

# Relationship Between Principals' Adversity Quotient and Leadership Styles in Secondary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

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**Abstract-** The study investigated the relationship between principals' adversity quotient and leadership styles in secondary schools in Delta State. Five research questions guided the study. Correlation research design was utilized for the study. The population of the study comprised 414 principals from 414 public secondary school in Delta State. The sample was made up of 290 principals from 414 secondary schools. The sample was composed through systematic sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection for the study. The instruments are: Questionnaire on Principals' Adversity Quotient (AQP) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The instruments were validated using three experts. Reliability indexes of 0.88 for AQP and 0.85 for MLO were obtained using Cronbach's Alpha. Out of the 290 pairs copies of Questionnaire (AQP and MLO) distributed, 282 copies were duly completed and retrieved representing 97.2% return rate. Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. The results of the study showed that adversity quotient of secondary school principals were significantly related to democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership style. It was also reported the need for a leadership training and development design by management of secondary education board to enhance leaders who have been found with low adversity quotient since adversity quotient is positively related to the leadership styles discussed. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended, among others, that secondary school principals should be made to be aware of the relevance of having high adversity quotient as it will likely facilitate their adoption of appropriate leadership styles.

**Index Terms-** Principals, Leadership styles, Adversity, Adversity Quotient and Secondary Schools.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Basically educational institutions are often forced to deal with numerous internal and external adversities in their operation. The way and manner these adversities are responded to can be determined by the leadership style of the principal who is the recognized head of the school. Leadership is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals

(Alberto, 2016). As the recognized leader in a school, the principal has a lot of responsibilities and accountability in the organization. The principal's position is critical to the organizational development, and academic growth of the students, because he is usually the main source and the driving force that sustains the welfare of the school (Kotirde, Yunos & Anaf, 2014).

The principal is concerned with the quality of instruction as well as the students' welfare, moral and spiritual tone of the school, maintenance of discipline, working with teachers to meet curriculum standards and set goals and objectives, academic achievement and improvement of the school, communicating the school's mission, goals and policies to teachers, students, parents and community, directing and delegating (where necessary) school operation, overseeing staff performance and supervising students' behaviour (Habegger, 2008). The above duties associated the position of principal bring him into contact with teachers, students, parents, education ministry and the society at large.

The constant interaction principals have with different people, stakeholders and situations within and outside the walls of their school and the constantly changing environment provide many adversities for them to contend with. Advances in technology, changes in educational policy, financial limitations, changes in student demographics, and the increased call for accountability are some factors that require responses in the field of education by education managers in this case the principals (Abdullahi & Onasanya, 2010; Peter, 2017 and Uzoma, 2010). In the same vein, Canivel (2010) argues that poor funding, academic achievement, high risk behaviour among students, and violence are some of the issues that provide assortment of adversities in education.

Dohrenwend (1998) refers to adversity as a calamitous or disastrous experience and a condition of suffering, destitution, or affliction. He further pointed out that adversity may apply to conjunction of events that is the cause of unhappy change of fortune or to an ensuing state of distress. Johnston and Scholler-Jacquish (2007) precisely define adversity as great trial, hardship and tribulation. Stoltz and Weihenmayer (2010) categorize adversity into two: (a) inner adversity which is the internal, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual states that cause hardship; (b) outer adversity in their view are things that occur externally that cause difficulty like militancy, terrorism, kidnapping and accident during excursion or field trip. In view of

the above definitions, the researchers are of the view that adversity is difficult situation, affliction, misfortune or tragedy which emanate from within and outside the school that confront the principals in the course of performing their duties.

The challenges engendering adversities in education, to a reasonable extent, apply to the Nigerian situation and Delta State in particular. Adeoti (2012) and Edokpolo (2011) opine that currently secondary schools are faced with many issues and emergent adversities which educational leaders must contend with, namely; poor academic performance of students that affects the performance of the school as a whole, increasing dropout rates, drug addiction, early marriage, parental problems, bullying, indiscriminate use of mobile phones and indiscipline are the most common. Wallington (2004) asserts that how a leader responds to these adversities not only affects the leader's performance but also the performance of those being led. Learning to deal with adversity in the school in one's life career is an essential element of effective leadership.

