

CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between crisis management strategies and the academic performance of secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone. A quantitative survey design was adopted, using structured questionnaires administered to principals, teachers, and students. The population comprised 170 respondents (20 principals, 50 teachers, and 100 senior secondary school students). A sample of 120 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula and proportionately allocated through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that effective crisis management characterised by continuous staff training, transparent communication, psychological support, and structured learning environments significantly improves students' academic performance during crises. Psychological support recorded the highest positive correlation ($r = 0.85$) with performance, highlighting the need for mental health services. Schools maintaining clear academic expectations, coordinated parental involvement, and proactive safety measures experienced minimal learning disruptions. The study concludes that a holistic crisis management framework integrating proactive planning, rapid response, and stakeholder collaboration is essential for sustaining academic outcomes during disruptions. Recommendations include regular crisis simulation exercises, establishment of crisis intervention teams, continuous training for school personnel, and active community involvement, supported by government funding for safety infrastructure and psychological services.

Keywords: Crisis management, Academic performance, Secondary schools, Enugu State.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone of human capital development, social mobility, and national progress. At the secondary school level in Nigeria, it provides a critical bridge between foundational learning and higher pursuits, equipping young people with the competencies required for societal participation and economic productivity (Animba, Chukwu, & Ezema, 2022). However, the learning environment in Nigeria particularly in the Enugu Education Zone has in recent years been marked by disruptions such as prolonged teachers' strikes, infrastructural decay, insecurity, and community conflicts, which reduce instructional time, weaken student morale, and undermine overall academic achievement (Bashar & Yasin, 2023). The relationship between crisis management strategies and academic performance is multi-layered, with both direct and indirect effects. Directly, crises disrupt school schedules through closures or delays, destabilising instructional time (Animba et al., 2022). Indirectly, they create psychological distress, absenteeism, and lack of motivation, all of which affect students' capacity to concentrate. Schools that adopt integrated crisis management approaches combining psychological support, alternative learning platforms, and effective communication are better equipped to sustain learning during crises (Ohia, 2022). Similarly, parental and community involvement in recovery, such as tutoring, emotional reassurance, and provision of temporary facilities, has been shown to mitigate academic setbacks and enhance student resilience (Olokoba, Olujuwon, & Jegede, 2025; Ekechukwu, Dienye, & Kalu, 2022).

Crisis management in educational settings has therefore moved from a peripheral administrative concern to a central pillar of school leadership. Effective strategies involve proactive planning, resource mobilisation, stakeholder collaboration, and psychological support mechanisms that safeguard both safety and continuity of learning (Ofangbonmu, Isabu, & Okosun, 2024; Kanyip & Ezech, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified the urgency for robust frameworks, revealing disparities in schools' preparedness for remote learning and crisis response (Adebayo & Onuoha, 2025). While some schools in the Enugu Education Zone have demonstrated adaptability, many remain reactive, underscoring the need for systematic research into the link between crisis management strategies and academic performance, and the identification of best practices that can be standardised across the region.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of crisis management strategies in some secondary schools within the Enugu Education Zone, their application remains inconsistent and inadequate. While a few schools adopt structured protocols such as safety drills, intervention teams, and proactive communication, many others lack even the most basic preparedness. This disparity creates unequal academic outcomes, as poorly prepared schools suffer significant learning losses during crises. Furthermore, psychological support proven to enhance resilience and academic recovery is often absent. Without a coordinated and standardised approach to crisis management, students' academic achievement remains highly vulnerable to disruption.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between crisis management strategies and the academic performance of secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What crisis management strategies are applied in secondary schools in the Enugu Education Zone?
2. How do these strategies relate to students' academic performance?
3. Which strategies are most effective in sustaining performance during crises?
4. What measures can be adopted to strengthen crisis management in schools?

