

Crisis Leadership Adaptability: Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Crisis leadership among global actors is a growing phenomenon in both the developed and the developing world. It is characterised by increasing failures in collaboration, innovation and adaptation to change as exemplified by the fuzzy global response to climatic change. It is critical that leaders learn to quickly adapt in times of crisis. Present research effort in mainstreaming academic discourse on leadership crisis adaptability (CLA) appears fairly unclear. Accordingly,

Purpose: This systematic literature review sought to examine the existing body of knowledge on crisis leadership adaptability, with a focus on identifying the antecedents and mapping out the status of methodologies, theories, and research gaps that are associated with the study of CLA.

Methodology: Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, a total of 41 articles were selected for analysis.

Findings: The findings suggest that social factors such as communication and emotional intelligence dominate as the antecedents, while the economic and cultural factors, community engagement and social capital have been barely considered in the study of CLA. Theoretically, current research on CLA appears to be anchored on largely three theories; the grounded theory, dynamic capabilities theory and contingency theory. Case studies and mixed methods emerged as the dominant approaches preferred for the study of CLA. Accordingly, there are glaring gaps

in the consideration of cultural factors as antecedents, particularly in the African and South American regions. A number of recommendations are suggested.

Keywords: Crisis leadership, leadership adaptability, crisis management, leadership flexibility

1.0. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, change and disruption are part of the routines of life, spiced by the recurring disasters, particularly those associated with climatic change attributed to the unabated human actions. Organizations experience dramatic change almost instantly and as a result, adaptability is evolving from being just a leadership trait to a necessity. Adaptable leaders understand that navigating and driving change is crucial in today's market (Calarco *et al.*, 2020).

In the last two decades, disasters have increasingly evolved into crisis, estimated to have affected millions of people in diverse proportions (Sahar *et al.*, 2022). Whereas the occurrence of some of these disasters is characterized as low-probability and impact, others are of high-probability and impactful on individuals, organizations, society, nations, and the entire planet (Koh, 2023). Some of these take the form of natural crisis (Letteney *et al.*, (2022) others are primarily triggered by human actions (WHO 2019). The Russia-Ukraine war appears fully orchestrated by human actions driven by tactical and strategic interest (Everly *et al.*, 2022). Ultimately, the net effects of such crisis pose significant danger to fauna and flora, business operations as well as the efficient functioning state apparatus Koh, *et al* (2023). During such times of crisis, the pressure on leadership adaptation to change is immense, emotionally driven and is most times overshadowed by personal feelings, anxiety, worry and stress which often undercuts the leaders' cognitive abilities, thereby culminating into tactical blunders (Koh, 2023).

According to Wu *et al.*, (2021), most crises are sudden, unpredictable and disruptive. Ingram *et al.* (2023) attempted to conceptualize adaptation in the perspective of organizational resilience. Indeed, the decisions and actions taken under conditions of crisis are most times delicate yet they must be taken anyway (Everly *et al.*, 2022). Overall, it calls for deeper appreciation of the antecedents, methods and theories that help explain CLA considering the short lead time for adaptation. Therefore, this systematic literature review sought to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the antecedents associated with the study of crisis leadership adaptability?
2. What theories support the study of crisis leadership adaptability?
3. What are the applicable methodologies in the study of crisis leadership adaptability?
4. What is the research gap in the study of crisis leadership adaptability?

1.1 Trajectory of Crises Worldwide

Crises have evolved significantly, now encompassing many events beyond traditional natural disasters, including pandemics, economic disruptions, geopolitical conflicts, social upheavals, and climate-driven events. For instance, natural disasters such as Australia’s 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, driven by climate change, caused widespread ecological and social disruption, affecting millions of hectares and displacing communities (Blaustein et al., 2023). Additionally, crises like the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted healthcare systems, halted economies, and revealed social inequalities on a global scale (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Letteney, 2021). Economic crises also feature prominently, as seen in global economic recessions and market volatility, often compounding other crises like health pandemics (Brethauer et al., 2020).

Worldwide crises are quickly becoming more frequent and severe, driven by climate change, political instability, and economic volatility (Gonzalez et al., 2022). A cross section of the triggers to some these crises is summarised in *Table 1* below. The increasing nature of complexity of these events stems from the interconnectedness of global systems, where localized crises can quickly escalate into global disruptions (Brethauer et al., 2020). Crises such as health pandemics overlapping with economic recessions create multifaceted challenges that prolong recovery and complicate management efforts (Brethauer et al., 2020). The convergence of multiple crises highlights the vulnerability of these global systems and the need for adaptive and resilient strategies (Letteney, 2021). This growing frequency of international and regionally based crises are most times driven by compounding factors such as climate change and economic volatility, indicating a trend toward more severe and complex emergencies (Singh et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic evidently stands out as a prime example of the increasingly disastrous nature of modern crises. It exposed weaknesses in global healthcare systems, amplified social inequalities, and severely affected minority and disadvantaged communities with higher mortality rates and economic losses (Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Table 1: A cross section of crises triggers and possibility of their occurrence

Crisis Trigger	Probability of occurrence
Financial/liquidity	0.23
Technology failure	0.23
Ops failure	0.2
competitive/marketplace disruption	0.19
Legal/Regulatory	0.16
cyber crime	0.16
Natural disaster	0.16
Leadership transition	0.15
supply chain	0.14
product failure	0.14
leadership misconduct	0.12
Ethical misconduct	0.11
Viral social media	0.09
Geopolitical disruptions	0.09
product integrity	0.09
workplace violence	0.08
shareholder activism	0.07
Humanitarian	0.07
Terrorism	0.05

Source: PWC Global Crisis Survey 2019

2.0. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a systematic literature review methodology and conducted a comprehensive search for secondary data from *ScienceDirect* and *Google Scholar* because of their overarching coverage of the study subject matter. To arrive at the relevant material the search terms included the following strings “crisis leadership adaptability,” “crisis leadership flexibility,” and “crisis leadership resilience.” Each search term was keyed differently the outcomes were recorded separately as summarized in the search results *Table 2* below.