To overcome the adversities internal and external to the school, it then becomes imperative for school administrators to possess the relevant qualities necessary to be successful despite adversities. One of such qualities is high adversity quotient. According to Stoltz (2000), adversity quotient is the measure of one's ability to prevail in the face of difficulty, misery and misfortune. It explains how one responds to adverse situations, and how one rises above them. He asserts that life is like mountain climbing and that people are born with a core human drive to ascend. Ascending means moving toward one's purpose no matter the challenges. Adversity quotient is the underlying factor that determines one's ability to ascend in the face of misfortune, suffering and difficulty. Stoltz (1997) model indicates that one's adversity quotient, the ability to prevail in the face of adversity, comprises four interrelated constructs embodied by the acronym, CORE: C stands for control, O for ownership, R for reach and E for endurance.

Stoltz asserts that these four dimensions will determine a person's overall adversity quotient. Control measures the ability of the person's perceived control over adverse situations. It is how one exercises control over difficulties in life. People who respond to adversity positively will most likely have a greater performance over those who take adverse situations as a worse scenario to encounter. The more control one has, the more likely one has to take positive actions. This implies that the more control principals have over adverse situations, the more likely they will take positive actions that will enhance the achievement of the school goals and objectives.

Ownership is the extent to which the person owns, or takes responsibility for the outcomes of adversity or the extent to which the person holds himself accountable for improving the situation. People with low adversity quotient in the ownership dimension are most likely to blame others rather than take responsibility for whatever negative outcome of a given adverse situation. Therefore principals with high adversity quotient in the ownership dimension will enhance their accountability, control the school situation and motivate positive actions among the staff (academic and non-academic) and students despite adversities for the smooth running and overall improvement of the school rather than trade blames.

Reach evaluates the degree to which adversity gets into other areas of one's life. A person with high adversity quotient in

the reach dimension will keep adversity in its place, make adverse events and difficulties more manageable. Those people with low adversity quotient will allow adversities affect other aspects of their life leading to frustration, bitterness, failure, misfortune and may lead to poor decision making. Principals' ability to keep the fallouts under control and limit the reach of adversity is essential for efficient and effective problem solving in a school situation.

Endurance is the perception of time over adverse situations and how their consequences will last or endure. This implies how long the effect of an adverse event endures and so will likely impact negatively on the principal in the future. Seeing beyond even enormous difficulties is an essential skill for maintaining hope. Principals with high adversity quotient in the endurance dimension have the uncanny ability to see past the most seemingly interminable difficulties and maintain hope and optimism despite adversities encountered in the past. They will not be afraid to venture into areas where they have failed in the past.

Educational leader's (in this context, the principal) adversity response plays a crucial role in the development of successful school climates and student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989 & Stoltz, 2000). A principal who possesses sufficient adversity quotient will more likely respond positively to educational adversity and lessen the negative impact it may have on teacher performance, student achievement and the overall development of the school. Therefore, failure of school administrators to face the adversities associated with their duties may result in more serious problems that can have detrimental effects on the success of students, teachers, parents, other stakeholders and even the whole educational institution. For this reason, adversity quotient is an important quality in principals' performance of their leadership roles and their choice of leadership styles.

Leadership styles have been defined in diverse ways. Abu-Hussein (2012) refers to leadership style as something that characterizes a specific person throughout different situations. However, Cherry (2015) provides a more detailed definition which views leadership style as a leader's characteristic behaviour when directing, motivating, guiding and managing groups of people. Consequently, leadership style, in this study, is seen by the researchers as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people.

Clark (2015); Johannson (2014); Murray (2015); Raza (2015) and Turnock (2012) among others have identified different leadership styles. One of the most comprehensive reviews was that provided by Johannson (2014) and Raza (2015) who discussed fifteen different leadership styles namely transformational leadership, autocratic leadership, transactional leadership, bureaucratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire, facilitative/ participative leadership, situational leadership, charismatic leadership, visionary leadership, servant leadership, coaching leadership, strategic leadership, cross-cultural leadership and team leadership. Scholars have identified some leadership styles adopted by secondary school principals. Prominent among them are: democratic, autocratic, laissez-fair, transactional and transformational leadership styles which among others are used by leaders in educational institutions (AlFahad, AlHajri & Alqahtani, 2013). Wilson (2017) upholds the view that democratic, autocratic, laissez-fair, transactional and transformational leadership styles are commonly used by principals of secondary schools.

