



**STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY PRIVATE SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CRISES IN  
RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>KEYWORDS</b>
<p>The study investigated principals' crisis management strategies for enhancing secondary school crises management of private secondary schools in Rivers State. Five research questions guided the study; the study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 293 principals randomly selected from the private secondary schools in Rivers State. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 293 respondents (representing 100% in the population) for the study. The researchers' developed structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection titled "Crisis Management Strategies Scale of Principals (CMSSP)". The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Management. The questionnaire was face validated by experts in the field of education, reliability co-efficient of 0.65 was obtained using Croanbach Alpha method of determining internal consistency of the instrument using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The study revealed that the private principals' communication, third party decision making, joint problem solving strategies and containment control strategies can help in resolving crises in schools. However, the contrary as revealed by the study is confrontation strategy which if applied will trigger crises in schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the district Education office should organize seminars and workshops aimed at improving rapport between principal and their staff/students, effective communication on long and short term negative effects of crisis should be made between teachers, principals and parents, the guidance and counseling should be strengthened to educate both principal and teacher on better strategies of managing crisis in secondary schools.</p>	<p>Crisis, Education, Management, Strategies, Private, School, Principal.</p>

## INTRODUCTION

The educational institution is one of the most paramount institutions in any given society. This is owing to the fact that it is a vital tool to the economic, social and political development of a society. No doubt, good education brushes away illiteracy, ignorance, laziness and even poverty from the society. However, for any educational goal to be achieved and sustained is dependent on how well the educational system is devoid or free from crises that comes into play between principals and principals, teacher and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students. Again, the school and the neighbouring community are also not left out in these crises which erupts the educational institution. Secondary education is the second ladder of the Nigeria education system. Secondary education starts from JSS1 (grade 7) (Age 12-13) until SS3 (grade 12) (Age 17-18).

Most students start at the age of 10 or 11 and finish at the age of 16 or 17. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on education (2014) revised, defined it as the education children receive after Primary education before the tertiary education. This level of education is a ladder to higher education. The secondary education provides an opportunity for primary school leavers to acquire more knowledge, built on already gained knowledge, develop skills and abilities, prepare them to live effectively in our changing society full of opportunities. The head of administration in a secondary school is called the Principal, and the onus is on him/her to ensure efficient, quality management and implementation of the school's programmes which covers teaching and learning in the school environment.

This goal is only achievable by the principal in a crises-free atmosphere and conducive environment for teaching and learning. Private schools, also known to many as independent schools, non-governmental, privately funded or non-state schools are schools not administered by local, state or national/Federal Governments. They have the right to select their students and are funded in whole or part by charging their students for tuition, rather than looking forward to be funded from the public coffer. By this, a private school is owned and managed by a single person or group of persons. It is important to note, however that the increase in the number of private schools in the state has its own consequences. This could be manifested in the series of crises being witnessed in the private schools. The concept of crisis has been seen as the act of violence resulting from dissatisfaction or a situation of disagreement between two parties (Fajana, 2000). According to Rayeski and Bryank, (2000), it is the state of disharmony that is brought about by differences of impulses, desire or tendencies. Despite the various forms in which crises emanates, it is as a result of tensions, stress, frustrations, unresolved or group to struggle to gain independence. These unresolved conflict leads to strikes, riots, major injuries, loss of lives and destruction of properties including school buildings as well as arresting those who are involved in such act.

The term crisis tends to be the result of conflicts and has been opined by many researchers as a rational and inevitable part of people working together as well as crazy song you can't get out of your head (Sessa, 2006). The occurrence of student's crisis could first be shown through boycotts of classes, refusal to obey the school rules and regulations, carrying of placards and chanting of war songs by the students, to make their grievances be known to the authorities as well as cult related activities such as the seizure of fellow students and disturbing the peace of the school environment. The first incidences of crises recorded within the secondary school system were the crises between, students and the school authorities (Ogonor, 1996). It is very obvious that crisis in educational institutions can make or mar the progress of the school. This may explain why school administrators must adopt certain

administrative strategies or measures in the breakdown of law and order in schools. These strategies may include; communication strategy, confrontation strategy, third party decision making strategy, joint problem solving strategy, and containment control strategy to enable schools continue to pursue and achieve the targeted set goals of teaching and learning as its mandatory role in the society.