Table 2: Summary of Data collection search criteria

Database	Search Terms	Steps	Search Criteria	Results	Included	Excluded
Science Direct	Crisis leadership adaptability	1st	Initial search	4,255		
		2nd	Filtered for publication years 2015-2023	2,354		1,901
		3rd	Research articles	1,613		741
		4th	specific journals (International Journal of Disaster Risk and the Journal of Business Research reduced)	127		1,486
		5th	open-access articles	21	21	106
	Crisis leadership flexibility	1st	Initial search	17,310		
		2nd	Limited by keywords in the title and abstract	19		17,291
		3rd	Restricted by research articles	14		5
		4th	Filtered for publication years 2015-2024	8	8	6
		Google Scholar	Crisis leadership adaptability	1st	Initial search	229,000
2nd	Restricted by Title			5		228,995
3rd	Filtered for publication years 2015-2024			5	5	
Crisis leadership resilience	1st		Initial search	1,240,000		
	2nd		Filtered for keywords in the title	13		1,239,987
			Filtered for publication years 2015-2024	10	10	3
	Total number of articles included				44	3
The final number of articles included				41		

The initial search command generated a total of 1,490,565 articles from Science Direct (21,565) while Google Scholar generated 1,469,000 articles. The search criteria were thereafter sequentially restricted according to; the year of publication, research articles, journals of interest and specifically those that directly related to the study subject matter where the *International Journal of Disaster Risk* and the *Journal of Business Research* turned out key. For accuracy reasons in collecting the relevant articles, the search was further restricted by both the abstract and title which helped deliver precision on the data required thereby excluding up to 1,490,521 articles. Further assessment and filtering for eligibility ultimately zeroed the search to 41 articles which were found eligible and accordingly included in the review for the study. Summary of the search process is illustrated in **Figure 1** below which acted as a checklist that guided the search. It helped ensure that the study relied on a scientific and verifiable procedure.

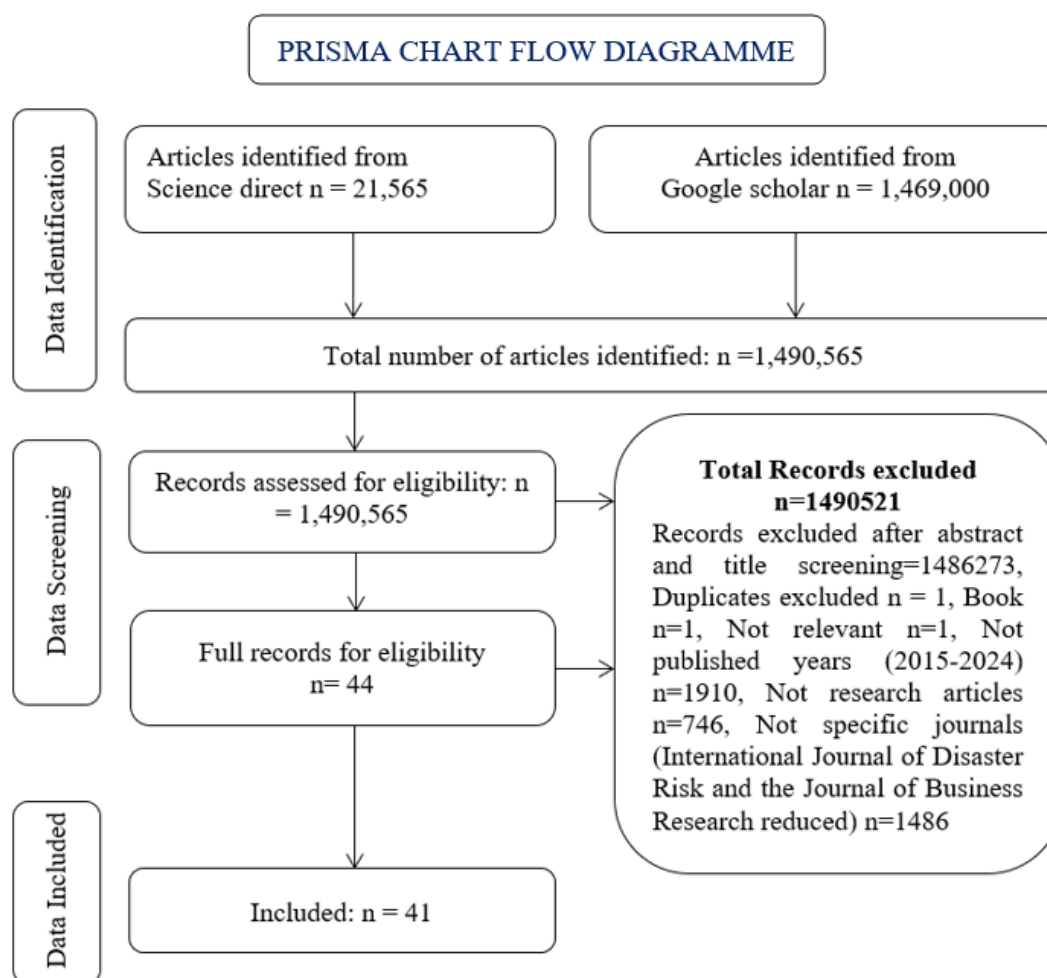


Figure 1: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)

3.0. JOURNAL SOURCES OF THE DATA ANALYSED

Considering the ever-increasing level of published material of all manner of quality, the degree of assessment that should the data sources subjected to is critical (Sandelands, 1996). Whereas scientific journal constitutes a communication or dissemination platform that is highly relied upon to spread scientific research findings, not all journals subject their publications to relatively high quality and uniform standards as those ranked A and B do. Also, whereas books play a critical role in popularize a huge number of ideas they most times do not concentrate on specific topical issues as journals do. As such the search was limited to articles from journals whose ranking was either A or B, as summarised in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Citation scores and percentage distribution of journals considered in the study

Journal	Journal Ranking	Citation Scores	%
International journal of disaster risk reduction	A	8.7	50
Journal of business research	A	20.3	23
Resources policy	A	13.4	3
Radiography	B	4.7	3
International journal of production economics	A	21.4	3
Procedia - social and behavioral sciences	B	6.5	3
Journal of surgical research	A	4	3
Journal of organizational change management	B	5.8	3
Journal of pragmatics	A	3.9	3
Journal of gastrointestinal surgery	B	4.3	3
Public relations review	A	8	3

From the **Table 3** above, it is evident that a greater number of publications (50%) were sourced from the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* which is an A ranked journal on the ABDC ranking. The other was the *Journal of Business Research* which constituted 23% of the articles analysed.