The democratic leader builds consensus through participation. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "What do you think?" The democratic style is most effective when the leader needs the team to buy into or have ownership of a decision, plan, or goal, or if he or she is uncertain and needs fresh ideas from qualified teammates (Benincasa, 2012). Principals who are democratic in their style of leadership tend to build consensus in decision-making by consulting the staff, students and parents during Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings in administering the school. Autocratic leadership refers to a system that gives full empowerment to the leader with minimal participation of the followers. Power and decision-making reside in the leader (Mulisa, 2015). Principals with autocratic styles tend not to consult before entrenching new reforms or making decision in schools. Laissez-faire Leadership is used to describe leaders who leave their employees to work on their own; leaders are hands-off and allow group members to make the decisions.

Abu-Hussain (2012) sees transactional leadership as one that uses rewards and incentives to effect motivation. It involves an exchange process between leader and subordinate. It views the leader-follower relationship as a transaction. By accepting a position as a member of the group, the individual has agreed to obey the leader. In most situations, this involves the employer-employee relationship, and the transaction focuses on the follower completing required tasks in exchange for monetary compensation.

Transformational leadership allows for the development and transformation of people. It is the process in which the leader and employee support each other to reach a high level of moral and supportive spirit (Spahr, 2015). Cherry (2006) observes that some of the key characteristics of transformational style of leadership are the abilities to inspire followers and to direct positive changes in groups. Transformational leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate. Principals who are transformational leaders are not only committed to helping the school achieve its goals, but also to helping group members (staff and students) fulfil their potential.

Principals being the recognized leader of the school play significant roles in adopting leadership styles as they tend to build highly aligned teams who have high levels of motivation and enthusiasm in the face of emergent and growing adversities plaguing secondary schools in Nigeria and Delta State in particular. In northern Nigeria, terrorism (Boko Haram sect), herdsmen attack, abduction of students (particularly females), teachers and outright killing of some, suicide bombing of schools leading to destruction of school facilities and the likes are issues of adversities principals contend with. In the south, particularly Delta state, herdsmen attack, militancy, violence, cultism, kidnapping are some of the adversities principals contend with. Duze and Ogbah (2013) and Ogbugo-Ololube (2016) have identified aggressive attitudes, engagement in high risk behaviour such as weapon carrying, drug and alcohol use by students, gang involvement, physical violence and poor academic achievement as issues of adversities principals in Delta State have to deal with as they provide leadership for the school.

Adversity quotient is the measure of one's ability to prevail in the face of difficulty, misery and misfortune. Stoltz advocates that these four dimensions will determine a person's overall adversity quotient. Somebody who responds to adversity

positively will most likely have a greater performance over one who takes adverse situations as a worse scenario to encounter. The more adversity quotient one has, the more likely one has to take positive actions. This implies that the more adversity quotient principals have over adverse situations, the more likely they will adopt leadership styles that will enhance the achievement of the school goals and objectives in the midst of adversities confronting the schools. Given the growing concern about the level adversities bedeviling schools in Delta State, it seems as if principals have not considered their adversity quotient in relation to the style of leadership they adopt as they work daily towards attainment of the school goals in the face of adversities. Hence, this study aims to ascertain the relationship between principals' adversity quotient and leadership styles in secondary schools in Delta State.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today's school environment seems to be plagued with numerous adversities. For instance, schools in Delta State are known to have cases of insecurity, teenage pregnancy, cultism, poor academic performance, poor funding, use of prohibited drug substance, physical violence and herdsmen attack. These are issues of adversities that principals of secondary schools in Delta State seem to constantly contend with. There is need for schools to evaluate the capacity of their principals to remain focused and strong in the midst of adversity. Previous studies carried out in foreign countries have shown that personal qualities such as adversity quotient of principals influence leadership styles. Therefore certain personal qualities of the principals such as high adversity quotient are required to adopt leadership styles for the school's success, particularly in the face of emerging adversities which principals have to contend with. There seems to be lack of existing knowledge in secondary schools in Delta State of a conceptual model that takes into consideration the relationship between the principal's personal qualities, expressed in degree of control over adverse situations and his leadership styles. Hence, this work sets out to investigate: principals adversity quotient and its relationship with leadership styles among secondary school principals in Delta State.