Methods

The study adopted a quantitative survey research design to investigate the relationship between crisis management strategies and academic performance. The population consisted of 170 respondents, made up of 20 principals, 50 teachers, and 100 senior secondary school students in selected public secondary schools in the Enugu Education Zone. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, which gave 120 respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportionate representation of principals, teachers, and students.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (170)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{170}{1 + 170(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{170}{1 + 170(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{170}{1.425} \approx 119.30$$

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Crisis Management Strategies and Academic Performance Questionnaire (CMSAPQ), developed by the researcher. It covered demographic data, crisis management strategies, and indicators of academic performance during crises. Content validity was established through expert review in Educational Management. A pilot test yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency.

The researcher and trained assistants administered the questionnaires. Out of 120 distributed copies, 115 were returned and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) and Pearson correlation with SPSS version 25.

Results

Table 1: Perception of Crisis Management Strategies by School Principals

Crisis Management Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Regular staff training on crisis management	40%	45%	10%	5%
Effective communication with stakeholders during crises	50%	40%	5%	5%
Availability of emergency resources (first aid, counselling)	55%	35%	5%	5%
Implementation of crisis simulation exercises	30%	50%	15%	5%

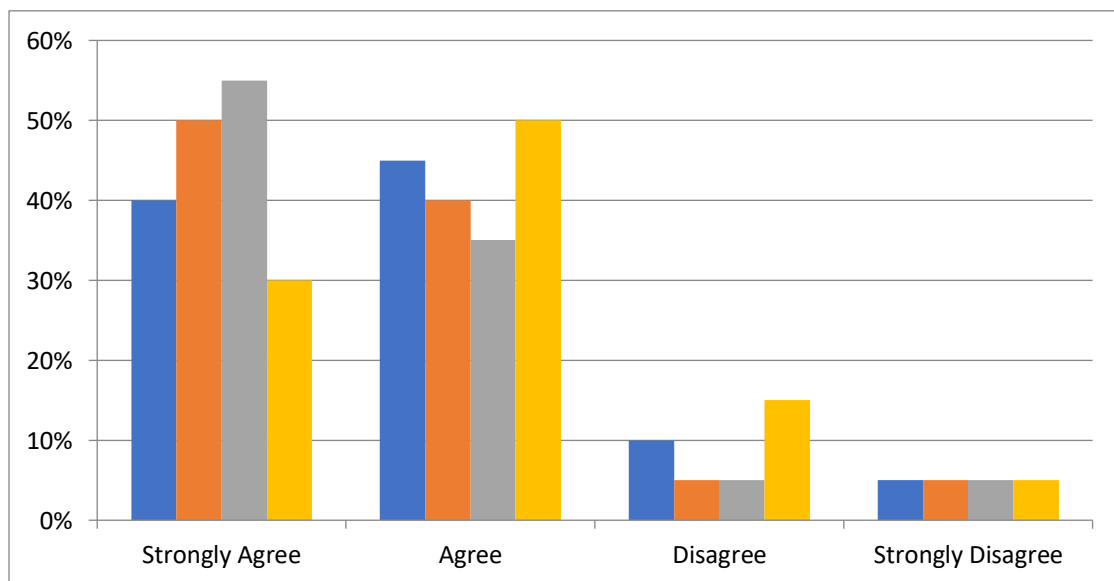


Table 1 show that most principals (85–95%) considered staff training, effective communication, and availability of emergency resources as essential crisis management strategies. Crisis simulation exercises were also recognised but with slightly less emphasis.

Table 2: Teachers' Perception of Crisis Management and Academic Performance

Crisis Management Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Implementation of conflict resolution techniques	60%	30%	5%	5%
Use of psychological support services for students	70%	20%	5%	5%
Coordination between schools and parents during crises	65%	25%	5%	5%
Availability of crisis intervention teams	75%	15%	5%	5%