4.0 HIGHLIGHT OF THE GLOBAL TREND ON THE STUDY OF CLA

The trend of research on CLA is summarised under **Figures 2 and 3** below. It suggests that scholars are incrementally paying attention on the study of CLA. Table 4 indicates an even rise on research of CLA between 2016 and 2023 that rose exponentially between 2021 and 2023, possibly explained by the global crisis associated with Covid 19 pandemic. This reflects the increasing relevance and interest of researchers on crisis leadership adaptability. The majority of

research involved cross-country studies, possibly signifying the worldwide nature of characteristics if modern day crises. It is also suggestive of the fact that collaborative research efforts across nations and reflects strong international interest and cooperation in tackling crisis and in leading adaptability. Accordingly, the first world economies such as United Kingdom, Spain, Austria, and France each contribute significantly to the research effort on CLA. Several other countries such as Colombia, Indonesia, South Africa, the Philippines, South Korea, Syria, Slovenia, New Zealand, Nordic countries, Eastern European countries, Israel, the UAE, Qatar, Greece, and the USA contribute fairly to the overall publication output. This implies there is a significant involvement in the research output.

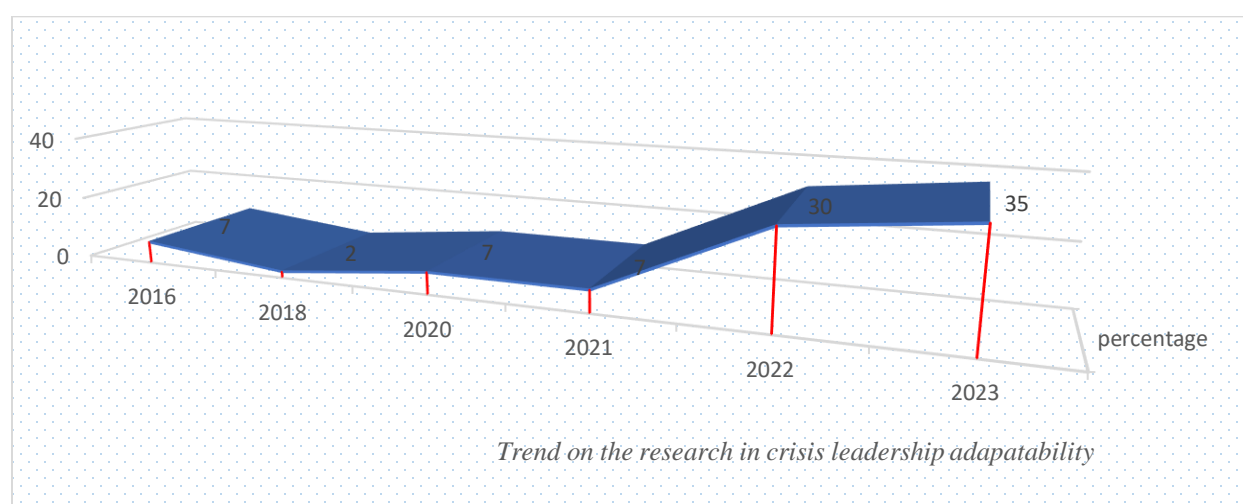


Figure 2: Research trends in the study of crisis leadership adaptability

The summary of findings presented in **Figure 3** below, point to the fact that researchers in Europe are paying close attention to explaining the dynamics of CLA. The researchers from Aisa closely follow the European trend, possibly influenced by the diversity of disasters experienced in the region. Such disasters range from weather changes to rampant earth quakes and occasionally destructive cyclones. The findings suggest that the research on CLA Europe contributes to about 32%, followed by Asia at 26%, Oceania and multi-continental publications contribute 13% and 16% respectively. It may be less surprising that both South America and Africa registered the least percentage contribution in research on CLA, as each posted about 3% possibly explaining the disjointed and often slow response to disasters.

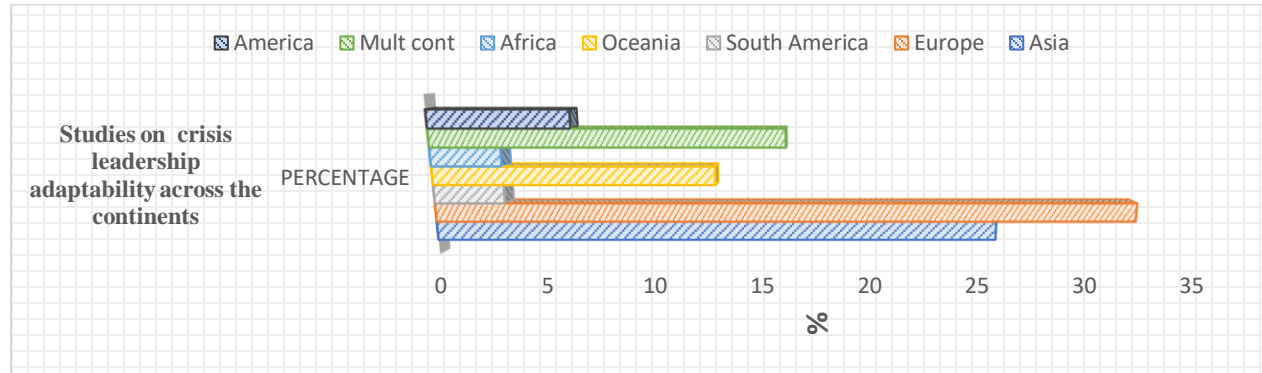


Figure 3: Studies of CLA across continents

Table 4: List of the journal articles and gray literature analyzed

No	Authors	Title	Journal	Continent	Drivers/factors/antecedents
1	Arifeen <i>et al</i>	How humanitarian assistance practices exacerbate vulnerability: Knowledges, authority and legitimacy in disaster interventions in Baltistan, Pakistan	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Sectarian affiliations, beliefs, and perceptions
2	Ates <i>et al</i>	Making obsolescence obsolete: Execution of digital transformation in a high-tech	Journal of Business Research	Europe	Strategic selectivity, re-focus, and ecosystem connectivity

