization's culture.

Operational Pivot: Process Innovation Under Pressure

Operationally, the team faced significant constraints. Traditional workflows, dependent on in-person collaboration and hierarchical approvals, proved inefficient. In response, the team adopted agile methods, decentralized decision-making, and digital tools to maintain momentum. Project timelines were restructured, and client engagement strategies were reimagined to accommodate virtual formats. These changes reflected the principles of process innovation as defined by Davenport (1993), but with notable deviations. Innovation was not planned or linear; it was reactive, emotionally driven, and context-dependent. The OECD (2021) documented similar trends among SMEs, noting that digitalization and improvisation were key to organizational survival. The team's experience also echoed Pisano's (2015) call for adaptive innovation frameworks, those that accommodate uncertainty, emotional complexity, and rapid iteration. Leadership in this context required not only technical agility but emotional resilience and tolerance for ambiguity.

Communication Transformation: Sensemaking in Remote Environments

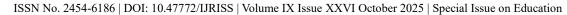
The shift to remote work disrupted established communication norms. In-person meetings were replaced by asynchronous messaging, video calls, and collaborative platforms. Leaders had to convey urgency, empathy, and clarity without physical presence, a challenge that demanded new communicative competencies. Drawing on Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory, communication became a mechanism for constructing shared meaning amid chaos. Messages were crafted to acknowledge uncertainty while reinforcing purpose and cohesion. The leader's approach reflected Daft & Lengel's (1986) media richness theory, selecting communication channels based on emotional nuance and immediacy. Gartner (2020) reported that emotionally resonant communication increased trust in remote teams, a finding affirmed by the team's experience. Strategic use of narrative, tone, and timing helped maintain alignment and morale, even as external conditions remained unstable. This case narrative illustrates how leadership theories were not simply applied but reinterpreted under crisis conditions. Emotional intelligence, process innovation, and communicative sensemaking became central to effective leadership, often in ways that stretched or challenged existing models. The narrative sets the stage for the bridging strategies that follow, offering insights into how leadership development can better prepare managers for complexity and disruption.

Bridging Strategies: From Concept to Contextual Leadership

The COVID-19 crisis revealed a persistent gap between leadership theory and practice. While conceptual models provided useful scaffolding, their application required significant adaptation in the face of emotional strain, operational disruption, and communicative ambiguity. This section proposes four strategies for bridging that gap, each grounded in secondary data and informed by the case narrative presented earlier.

Integrate Lived Experience into Leadership Curricula

Management education often privileges abstract models over experiential insight. Yet, as the pandemic demonstrated, leaders must be prepared to navigate complexity, ambiguity, and emotional volatility, conditions that cannot be fully captured through theory alone. Incorporating lived experience into leadership development can enhance relevance and resilience. Experiential learning methods such as scenario-based simulations, reflective journaling, and practitioner case studies should be embedded alongside theoretical instruction. AACSB (2021) advocates for such reforms, emphasizing the need to "build back better" by aligning curricula with real-





world challenges. Bartunek (2007) similarly calls for greater integration between academic and practitioner knowledge, arguing that lived experience offers unique epistemic value. In practice, this means inviting crisistested leaders into classrooms, using pandemic-era case studies as teaching tools, and encouraging students to reflect on their own

Reposition Emotional Intelligence as Core Competency

Emotional intelligence (EI) must be repositioned from a peripheral "soft skill" to a foundational leadership competency. The pandemic underscored the centrality of empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication in sustaining team cohesion and psychological safety. Anvari et al. (2023) found that EI training improved retention and performance during a crisis, while Ogunyemi et al. (2023) demonstrated its role in fulfilling psychological contracts. Despite this evidence, EI remains underrepresented in formal leadership pipelines. Leadership development programs should include structured EI assessments, coaching modules, and feedback loops. Korn Ferry's research suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders outperform their peers across industries, particularly in volatile environments. Reframing EI as a strategic asset, rather than a personal trait, can help organizations cultivate more resilient and responsive leadership cultures.