## III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between principals' adversity quotient and leadership styles in secondary schools in Delta State. Specifically, the study determined the following:

1. The relationship between principals' adversity quotient and democratic leadership style in secondary schools in Delta State.
2. The relationship between principals' adversity quotient and autocratic leadership style in secondary schools in Delta State
3. The relationship between principals' adversity quotient and laissez-faire leadership style in secondary schools in Delta State
4. The relationship between principals' adversity quotient and transactional leadership style in secondary schools in Delta State

- The relationship between principals' adversity quotient and transformational leadership style in secondary schools in Delta State.

#### IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

- What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and democratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?
- What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and autocratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?
- What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and laissez-faire leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?
- What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and transactional leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?
- What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and transformational leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

#### V. METHOD

Correlation survey was adopted for the study. The area of the study is Delta State. Delta State is one of the states in the South- south geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study population comprised 414 principals in the 414 public secondary schools in

Delta State. Systematic sampling technique was used to draw the sample of 285 principals for the study. Two sets of questionnaire titled "Adversity Quotient Profile (AQP)" and "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)" were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by experts. The reliability of the instrument was established. The data used for computing the reliability indices were obtained from copies of the questionnaire administered on a sample of 20 principals in Anambra State. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability indexes yielded 0.88 for AQP and 0.85 for MLQ respectively. The administration of the instruments was done by the researchers together with three research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Delta State using direct administration method. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions. In answering the research questions, the coefficient (r) and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the interpretation of correlation coefficient by Best and Kahn (2003, p.388) as shown: .00 to .20 for negligible; .20 to .40 for Low; .40 to .60, for moderate, .60 to .80 for substantial; .80 to 1.00 for high to very high respectively.

#### VI. RESULTS

##### Research Question One:

What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and democratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

**Table 1. Pearson's Correlation between adversity quotient scores and democratic leadership style scores of principals**

	N	Adversity Quotient	Democratic Leadership	Remark
Adversity Quotient	282	1	.390	
Democratic Leadership	282	.390	1	Low Positive Relationship

The above table shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r(282) = .390$ . This indicates that there is a low positive relationship between adversity quotient scores and democratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

##### Research Question Two

What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and autocratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

**Table 2. Pearson's Correlation between adversity quotient scores and autocratic leadership style scores of principals**

	N	Adversity Quotient	Democratic Leadership	Remark
Adversity Quotient	282	1	.359	
Autocratic Leadership	282	.359	1	Low Positive Relationship

As shown in table 2, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r. (282) = .359$ . This is an indication that a low positive relationship exists between adversity quotient scores and autocratic leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

**Research Question Three**

What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and laissez-faire leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

*Table 3. Pearson's Correlation between adversity quotient scores and laissez-faire leadership style scores of principals*

	N	Adversity Quotient	Laissez-faire Leadership	Remark
Adversity Quotient	282	1	.437	Moderate Positive Relationship
Laissez-faire Leadership	282	.437	1	

As shown in table 3, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r. (282) = .437$ . This shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between adversity quotient scores and laissez-faire leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

**Research Question Four**

What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and transactional leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

*Table 4. Pearson's Correlation between adversity quotient scores and Transactional leadership style scores of principals*

	N	Adversity Quotient	Transactional Leadership	Remark
Adversity Quotient	282	1	.289	Low Positive Relationship
Transactional Leadership	282	.289	1	

Table 4 shows the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r. (282) = .289$ . This is an indication that a low positive relationship exists between adversity quotient scores and transactional leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

**Research Question Five**

What is the relationship between adversity quotient scores and transformational leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