		manufacturing SME			
3	Zeballos-Velarde <i>et al</i>	The role of ancestral practices as social capital to enhance community disaster resilience. The case of the Colca Valley, Peru	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	South America	Traditional techniques, disaster risk perception, ancestral values
4	Marjan Malesic		International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Europe	Improvisation and Emergent Action, coordination and networking.
5	Fernandez <i>et al.</i>	Managing digital transformation : The view from the top	Journal of Business Research	Europe	role of top managers, the role of IT/Digital
6	Edwards J <i>et al.</i>	Entrepreneurial strategy-making, corporate entrepreneurship preparedness and entrepreneurial sales actions: Improving B2B sales performance	Journal of Business Research	Oceania	Rewards/reinforcements, work discretion, time availability, entrepreneurial sales actions, Management support
7	Quy <i>et al</i>	Creative	International	Asia	Emotional Intelligence,

		adaptability and negative emotions of employees during a crisis: the role of servant leadership	Studies of Management and Organization		creative, adaptive
8	Elkady et al	What do emergency services and authorities need from society to better handle disasters?	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Europe	Communication and knowledge sharing needs, public perception, risk awareness levels, public capacities
9	Parsons et al.	Top-down assessment of disaster resilience: A conceptual framework using coping and adaptive capacities	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Oceania	Social character, economic capital, infrastructure and planning, community capital, access to services, governance, policy, leadership, research and development, social and community engagement
10	Onjewu et al.	The effect of government support on Bureaucracy, COVID-19 resilience and export intensity: Evidence from North Africa	Journal of Business Research	Europe	Government support, bureaucracy

11	Lines et al.	Progression through emergency and temporary shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing: A longitudinal case study from the 2018 Lombok earthquake, Indonesia	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Grant approval, shortage of labour and materials
12	Cole et al.	Managing city-scale slow-onset disasters: Learning from Cape Town's 2015–2018 drought disaster planning	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Africa	Uncertainty of timing and impact, complex governance challenges, limited capability, cascading risks
13	Dodd W et al.	The contributions of religious leaders in addressing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines: A	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Relationships between ICM staff and religious leaders, social infrastructure, efficient communication, leveraging community assets

		realist evaluation of the Rapid Emergencies and Disasters Intervention (REDI)			
14	Ro B, Garfin G	Building urban flood resilience through institutional adaptive capacity: A case study of Seoul, South Korea	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Autonomous change and leadership, non- structural and institutional measures
15	Abujaber et al	Towards a comprehensiv e framework for the design and implementatio n of agile Mobile Health Units in humanitarian crises: A case study in Northwestern Syria	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Clinic design, staff recruitment, services offered, accessibility, needs assessments, and travel routes
16	Marjan Malesic	Disaster response from a comparative perspective	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Europe	Centralized and hierarchical structure, leadership, command, coordination, standardization, and flexibility

17	Dohaney J <i>et al.</i>	Benefits, barriers, and incentives for improved resilience to disruption in university teaching	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Oceania	Perceptions & behaviours, competencies, community & culture, management & leadership, support & resources, infrastructure, communication
18	AlNuaimi	Mastering digital transformation : The nexus between leadership, agility, and digital strategy	Journal of Business Research	Asia	digital transformational, leadership and organizational agility
19	Van Well L, <i>et al.</i>	Resilience to natural hazards: An analysis of territorial governance in the Nordic countries	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Europe	Climate change, urbanization, globalization, and diffusion of new information technologies
20	Stratu-Strelet D <i>et al.</i>	Developing a theory of full democratic consolidation: Exploring the links between democracy and digital transformation in developing eastern European	Journal of Business Research	Europe	Level of technology, level of ICT usage by individuals, businesses, and government

		countries			
21	Leykin D et al.	The dynamics of community resilience between routine and emergency situations	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Asia	Leadership, collective efficacy, preparedness, place attachment, and social trust
22	Blaustein J et al.	Resilience policing and disaster management during Australia's Black Summer bushfire crisis	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Oceania	Role of local police officers in emergency response, vulnerability assessments, risk communication strategies, engagement with individuals with low social capital, and concerns about a large seasonal tourist population
23	AlNuaimi et al.	Mastering digital transformation : The nexus between leadership, agility, and digital strategy	Journal of Business Research	Asia	Digital transformational leadership and organizational agility
24	Singh A et al	The state of the art of strategic leadership	Journal of Business Research	Multicontinen tal	Encapsulating a wide range of high-level administrative (governance), engagement, innovation (improvement), operational, and supervisory tasks

25	Meza A et al.	Perspectives and strategies for LNG expansion in Qatar: A SWOT analysis	Resources Policy	Asia	-regulatory support, strategic partnerships.
26	Lemon M, et al	Radiographers ' organisational commitment and occupational stress: First Covid-19 wave	Radiography	Multicontinental	Organisation's structure, climate, information flow, role-related factors, relationships at work, perceived career development, external commitments
27	Gisquet E, Duymedjian R	Coping with chaos at Fukushima Daiichi: Bricolage in and through a space	International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	Europe	Hierarchical Power, movement and distance
28	Eggers F	Masters of disasters? Challenges and opportunities for SMEs in times of crisis	Journal of Business Research	America	Effectual reasoning, liability of smallness
29	Restrepo-Morales et al	In a similar vein, Sánchez (2020) analyzes the role of leadership in	Revista Digital de Estudios Organizacionales.	America	effective communication, role of innovation, collaboration, information technology, strategic planning,

		crisis management and the adaptability of organizations.			communications and social media, knowledge management, governance, leadership
30	Gonzalez L et al	The 2020 Pandemics: Lessons Learned in Academic Surgery and Beyond	Journal of America	-	
31	Kim J et al.	Organizational resilience: leadership, operational and individual responses to the COVID-19 pandemic	Journal of Multicontinen		psychological safety of employees, Human resource management practices, communication.
32	Wei J	I think and I know: Authority and solidarity in UK government Covid briefings	Journal of Multicontinen		Empathy, establish solidarity, maintain professionalism, and position themselves as authoritative sources of information
33	Brethauer et al.	Redesigning a Department of Surgery during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Journal of America		Communication plan, retaining personnel, redeployment
34	Monehin, & Diers-	Pragmatic optimism,	Public Relations	Multicontinen	Optimism, contingency planning.