Crises management among principals in schools is very paramount because as an administrator, the goals and school environment where free flow of communication exists, where the school administrator is able to communicate with all the departments using effective channels of communication to curtail emergencies in school. It is expected that principals and members of staff work harmoniously as a team for the good, growth and development of the school. To this effect that the study was formulated to examine how the various crises management strategies can help in saving schools from crises. The incessant occurrence of crises among students in private secondary schools has become a major concern to the researchers. Several reasons may have brought about this. This may include lack of school equipment, inadequate supply of school amenities. It might also be that students have been denied of their rights to the amenities they paid for because of shortage in supply.

On the other hand, proprietors on their part argue that they are doing their best, but failure on the part of the school administration to manage and distribute these amenities evenly among students can spark off crises. More so, it might be that the school administrators adopt the autocratic and authoritarian leadership style which sometimes cause misunderstanding among staff and students. Sometimes, the communication channels may not have been fully explored or are hindered. It may be that most principals of private secondary schools in Rivers State do not delegate duties to their subordinates. The researcher is concerned about these developments and bothered about what has to be done to develop best strategies to manage and control crises in private schools in Rivers State.

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate crises management strategies of private secondary school's principals in Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Investigate how principals' communication strategy can assist in managing crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Examine how principals' confrontational strategy can enhance effective management of crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Find out how third party decision-making strategy can enhance the management of crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
4. Ascertain how joint problem solving strategy can assist in the management of crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
5. Determine how containment control strategy can help principals in managing crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. How can principal's communication strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. In what ways can principals' confrontational strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

3. How can third party decision making strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
4. How does joint problem solving strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
5. In what way can containment control strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The population of this study comprised the two hundred and ninety three (293) registered private secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample of the study consisted of 293 principals selected from the all registered private secondary schools in Rivers State, representing 100% of the population. The instrument for data collection for this study was a self-addressed questionnaire titled 'Crises Management Strategies Scale for Principals (CMSSP). The instrument was divided into two sections A and B. Section 'A' source for the background information of respondents, while section B gathered information on the issues raised by the various research questions and hypotheses of the study. The instrument was structured using the modified 4-points Likert scale model of Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The method of data collection for this study was a questionnaire distribution. The instrument was validated by two experts in educational management who scrutinized the items. Their suggestions were used to bear on the items before the final drafts were prepared. Through split half technique, the reliability of the instrument was ensured.

A pilot study was conducted on 30 subjects. The decision rule was set at 2.50, the midpoint for the scale. Therefore only mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted as indication of areas of communication strategy while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as indication of areas of low level of low communication strategy. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest method was used, where a set of 10 instruments was administered to 10 male and female principals in private secondary schools. A week later another set was re-administered to the same respondents. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha was used to compute the reliability coefficient of 0.64, thus establishing the internal stability of the instrument. This was made possible by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 22. The data collected through the research questionnaire were analyzed and used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The research questions were answered through the use of mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested through the use of z-test.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research Question 1:** How can principals' communication strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

To answer research question one, mean and standard deviation were used:

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how principals’ communicational strategy can help in resolving crises in schools.

S/N QI	ITEMS	SEX	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	Mean	STD	Remarks
1	Allowing the free flow of information can assist in removing communication gaps in school administration?	Male	118	24	10	3	157	3.61	0.86	Agreed
		Female	75	35	15	11	136	1.38	0.82	Agreed
2	Sending urgent information to those connected can help to arrest the problems in school administration.	Male	98	34	10	8	150	3.48	1.02	Agreed
		Female	90	23	25	5	143	3.38	1.28	Agreed
3	Sending law enforcement to calm situations can assist in controlling the crisis.	Male	95	44	35	6	180	3.08	0.59	Agreed
		Female	70	27	12	4	113	3.44	0.80	Agreed
4	Informing medical agencies to help injured students can help in reducing loss of lives.	Male	100	25	14	9	148	3.46	0.62	Agreed
		Female	91	27	17	10	125	3.91	1.15	Agreed
5	Sending of urgent information to all departments during crises, can help in alerting everybody on the direction of the crises.	Male	120	37	20	3	180	3.52	0.86	Agreed
		Female	58	43	23	10	113	3.69	0.85	Agreed
Total			915	319	181	69	1445	32.95	8.85	

From Table 1 above, the mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 exceeded the critical mean score of 2.50. This means that of all the five items administered, both males and females agreed that principal’s communicational strategy can help in resolving crises in schools in Rivers State, according to the mean of the study.