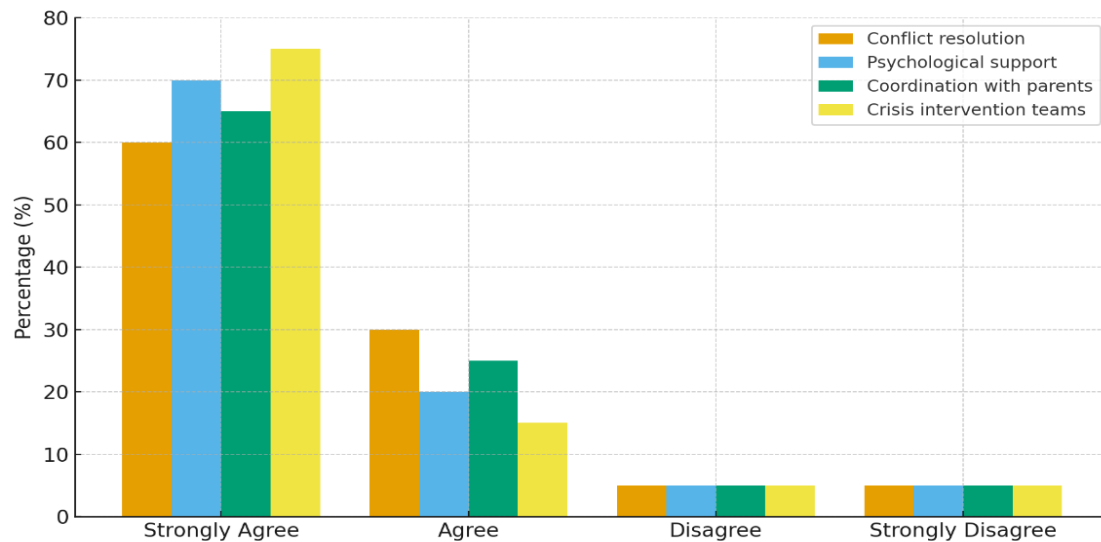


Table 2 shows that teachers strongly agreed on the importance of psychological support services (70%) and conflict resolution techniques (90%) in enhancing students' academic performance during crises. Coordination with parents and crisis intervention teams were also seen as vital strategies.

Table 3: Students' Academic Performance during Crisis Periods

Crisis Management Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly
Clear academic expectations	35%	50%	15%	—
Structured learning environments	50%	40%	10%	—
Access to additional tutoring	45%	45%	10%	—
Reduced academic workload	30%	55%	15%	—

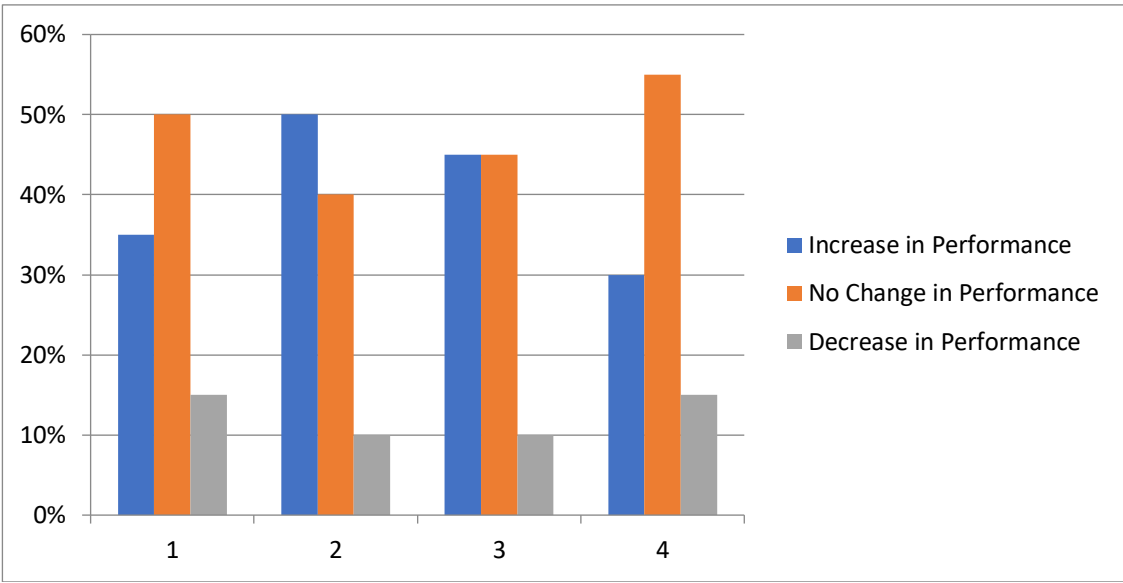


Table 3 indicates that clear academic expectations and structured learning environments had positive effects on over 85% of students. Access to tutoring was also beneficial, though not consistently available.