	Lawson.	crisis leadership, and contingency theory: A view from the C-suite	Review		
35	Everly GS	Crisis Leadership (Resilience) Predicts Overall Leadership Effectiveness	International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience	America	Human character.
36	Letteney JS et al	Leadership, resilience, and sensemaking at Colorado State University during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Master's thesis at Colorado State University	America	Competence and integrity, perceived term, crisis, stakeholder, reputation, emotion, purchase intention, stock prices, word of mouth
37	Everly GS	Clueless incompetence: The constellation of influentialness, incompetence, and cluelessness represents an insidious plague in leadership and	International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience	America	vision/agenda, morality, effective persuasive communications, ability to create collaborative, supportive

		elsewhere.			
38	Roraback GD	Elementary School Principals' Perception of Stress and Resilience During Covid- 19	Ed.D. dissertation at Manhattanville College	America	Emotional and mental well-being
39	Koh CB	An Exploratory Study of Crisis Leadership Qualities: the Creative, Adaptive, Resilient, Emotional Intelligence (CARE) Survey	Eurasian Journal of Business and Management	Asia	Social skills, communication, motivation, problem- solving
40	Baradas SVA et al.	Influence of Crisis Management Team, Frugal Innovation, Quality of Communication, and Transformational Leadership on Crisis Adaptability	- Bachelor's Thesis at De La Salle University, Manila	Asia	Quality of communication, transformational leadership
41	Fernandes V et al.	Developing adaptability	International Journal of	Oceania	Emotional intelligence

and agility in Educational
leadership Management
amidst the
COVID-19
crisis:
Experiences
of early-career
school
principals

5.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Antecedents associated with the study of crisis leadership adaptability

The study findings illustrated in Figure 4 below suggests that social factors dominate current research as predictors of CLA. This may be due to differences in; culture, group values, social norms, behaviours and practices. Social factors account for more than 50% of research focus as predictors of CLA. Economic factors meanwhile follow in sequence but with slightly a lower performance rate of about 27% as predictors of crisis leadership adaption. Cultural factors for various unexplained reasons however, attract relatively lesser research attention, as it constitutes about 22% of the research effort treats them as antecedents of CLA. For example, Arifeen *et al.* (2021) demonstrate how sectarian affiliations in Pakistan legitimize crisis responses, while Zeballos-Velarde *et al.* (2023) link ancestral practices in Peru to heightened risk perception. These studies suggest that cultural norms such as collectivism, traditional knowledge directly influence leaders' adaptive strategies a dimension needing deeper integration into CLA frameworks.



Figure 4: Antecedents associated with studies on crisis leadership adaptability

5.2 State of theories applied in the study of crisis leadership adaptability

The pie chart below, **Figure 5**, suggests that results point to the fact that Grounded Theory is the most dominant approach in the study of CLA. Other theoretical frameworks almost uniformly applied to the study of CLA include the Dynamic Capability Theory, Realist Evaluation frameworks that generated novel guidelines for the study of CLA. Others considered pragmatic theoretical approaches, while some applied societal resilience and territorial governance frameworks. Additionally, the Democratic Consolidation Theory, Resilience Policing Model, New Institutional Theory (NIT), Contingency Theory and Competing Values Model (CVM), each set foot print in guiding discussion and research on the CLA.

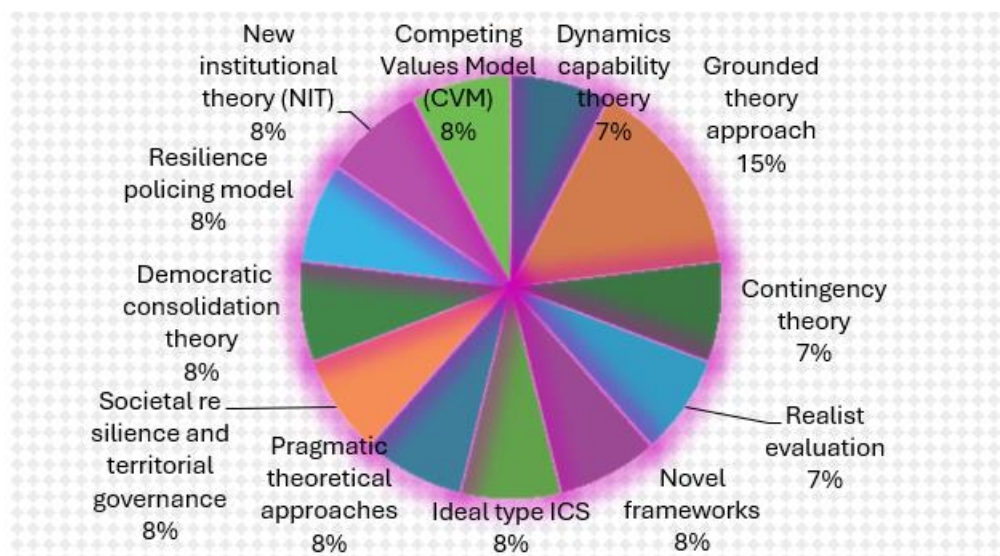


Figure 5: Level of application of the various theories in the study of CLA

The data in **Figure 6** below suggests that "case study" stands out as the most frequently applied methodology in the study of CLA, representing 24% of the studies. While the "mixed-methods approach" is the next most applied research approach in the study of CLA ranking at 21%, accordingly reflecting the popularity for combining the research techniques. The "Survey" methodology is about 17% of the research effort, while "online survey" constitutes about 7%. Other minimally applied methodologies, include "qualitative research," "Gioia methodology," "Realist evaluation," "Fuzzy-Set qualitative comparative analysis (Fsqa)," "The Conjoint Community Resiliency Assessment Measure (CCRAM)," "empirical case study," "bibliometric methodology," "structured questionnaire," and "multi-level analysis," each contribute 3% in the overall distribution.



Figure 6: Methodologies applied in the study of CLA

6.0. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Antecedents that determine Crisis Leadership Adaptability

6.1.1 Social factors

The study findings suggest that recent scholars have considered social factors as major predictors or antecedents of CLA and most specifically the ability to effectively communicate. The findings collectively highlight the pivotal role played by communication in crisis leadership.

Communication: Effective communication not only enables prompt and informed decision-making but also fosters trust and collaboration among stakeholders. This trust is essential for ensuring that all parties work towards common goals and cooperate effectively during stressful situations. Additionally, maintaining open lines of communication helps leaders understand the needs and concerns of their teams and stakeholders, thereby improving their responsiveness and adaptability.