Promote Agile Innovation Frameworks for Crisis Readiness

Traditional change management models often assume stability, predictability, and linear progression. Crisis conditions demand agile, iterative approaches to innovation, ones that accommodate emotional complexity, rapid decision-making, and decentralized authority. The OECD (2021) recommends agile innovation frameworks for SMEs, noting that digitalization and improvisation were key to survival during COVID-19. Pisano (2015) similarly advocates for "adaptive innovation," which emphasizes learning, experimentation, and tolerance for failure. Leadership education should incorporate agile methodologies such as design thinking, rapid prototyping, and scenario planning. These tools enable leaders to respond to disruption not with rigidity, but with creativity and strategic flexibility. In practice, this means training managers to lead innovation under pressure, navigate resource constraints, and foster psychological safety during change.

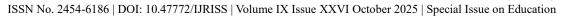
Reframe Organizational Communication as Sensemaking

Communication in crisis is not merely transactional; it is interpretive. Leaders must be equipped to facilitate sensemaking, using language to construct shared understanding, emotional alignment, and strategic clarity. Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory and Daft & Lengel's (1986) media richness model offer valuable insights, but they must be updated to reflect digital and remote contexts. Gartner (2020) found that emotionally resonant messaging increased trust in virtual teams, while IABC (2021) emphasized the need for strategic communication competencies in leadership development. Training should include narrative framing, tone modulation, and channel selection based on emotional nuance. Leaders must learn to communicate not just information, but meaning, especially when uncertainty prevails. These reframing positions communication as a strategic leadership function, essential to cohesion, morale, and adaptive capacity.

Future Research Directions

Future research should build on the theoretical integrations identified in this study by exploring how transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and organizational communication intersect in dynamic portfolio management settings during crises. While this conceptual paper emphasized the adaptive capacity of these frameworks in response to COVID-19 disruptions, empirical studies are necessary to confirm how leaders maintain a balance between emotional stability and operational agility during extended periods of uncertainty. Long-term research could examine how transformational behaviors change as crises unfold, especially whether leaders who initially depend on charisma later adopt empathy-driven "holding behaviors." Such research would offer a deeper understanding of the temporal dynamics of leadership adaptation and resilience.

Further research should also investigate how emotional intelligence influences the connection between innovation and team cohesion in high-pressure portfolio environments. The results in this paper indicate that emotionally intelligent communication builds trust and improves decision quality, but there is limited empirical





measurement of this relationship. Using mixed-methods approaches, combining behavioral analytics with qualitative interviews, could help clarify how effective leadership practices lead to sustained organizational success. Additionally, cross-sector comparisons could reveal whether the adaptive processes identified here apply beyond portfolio management to other professional service areas facing similar volatility. By exploring these paths, future studies can advance from conceptual ideas to concrete evidence on how leaders apply theory while managing real-world complexity.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a crucible for leadership, exposing the limitations of static models and underscoring the need for adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and context-sensitive approaches. While frameworks such as transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, process innovation, and organizational communication provided conceptual scaffolding, their practical application required reinterpretation under conditions of uncertainty, emotional strain, and operational disruption. This article has argued for a more integrative model of leadership, one that bridges theory and practice through experiential learning, emotional intelligence training, agile innovation frameworks, and strategic communication. Drawing on secondary data and a documented case from a portfolio management team, it demonstrated how leaders navigated a crisis by adapting established models to meet emergent needs. Emotional containment replaced charisma, improvisation supplanted structured change, and sensemaking communication became central to cohesion and trust. The proposed bridging strategies offer actionable insights for educators, managers, and policymakers. Leadership development must evolve to include lived experience, emotional competencies, and adaptive tools that prepare leaders not just to manage complexity, but to humanize it. Management education should prioritize reflective practice, scenario-based learning, and emotional intelligence as core components of curricula. Organizations must invest in leadership pipelines that cultivate agility, empathy, and communicative clarity. Future research should explore how experiential knowledge can be systematically integrated into leadership education and how adaptive competencies can be assessed and developed across diverse organizational contexts. Comparative studies across sectors, cultures, and crisis types could further illuminate the conditions under which theory translates effectively into practice. Ultimately, bridging theory and practice is not a matter of simplification; it is a commitment to complexity. It requires leaders who can interpret frameworks, respond to context, and lead with both strategic clarity and emotional depth. As the world continues to face disruption, such leadership will not only be relevant but essential.

DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

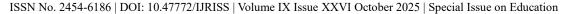
Funding: This conceptual study received no external funding.

Ethics Approval: This is a conceptual analysis; IRB review was not required.

Data Availability: No empirical data were generated for this study.

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