**Research Question 2:** In what ways can principals’ confrontational strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

To answer research question two, mean and standard deviation were used:

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how confrontation strategy can help in resolving crises in schools.

Q2	In what ways can principals confrontational strategy help in resolving crises?	SEX	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	Mean	STD	Remarks
QA6	Rebuke student/staff involved	Male	20	35	35	60	150	0.53	0.92	Disagreed
		Female	20	22	33	68	143	1.97	1.29	Disagreed
QA7	Invite the security men to calm the crises.	Male	29	43	35	43	150	2.38	1.32	Disagreed
		Female	10	15	18	100	143	2.83	1.06	Disagreed
QA8	Arrest the leader of the gang protesters.	Male	12	28	56	80	175	1.85	0.86	Disagreed
		Female	3	5	10	100	118	1.25	0.63	Disagreed
QA9	Give special attention to injured students and staff	Male	15	20	31	88	154	1.75	0.55	Disagreed
		Female	21	21	33	70	139	2.04	0.92	Disagreed
QA10	Close down all academic activities.	Male	20	23	30	78	156	1.84	1.29	Disagreed
		Female	6	10	51	70	137	1.71	1.06	Disagreed
	<b>Total</b>		156	222	332	757	1465	18.15	9.90	

From Table 2 above, the mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are below the critical mean score of 2.50. This means that all the five items administered, both males and females disagreed that principals' confrontation strategy can help in resolving crises in schools.

Considering the table above, at the 95% probability level against 584 degrees of freedom, the z-calculated value of -3.97 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

“There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how confrontation strategy can help in resolving crises in schools”.

**Research Question 3:** How can third party decision making strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

To answer research question three, mean and standard deviation were used

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how third party decision making strategy can help in resolving crises in schools.

Q3	How can third party decision making strategy help in resolving crises?	SEX	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	Mean	STD	Remarks
QA11	Report the death of any person to the police and parents.	Male	150	25	8	5	188	3.19	0.68	Agreed
		Female	88	15	2	1	105	3.87	0.37	Agreed
QA12	Evacuate students and staff from the premises.	Male	42	22	40	33	153	2.27	1.16	Agreed
		Female	45	31	44	20	140	2.72	1.24	Agreed
QA13	Involve the parents of students that perpetrate the act.	Male	48	51	32	21	152	2.84	1.37	Agreed
		Female	42	45	32	22	141	2.76	0.98	Agreed
QA14	Apply for legal judgment against the gang leader.	Male	90	40	28	17	175	3.16	1.26	Agreed
		Female	70	26	12	10	118	3.32	1.13	Agreed
QA15	Allow court judgments to be final on the matters.	Male	106	37	27	17	187	3.24	0.68	Agreed
	Report the death of any person to the police and parents.	Female	95	8	2	1	106	3.86	0.37	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>		776	300	227	147	1465	31.23	9.24	

From Table 3 above, the mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 exceeded the critical mean score of 2.50. This means that of all the five items administered, both males and females agreed that third party decision making strategy helps in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State, according to the mean of the study.

**Research Question 4:** How does joint problem solving strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

To answer research question four, mean and standard deviation were used:

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how joint problem solving strategy can help in resolving crises in school.

Q4	How does joint problem solving strategy help in resolving crises?	SEX	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	Mean	STD	Remark
QA16	Inviting parents teachers association for meeting on the issues.	Male	75	43	23	11	152	3.19	1.44	Agreed
		Female	63	34	27	17	141	3.01	0.68	Agreed
QA17	Signing agreements with parents and students.	Male	58	55	31	21	167	2.87	0.77	Agreed
		Female	35	35	37	19	126	2.68	1.45	Agreed
QA18	Using of dialogue with students and staff.	Male	76	45	33	11	165	2.76	1.36	Agreed
		Female	45	32	32	19	128	2.80	0.61	Agreed
QA19	Use of good leadership behavior towards staff and students.	Male	65	43	52	10	170	2.96	1.36	Agreed
		Female	40	38	22	23	123	2.77	1.02	Agreed
QA20	Involve students in decision making on issues that concern them.	Male	52	31	37	23	143	2.78	1.44	Agreed
		Female	47	40	52	11	150	2.82	0.68	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>		556	396	346	165	1465		10.81	

From Table 4 above, the mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 exceeded the critical mean score of 2.50. This means that of all the five items administered, both males and females agreed that joint problem solving strategy helps in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State, according to the mean of the study.