Elkady et al. (2022) emphasizes that effective communication is vital in dealing with crisis leadership, as it facilitates timely responses toward the management of crises under circumstances of uncertainty. Dodd et al. (2023) further demonstrates that efficient communication contributes to Rapid Emergencies and Disasters Intervention (REDI). During crisis there is need for clear, accurate and continuous two-way communication (Brethauer et al., 2020). Dohaney et al. (2020) emphasises that coherent crisis communication strategy and effective communication channels define resilient institutions. Communication is either operational or strategic; it is operational when it gives people information that can enhance their

ability to cope with the current challenges, and it is strategic when it informs long-term organizational planning and response to disaster (Letteney et al., 2022).

Emotional intelligence: The other dominant social factor that the results reveal is emotional intelligence. This defines individuals’ understanding, recognition and evaluation of the meaning of the feelings and related actions ignited by the same feeling as guided by reason to resolve challenges (Fernandes et al., 2023). It is suggested that self-regulated leaders analyse their responses and behaviours and identify effective ways of achieving their intentions and purposes under specific circumstances, all of which are a function of emotional intelligence. Emotionally intelligent leaders are often better placed to inspire followers, create identity, and enhance commitment (Koh., 2023). Therefore, emotional intelligence is a critical skillset in times of high crisis. Studies on community behaviour emphasize that communities often exhibit an important role in this social factor during crisis management (Elkady et al. (2022). Community behaviour plays a significant role before, during and after the crisis. It is critical in shaping community preparedness and, later, in enabling coping mechanisms. As such, response to crisis that invokes community engagement easily leverages collective strengths for effective crises management. In the event of disasters, social networks become pivotal in easing community recovery. The concepts of bridging, bonding and social capital become critical for enhancing collective action at the peak of natural crises (Parsons et al., 2016). It thus follows that the responses to crisis are often socially constructed, politically driven and knitted in a broader society relation (Arifeen et al., 2021).

Overall, the significance and influence of social factors, with particular focus on communication and emotional intelligence shapes crisis leadership adaptability and is well-supported by empirical evidence. This insight provides a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge on crisis leadership adaptability and offers practical implications for enhancing leadership effectiveness in crises.

6.1.2 Economic factors

The results suggest that economic antecedents also play a relatively important role in crisis leadership adaptability. This finding underscores the necessity for leaders to understand and manage properly economics factors such as financial resources during crises. Effective management of economic factors is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of operations and in enabling a swift response to emergent challenges. The ability to adapt economically is further highlighted by the need for leaders to employ innovative financial strategies. This includes reallocating resources efficiently, identifying new revenue streams, and implementing cost-saving measures without compromising the quality of crisis response services. Leaders who

think creatively and apply innovative skills in managing economic factors are often better positioned to generate better response to crises.

The results however reveal that latest research capture relatively limited attention on factors associated with culture in explaining crisis leadership adaptability. Nevertheless, the findings however limited, appear to highlight the critical need for leaders to be culturally alive to the diverse values and practices within their organizations and communities that influence crisis leadership adaptability.

Cultural factors: In particular, religious beliefs and sectarian affiliations are suggested as being pivotal in the defining the legitimacy of the struggles faced by crisis leaders (Arifeen et al., 2021). Further, Zeballos-Velarde et al. (2023) provides evidence that suggests that individuals that implement traditional and ancestral techniques appear to possess a heightened perception of natural disaster risk. The study identifies significant differences in the perception of threats thereby designating safer areas based on previous experiences of disaster. Notably, the group with the highest risk perception often tend to practice ancestral techniques and are more risk averse due to the level of frequency in encountering natural disasters. They perceived greater threats to their homes, crops, and lives, and easily adapt by earmarking and designating safer zones during natural disasters. Therefore, the implied diverse cultural factors have the potential to shape leadership behavior and perceptions of legitimacy during crisis.

6.2. Theories applicable to the study of crisis leadership adaptability

6.2.1 Grounded Theory

The study results suggest that the most dominant theory applied that guided the study of crisis leadership adaptability was Grounded Theory. Grounded theory excels in guiding the development of new theoretical insights. This approach is precious in areas where the existing theories appear inadequate or non-applicable in explaining the status quo. It provides fresh insights and frameworks that are deeply rooted in real-world life observations. Fernandez *et al.* (2022) utilized a grounded theory approach to explore the evolving role of senior executives in talent management during digital transformation processes. Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology that guides the development of theory direct from data, rather than in testing pre-set hypotheses. Such an inductive approach is predominantly well-suited for circumstances where theoretical appreciation is limited or is less developed. Kim *et al.* (2024) applied the grounded theory approach to guide the synthesis of the processes through which organizational outcomes develop from the negative to positive indicators. This approach is

principally suited for examining complex circumstances or multi-level phenomena such as organizational resilience in times of crisis. However, its inductive nature often tends to limit its applicability in cases that require hypothesis testing or quantitative measurement.

6.2.2 Realist Evaluation

It is a framework that mostly works to guide the assessment of how programs work as well as the interaction of different components to shape the outcomes. Realist evaluation offers a theory-driven approach that tends to enrich studies on crisis leadership. This framework helps researchers assess interventions through a lens of what works, for whom should it work, the conditions it can work and why it works (Dodd *et al.*, 2023). However, due to its complexity and extensive requirement for data its application has been quite limited.

6.2.3 Dynamic Capabilities (DCS) Theory

This postulates that a firm's ability to adapt to rapidly changing environments by building, integrating and reconfiguring internal and external competencies, which is presently a less underutilized framework (Aylin *et al.*, 2022). **This theory is specifically more relevant in competitive and dynamic environments such that its application to crisis leadership could offer significant contributions. Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) is underutilized but highly relevant in a way that it explains how leaders reconfigure resources during crises for example Ates *et al.* (2022) on digital transformation in SMEs. Explicitly linking this theory to cultural or economic antecedents could unify CLA's fragmented theoretical landscape.**

6.2.4 Contingency Theory

This theory posits that the optimal performance of a firm is determined by various internal and external constraints which however have remained underexplored in the context of crisis leadership (Onjewu *et al.*, 2023). It highlights the importance of the leadership decisions in determining the success of the crisis and conflict response efforts. Its adaptability across different organizational contexts over the last three decades has been pronounced (Monehin *et al.*, 2020). However, further research is still required to understand how the different contingencies in the contemporary world interact and affect crisis leadership, especially in existing diverse cultural, organizational settings and the emerging environmental landscape. **It highlights the importance of leadership decisions in determining the success of the crisis and conflict response efforts. Onjewu *et al.* (2023) exemplify this through bureaucratic and government support dynamics during COVID-19, aligning well with contingency theory's premise.**

Other frameworks identified from the existing literature relate to the process of response to crises

through mobilization within humanitarian settings, with emphasis on a cyclical and iterative process that mainstreams feedback and flexibility (Abujaber *et al.*, 2021). These frameworks however appear to address the dynamic nature of crisis environments but require further empirical validation across different humanitarian contexts to establish their broader applicability.