*Table 4. Pearson's Correlation between adversity quotient scores and Transformational leadership style scores of principals*

	N	Adversity Quotient	Transformational Leadership	Remark
Adversity Quotient	282	1	.417	Moderate Positive Relationship
Transformational Leadership	282	.417	1	

Data analysis in Table 5 shows the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r. (282) = .417$ . This indicates that a moderate positive relationship exists between adversity quotient scores and transformational leadership style scores of principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

## VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of this study showed that there was a significant positive relationship between adversity quotient and democratic leadership style of principals. This findings is not consistent with the findings reported by Napire (2013) who found that there was no significant relationship between adversity quotient and democratic leadership style of elementary school principals. The difference in the findings may be due to limited sample size, Napire used 49 elementary school principals while this present study used 282 principals.

It was also found out that there was a significant positive relationship between principals' adversity quotient and their use of autocratic leadership style. This is finding is not in agreement with previous findings reported by Napire (2013) and Canivel (2010). The difference may be due to the use of small sample sizes while Napire used 49 elementary school principals and Carnivel used only 40 principals of private schools. The geographical disparity may also be a factor as cultural differences may also account for the differences in principals rating and perceptions of their adversity quotient and their leadership style.

The analysis of findings revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between principals' adversity quotient and their laissez-faire leadership style. This does not agree with previous studies carried by Napire (2013) who found no significant relationship between adversity quotient and principals leadership styles. The current finding was also at variance with the findings reported by Tigchelarr and Khaled (2015) who found no significant relationship between adversity quotient and transactional leadership among Egyptian businessmen. Issues of small size may have accounted for the difference in findings as they also used only 80 businessmen.

Another finding was that there was a significant positive relationship between principals' adversity quotient and transactional leadership style. This finding is in line with the previous results presented by Aquino (2013) who reported a significant positive relationship between adversity quotient and transactional leadership style. This suggests that when leaders exhibit adversity quotient trait, their use of transactional behaviour increases. This finding is also consistent with the finding recently reported by Bautista, Pascua, Tiu and Vela (2016) who found that adversity quotient is significantly related to leadership styles of student leaders. However, the current finding contrasts with the finding by scholars such as Canivel (2010) and Napire (2013).

It was also found that there was significant positive relationship between adversity quotient and principals' transformational leadership style. This finding is in agreement with the findings reported by some scholars, Bautista, Pascua, Tiu and Vela (2016) who found that adversity quotient is significantly related to leadership styles of student leaders. This suggests that there is the likelihood that principals' display of adversity quotient will increase their use of transformational leadership style. However, this study contrasts with the findings of other scholars: Aquino, 2013; Canivel, 2010; Napire, 2013; Tigchelarr and Khaled, 2015 who reported that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. ). One of the possible reasons for this difference may be the small sample sizes used by these researchers.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to ascertain the relationship between principals adversity quotient and democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership styles. From the findings derived from the analysis of data, it was concluded as follows:

1. Adversity quotient of secondary school principals was significantly related to their democratic leadership style.
2. Adversity quotient of secondary school principals was significantly related to their autocratic leadership style.
3. Adversity quotient of secondary school principals was significantly related to their laissez-faire leadership style.
4. Adversity quotient of secondary school principals was significantly related to their transactional leadership style.
5. Adversity quotient of secondary school principals was significantly related to their transformational leadership style.

## IX. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have implication for leadership development in secondary schools in Delta State and beyond. Considering that adversity quotient is positively related to democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership styles, leadership development efforts both in the secondary schools and by the secondary school management board may need to adapt strategies for the development of adversity quotient in school leaders.

## X. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings that emerged from this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Secondary School principals in Delta state should be made to be aware of the relevance of having high adversity quotient as it will likely facilitate their adoption of appropriate leadership styles. This can be done through a symposium or seminar on the need for increased adversity quotient in the management and leadership of secondary school.
2. Policy makers should develop policies relative to training of prospective principals before ratifying their appointment in the area of adversity quotient, since adversity quotient is associated with leadership styles, to prepare them for the task and difficulties inherent in their work and in-service training of Secondary school principals should be incorporated into it also.

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