**Research Question 5:** In what ways can containment control strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

To answer research question five, mean and standard deviation were used:

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female private secondary school principals on how containment control strategy can help in resolving crises in schools.

Q5	In what ways can containment control strategy help in resolving crises?	SEX	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	Mean	STD	Remarks
QA21	Use of effective communication channel	Male	45	57	30	13	145	2.92	0.38	Agreed
		Female	45	45	43	15	148	2.81	0.72	Agreed
QA22	Use of safety service providers	Male	43	55	34	25	157	2.79	1.30	Agreed
		Female	41	38	38	19	136	2.74	1.58	Agreed
QA23	Use of authority on staff and students	Male	63	55	30	6	154	2.16	1.25	Agreed
		Female	45	42	30	22	139	2.79	1.21	Agreed
QA24	Issue warnings on parties involved in the crises.	Male	64	41	32	21	158	2.94	0.99	Agreed
		Female	55	49	19	12	135	3.09	0.38	Agreed
QA25	Allow the law enforcement agencies to camp on the school premises.	Male	58	56	27	15	156	3.01	0.72	Agreed
		Female	44	50	25	18	137	2.88	1.30	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>		503	488	308	166	1465	28.13	9.83	

From Table 5 above, the mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 exceeded the critical mean score of 2.50. This means that of all the five items administered, both males and females agreed that containment control strategy help in resolving crises in private secondary schools in Rivers State, according to the mean of the study.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study revealed that private principals’ communication, third party decision making, joint problem solving strategies and containment control strategies can help in resolving crises in schools. However, the contrary as revealed by study is confrontation strategy if applied can trigger crises in schools, hence should be avoided.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings above have revealed the private principals’ communication, third party decision making, joint problem solving strategies and containment control strategies can help in resolving crises in schools This is supported by Jack and Ukaigwu (2018) who affirm that the a Integrating and compromising strategies in crisis management in schools. Integrating strategy focuses on gathering and organizing information at the same time, it encourages creative thinking and welcomes diverse perspectives. This strategy enable parties involve in conflict to pool all their information together, put their differences on the table and examine them along with any data that might contribute to resolution. It leads to alternative solution, which addresses all parts of the conflict, other than the initial solutions



of the parties involve. This implies that the school system, school authority, students and teachers must be able and willing to contribute time, energy and resources to finding and implementing a solution. Compromising strategy is a middle of the road strategy that gets every one talking about issues and moves them closer to each other and to a resolution. In compromise, each person has something to give and something to take. Compromise is more effective in the school system, when issues are complex and parties in conflict look for a level playing ground and are also willing to exchange concessions. In this strategy, negotiation and bargaining are complementary skills. Avoiding strategy: this occurs when one party in a potential conflict ignores the conflicting issues and denies the significant of the conflict. It is a way of not addressing the conflict or postponing the conflict for a better time, which never comes. It is a way of postponing or withdrawing from – conflict situations in the school that might cause unpleasantness for the principal in particular and teachers in general. On the contrary, the confrontation strategy is the dominating strategy as used by used by Iwowati (2007), the school principal to resolve the conflict by dictating what the students and teachers will do. According to Iwowati (2007) the dominating strategy does not allow inputs from students and teachers in the school system. It implies that the school management resolves conflict as it deems fit and communicates its decisions and desires to the students and teachers and they will abide by the decision whether or not they the teachers and students are with it.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that private principal's adoption of communication, third party decision making, joint problem solving strategies and containment control strategies can help in resolving crises in schools. However, the confrontation strategy if applied can trigger crises in schools.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends the following based on the findings of the study:

1. Principals should be educated on the negative implications in the use of the avoiding strategy.
2. Infusing and integrating conflict resolution into the school curriculum and culture is also imperative.
3. District Education office should organize seminars and workshops aimed at improving rapport between principal and their staff,
4. Effective communication on long and short term negative effects of conflict should be made between teachers, principals and parents,
5. The guidance and counseling should be strengthened to educate both principal and teacher on better strategies of managing conflict in secondary schools
6. Above all, it is very imperative that school boards organize regular workshops, seminars, conferences and orientation programmes for principals and teachers on conflict management strategies. This is appropriate to improve their knowledge, particularly the emerging ideas and innovations concerning students and teachers conflict management in schools.

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