6.3. The applicable methodologies to the study of crisis leadership adaptability.

6.3.1. Case study methodology

The study findings also suggest that the most frequently applied methodologies in the study of crisis leadership adaptability is the case study, possibly because it allows for detailed examination of specific circumstances in peculiar situations. In the literature, a case study is defined as an intensive study of a single unit to understand a larger class of similar units (Ates *et al.*, 2022). For reasons best associated with regional environmental dynamics, a significant number of these case studies have been conducted in Asia. Ro B *et al.* (2023) for instance employed a case study methodology of Seoul's flood risk management (FRM) to describe the city's efforts to build urban resilience. This idea was to influence the level of institutional adaptive capacity in South Korea. Similarly, Abujaber N *et al.* (2021) selected a case study methodology to explore the Mobile Health Units in the context of the Syrian conflict, illustrating a health system adaptation to meet the needs of all those individuals that had been negatively impacted by the war. While Lines *et al.* (2022) provided a longitudinal case study of the 2018 Lombok earthquake in Indonesia and offered an assessment of shelter progress over the first eight months among displaced populations in the seven villages that had been affected by the earthquake. Relatedly, in Australia, Blaustein J *et al.* (2023) conducted a case study on emergency management policing activities during the 2019 - 2020 Black Summer bushfire crises. **The notable case studies in Africa are epitomised by scholars such as Cole, H. D *et al.* (2021), who presented a case study of city-scale slow-onset disaster management and drew lessons from Cape Town's 2015–2018 drought disaster planning and management and offers benchmarks for related urban based crises management.**

A great deal of case studies on crisis leadership adaptability appears to have been conducted in Asia, highlighting the region's volatility to natural disasters and suggesting their focus on understanding and improving adaptive capacities in various contexts. Significant contributions have also been made in Australia and Africa, indicating a global interest in the subject of crisis leadership adaptability through detailed case analyses. It may be mostly applied to Asia due to the region's frequent exposure to a variety of crises, such as natural disasters, economic challenges, and geopolitical conflicts. This frequent exposure provides numerous real-life

examples to study, that suggest increased desire to appreciate and improve adaptive leadership strategies in response to these diverse and often complex situations.

6.3.2. Mixed-methods

The mixed-methods approach in the study of CLA features prominently in the current research methodology possibly because the approach tends to be comprehensive in the analyses of phenomena through its combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. Elkady S *et al.* (2022) adopted a mixed-methods approach by combining quantitative data (questionnaire) with qualitative data (interviews) in their research of conducted in Spain which facilitated a deeper appreciation of the complexities surrounding crisis leadership adaptability. Likewise, Dohaney J *et al.* (2020) applied a mixed-methods approach in a post-positivist pragmatic perspective in which they combined data generated from interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. Their study, conducted in New Zealand, categorized results into three distinct levels (individual, school/department, and institution) which supported the design and implementation of resilience-building strategies for academics and institutional leaders. Additionally, Van Well L *et al.* (2018) used a mixed-method approach to provide a comparative overview of the governance of natural hazards risks and further identified the needs and opportunities necessary for improving risk governance in the Nordic countries. Their study highlighted the benefits of integrating multiple data sources to enhance the understanding of crisis adaptability and for comprehensive information of policy development.

Therefore, mixed-methods approaches have been extensively used in the studies of crisis leadership adaptability across various continents, with notable examples registered in Europe (Spain), Oceania (New Zealand and Australia), and the Nordic countries. This is because the methodology allows researchers to adapt their approach based on the research question and context. **This diverse geographical application underscores the versatility and effectiveness of the approach in providing comprehensive insights particularly on crisis leadership adaptability. However, the dominance of qualitative case studies suggests a gap that could be addressed by incorporating more quantitative and longitudinal studies to enhance generalizability and temporal depth.**

6.3.3. Surveys and online surveys

Surveys and online surveys provide broad, generalizable data. The survey provides data from a large sample size while the interviews offer in-depth information from a small sample size Elkady S *et al* (2022). AlNuaimi, *et al* (2022) applied a survey to examine the relationships among digital transformational leadership, organizational agility, digital strategy, and digital

transformation which are good attributes for CLA. Edwards *et al* (2023) used an online survey to investigate organizational preparedness which is a critical feature of CLA. While Lines *et al* (2022) likewise applied a survey to generate an overview of post-disaster shelter provision and recovery process following an earthquake in Lombok.

Again, like it has been noted under the case studies methodology, a great proportion of research conducted on CLA is traceable to Asia, possibly because of the same reasons prior suggested relating to the region's volatility to natural disasters and its high population density, allowing large-scale data collection and comprehensive assessment of diverse perspectives and practices across varied cultural and socio-economic groups.

6.3.4. Qualitative Studies

The application of qualitative research on CLA is associated with ability to generate generalizable findings and interpreting discursive functions (Wei J, 2024). The bibliometric methodology utilizes quantitative tools to analyse bibliometric data (Singh A *et al*, 2023). Realist evaluation, employed by Dodd W *et al* (2023), is conceptualized as a theory-driven approach aimed at explaining programme mechanisms and the interaction between programme components in shaping implementation and outcomes.

Overall, integrating these methodologies could lead to more robust and actionable findings in crisis leadership adaptability research by providing a comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of the subject matter.