Table 4: Relationship between Crisis Management Strategies and Academic Performance

Strategy	Correlation (r)	Effectiveness
Training of staff and administrators	0.72	Highly effective
Effective communication	0.78	Very effective
Psychological support	0.85	Extremely effective
Availability of crisis teams	0.74	Effective

Table 4 shows a strong positive correlation between crisis management strategies and academic performance. Psychological support demonstrated the highest impact ($r = 0.85$), underscoring its importance in sustaining learning during crises.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that effective crisis management strategies are critical to sustaining, and in some cases enhancing, academic performance during periods of disruption in secondary schools. Among the strategies examined, psychological support emerged as the most influential factor, showing the strongest positive correlation with academic performance ($r = 0.85$). This underscores the well-established link between students’ emotional well-being and their capacity to learn, particularly in times of uncertainty and instability (Ugwu & Nwabuzo, 2024; Bashar & Yasin, 2023). Schools that offered counselling, peer support programmes, and stress-management workshops not only maintained academic stability but also recorded better student attendance and fewer behavioural problems. Communication practices also played a vital role. A strong correlation ($r = 0.78$) was found between transparent communication and student performance, confirming Nwankwo and Eze’s (2024) assertion that timely and accurate information reduces panic, absenteeism, and misinformation. In practice, schools that used multiple channels—such as text alerts, WhatsApp groups, and parent–teacher association meetings—were able to sustain learning schedules more effectively than those with weak communication systems.

Staff training and professional development also contributed significantly to effective crisis management. Principals and teachers who regularly attended crisis management workshops were more competent in reallocating resources, maintaining order, and ensuring

instructional continuity. This supports Olokoba et al.'s (2025) view that capacity building transforms crisis response from a reactive exercise into a sustainable institutional practice. Despite these strengths, the study also highlighted serious disparities. Schools without formal crisis intervention teams or standardised response protocols reported greater disruptions in learning. In many cases, reliance on untrained personnel and ad hoc measures led to delays in decision-making and inconsistent student support. This reflects Ohia's (2022) warning that without institutionalised frameworks, even well-intentioned responses may fail to protect academic continuity.

Overall, the findings suggest the need for a holistic approach to crisis management one that integrates safety protocols, psychosocial support, adaptive pedagogy, and community engagement. For example, schools that combined clear academic expectations with supplementary tutoring were able to keep students on track despite disruptions in normal curriculum delivery. This demonstrates that academic resilience is not determined by infrastructure alone but also by flexible teaching strategies and supportive relationships. Finally, the observed disparities in preparedness point to the necessity of policy intervention. The Enugu State Ministry of Education and related agencies should establish uniform crisis management guidelines, mandating minimum preparedness standards such as regular simulation drills, employment of professional counsellors, and formation of crisis intervention teams. With adequate government funding and stakeholder collaboration, such measures could reduce performance gaps between well-prepared and poorly prepared schools during crises.

Educational Implication of the Findings

The study holds implications for school principals, teachers, students, and policymakers:

1. Principals should integrate proactive crisis planning and mental health services into school management.
2. Teachers require training to provide academic and emotional support during disruptions.
3. Students benefit when schools maintain clear expectations and structured routines in crises.
4. Government and education agencies should standardise crisis management protocols across schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Principals and teachers should receive regular training on crisis prevention and response.
2. Schools should employ trained counsellors and provide continuous psychological support.
3. Crisis intervention teams should be established in all schools.
4. Stronger partnerships with parents, communities, and local authorities should be encouraged.
5. Government should fund safety infrastructure, counselling services, and crisis management training.

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