6.4. The research gap in the study of crisis leadership adaptability

Despite extensive research so far conducted in the area of CLA, there are still grey areas ranging from the need to test the role of cultural factors in influencing CLA. Cultural factors, although recognized as important, have significantly less scholarly attention. The findings suggest the need for substantial research effort on the impact of cultural factors, including traditional practices and religious affiliations, community perceptions and responses on CLA. Results from such studies would ultimately enable leaders incorporate cultural awareness into their crisis management strategies thereby enhancing their adaptability and legitimacy in diverse cultural settings, which could improve the overall crisis leadership effectiveness. **The findings suggest the need for substantial research effort on the impact of cultural factors, including traditional practices, religious affiliations, language, community identity, and localized governance structures, which shape leadership behavior and perceptions of legitimacy during crisis.**

Also, the most researched context presently relates to Europe and Asia and there appears to be insufficiency of attention on the status and nature of CLA in the African and South American contexts despite being hosts to a diversity of the crises. **This apparent information asymmetry appears to create a fairly imbalanced conceptualization of CLA. *Africa and South America remain critically underrepresented for instance, Cole et al. (2021) and Velarde et al. (2023) offer rare insights into drought resilience in Cape Town and ancestral practices in Peru, yet broader regional disparities persist. This gap limits understanding of how localized crises instability in Africa shape leadership adaptability.*** There is also a pressing need for empirical studies from Africa and South America to broaden the contextual relevance and diversify the global discourse on CLA.

It is also notable methodologically that studies on CLA tend to miss out the qualitative insights which would have otherwise fitted well with the assessment of the cultural factors. It is no wonder that studies on the same are deficient. While theoretically, save for the application of specific theoretical frameworks such as the dynamic capability theory which explores adaptability in an organizational context and points to the potential to explore how dynamic capabilities interact with organizational factors, it has been insufficiently applied to the study of culture and CLA. Accordingly, there is need to explain the leadership crisis in the lenses of resilience so as to draw insights on how leaders can sustain their mental / psychological responses to challenges of crises.

7.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and the results of antecedents, theories, methodologies, and research gaps in crisis leadership adaptability, several key recommendations are proposed in enhancing crisis leadership adaptability. These recommendations are proposed to address identified gaps and leverage the critical factors that contribute to successful crisis leadership.

7.1. Enhance Communication Skills in Leadership Training Programs

Organizations should incorporate advanced communication skills training into leadership development programs for effective leadership preparedness to handle adaptation before and during crisis. The findings indicate that effective communication is a crucial social factor that significantly influences crisis leadership adaptability (Elkady S *et al.*, 2022). To address this need, the training programs should include comprehensive modules on crisis communication, active listening, and transparent information dissemination. Incorporating real-world simulations and role-playing exercises will provide leaders with practical experience that allows them to refine the adaptation skills, thereby improving the crisis management abilities.

7.2. Promotion of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is vital for managing crisis, particularly in terms of self-regulation, empathy, and understanding others' emotional responses (Fernandes et al., 2023). Leadership development initiatives should integrate workshops and coaching sessions focused at enhancing emotional intelligence. Additionally, tools such as emotional intelligence assessments and feedback mechanisms ought to be utilized to help leaders identify areas for improvement and track progress the adaptability of leadership during before and during times of crises. Professional development programs should include workshops and coaching sessions focused on developing these competencies. Tools such as emotional intelligence assessments and feedback mechanisms should be utilized to help leaders identify areas for growth and track their progress.

7.3. Strengthening Strategies on Community Engagement

There appears to be a good relationship between community engagement and successful crisis management. As such it is important that leaders should prioritize the development of community engagement strategies to leverage the collective strengths of communities during crises. Research highlights the importance of community involvement in all phases of crisis management, from preparation to recovery Elkady S *et al* (2022). To strengthen community engagement, organizations should establish outreach programs, foster relationships with community stakeholders, and involve community members in crisis planning and response activities.

7.4. Utilization of social capital in enhancing crisis response

Most organizations find themselves in a predicament that calls for immediate action in harnessing social capital that calls for instant mobilization from the existing social networks to support the various crisis recovery efforts. Social networks are pivotal in facilitating collective action and resource sharing during post-crisis recovery (Parsons M *et al.*, 2016; Arifeen A et al., 2021). To leverage social capital, organizations should create platforms for networking and collaboration among community members and stakeholders and should encourage the development of support groups and partnerships for mutual aid during crises.

7.5. Development of financial resilience and innovation strategies

Leaders at times of crisis should focus on building financial resilience and fostering innovative problem-solving approaches. Economic factors, such as financial stability and innovation, are essential components of crisis leadership adaptability Edwards J *et al* (2023). To enhance financial resilience, leaders should implement financial planning and risk management strategies,

ensuring the organization's stability during crises. Promoting creative problem-solving can further help leaders overcome economic challenges effectively during crises.

7.6. Fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity

Organizations should promote cultural awareness and sensitivity training as a key component of leadership development. Cultural factors play a vital role in crisis leadership, and an understanding of diverse values and practices can enhance leadership effectiveness (Arifeen A *et al.*, 2021). Incorporating cultural competency training into leadership programmes and encouraging leaders to engage with diverse communities will enable them to navigate cultural complexities during crises.

7.7. Expand research in underrepresented regions

To achieve a more comprehensive global understanding of CLA, research efforts must increase in underrepresented regions such as Africa and South America. The existing literature shows a significant imbalance in regional contributions, with most research originating from Europe and Asia (Elkady S *et al.*, 2022; Malešič, M., 2020). Expanding research initiatives in these regions will provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and contexts of crisis leadership in diverse global settings.

8.0. CONCLUSION

This study examined the antecedents, theories, methods, and gaps in the study of crisis leadership adaptability. Overall, the findings highlight that communication, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness are essential antecedents that significantly impact crisis leadership adaptability. The frequent use of case studies and grounded theory provides a strong foundation for advancing new theories and practical frameworks. Despite the increasing interest and recognition of crisis leadership adaptability, gaps remain in the understanding of the interplay of various influencing factors, most specifically the cultural and economic factors. This contributes to the existing body of knowledge on crisis leadership adaptability and offers practical recommendations to build a more resilient leadership capable of effectively managing future crisis.

8.1. Limitation

This study's limitations arise from its observational design, which may be subject to certain errors. These risks include selection bias, insufficient blinding, and selective outcome reporting. Additionally, variations between the studies analyzed could result in inconsistencies and

potential inaccuracies. Another challenge is publication bias, where studies with statistically significant results are more likely to be published, potentially overshadowing equally valuable studies with non-significant findings. Such biases and inconsistencies could affect the overall understanding of crisis leadership adaptability, underscoring the need for careful interpretation and further investigation to improve robustness and reliability in this area of research. Furthermore, publication bias may have distorted the visibility of studies with non-significant findings, and future research should explore systematic inclusion of diverse study types and sources.

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