

The Decision-Making Approaches of School Leaders at Parang West District, Division of Sulu: Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT. This study investigated the decision-making approaches of school leaders in Parang West District, Division of Sulu, as perceived by public elementary school teachers. It aimed to determine the extent to which school leaders demonstrate decision-making practices in terms of problem identification and analysis, participation and involvement, transparency and communication, and implementation and follow-up. It also examined differences in teachers' perceptions when grouped according to demographic variables and explored the relationships among the dimensions of decision-making. A descriptive–correlational research design was utilized, involving 100 teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation. The results revealed that school leaders consistently exhibit effective decision-making practices, with all dimensions rated at a high level. Participation and involvement and problem identification and analysis obtained the highest ratings. Significant differences were found in selected dimensions when grouped according to gender, civil status, and length of service, while age and educational attainment showed no significant differences. Furthermore, strong positive correlations were identified among all dimensions, particularly between participation and involvement and implementation and follow-up, as well as between transparency and communication and implementation and follow-up. The findings suggest that effective decision-making among school leaders is achieved through the integration of analytical processes, collaborative participation, transparent communication, and systematic implementation, contributing to improved school performance and teacher engagement.

KEYWORDS: *decision-making approaches, school leadership, teacher perceptions, participation and involvement, transparency and communication, implementation and follow-up, Parang West District, Sulu*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership remains a key determinant of school effectiveness, organizational climate, and overall instructional quality. Among the various leadership functions, decision-making plays a central role in guiding how school leaders implement policies, distribute resources, and respond to the evolving needs of both teachers and learners. Rather than being a purely administrative responsibility, decision-making represents a dynamic process that shapes school direction and influences day-to-day practices. Scholars emphasize that leadership effectiveness is closely tied to how decisions are developed, communicated, and carried out within educational settings (Bush, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2019).

In contemporary educational discourse, decision-making approaches are understood to vary depending on context and leadership orientation. School leaders may adopt directive methods that emphasize control and efficiency, particularly in urgent situations, or they may employ participatory approaches that encourage collaboration and shared responsibility. Research suggests that when teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and commitment to school goals. In contrast, highly centralized decision-making may limit teacher involvement and reduce opportunities for innovation (Northouse, 2022; Leithwood & Sun, 2020; Oduro, 2019). These contrasting approaches highlight the importance of selecting leadership strategies that are responsive to the specific needs of the school environment.

Within the Philippine educational system, school heads are expected to balance instructional leadership with administrative responsibilities. Their decisions influence critical areas such as curriculum implementation, teacher management, and the allocation of resources (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). Existing local studies indicate that leadership practices that promote participation and collaboration contribute to improved school climate and stronger professional relationships among teachers (Bernardo, 2018; Guillergan, 2024). Furthermore, emerging research highlights that decision-making is shaped by various contextual factors, including emotional intelligence, technological readiness, and the demands of crisis situations, which require leaders to adapt their approaches accordingly (Dumandan & Oca, 2025; Tanucan et al., 2022).

Aligned with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which advocates for transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance, effective decision-making in schools must promote participation and trust among stakeholders. In educational contexts, this translates to leadership practices that involve teachers in meaningful ways, ensuring that decisions are not only efficient but also equitable and responsive.

Despite the growing interest in educational leadership, there remains a limited number of studies focusing on decision-making approaches in geographically isolated and resource-limited areas such as Sulu. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on urban or more stable regions, leaving a gap in understanding how leadership operates in contexts characterized by socio-political complexity and cultural diversity. In Parang West District, Division of Sulu, school leaders navigate challenging conditions, including resource constraints and heightened community expectations. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how teachers perceive these decision-making practices, even though they are directly involved in implementing and experiencing leadership decisions.

Grounded in the framework of Herbert Simon’s concept of bounded rationality and the Vroom-Yetton Normative Decision-Making Model, this study views decision-making as both a constrained and context-dependent process. These perspectives emphasize that leaders must balance practical limitations with the need to involve stakeholders, ultimately shaping how their decisions are perceived within the school community.

This study examined the decision-making approaches of school leaders in Parang West District, Division of Sulu, from the perspectives of teachers, focusing on the extent of these approaches, their differences across demographic characteristics, and the relationships among their key dimensions.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive–exploratory design within a quantitative framework to examine the decision-making approaches of school leaders as perceived by teachers in Parang West District, Division of Sulu. The descriptive component was used to systematically present existing conditions, while the exploratory aspect allowed for a deeper understanding of patterns and relationships among variables. This design is appropriate for identifying trends, describing perceptions, and generating insights without manipulating any variables.

2.2. Research Locale

The research was conducted in selected public elementary schools within Parang West District, Division of Sulu. The district comprises diverse schools with varying resources, geographic conditions, and community backgrounds, making it a suitable setting for examining leadership practices. The selected schools represent a cross-section of the district, allowing the study to capture a broad perspective of decision-making approaches in different educational contexts.

2.3. Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of 100 public elementary school teachers from ten (10) selected schools in Parang West District during the School Year 2025–2026. These respondents were chosen to reflect a range of teaching experiences and school environments within the district.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by School

School	Number of Respondents
Alu Layag Layag Elementary School	10
Alu Pangkoh Primary School	10
Hji. Panglima Tingkahan Elementary School	10
Kahoy Sinah Elementary School	10
Kutah Sairap Elementary School	10
Lower Sampunay Primary School	10
Sampunay Primary School	10
Silangkan Elementary School	10
Utoh Laja Elementary School	10
Buka Buka Primary School	10

Total	100
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2.4. Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select participants who were directly involved in school operations and capable of providing relevant insights regarding leadership decision-making. This approach ensured that the data collected were context-specific and reflective of actual experiences within the selected schools. Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate when participants are chosen based on their knowledge and relevance to the research objectives (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

2.5. Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a modified standardized questionnaire adapted from established decision-making frameworks. The instrument was based on the models of Victor Vroom and Philip Yetton (1973), and contextualized for educational settings following Hoy and Miskel (2013).

The questionnaire consisted of 40 items divided into the following dimensions:

- Problem Identification and Analysis
- Participation and Involvement
- Transparency and Communication
- Implementation and Follow-up

Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2. Scale of Measurement

Scale	Range	Interpretation
5	4.50–5.00	Always
4	3.50–4.49	Often
3	2.50–3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50–2.49	Seldom
1	1.00–1.49	Never

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured approval from the School of Graduate Studies, the Schools Division Office, and the principals of the selected schools. The questionnaires were personally administered and retrieved to ensure completeness and accuracy of responses. The direct involvement of the researcher also allowed for immediate clarification of any concerns raised by the participants.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and no identifying information was disclosed. Data were collected and reported with honesty and accuracy, ensuring the integrity of the research process. The study adhered to institutional guidelines and ethical standards for educational research.

3. RESULTS

Objective 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 100)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25 and below	8	8%
	26–35 years old	35	35%
	36 and above	57	57%
Gender	Male	11	11%
	Female	89	89%
Civil Status	Single	24	24%
	Married	70	70%
	Widowed/Separated	6	6%
Length of Service	5 years and below	24	24%
	6–10 years	44	44%
	11–15 years	8	8%
	16 years and above	24	24%
Educational Attainment	Bachelor’s Degree	86	86%
	With Master’s Units	10	10%
	Master’s Degree	2	2%
	Doctorate Degree	2	2%

The data indicate that the majority of respondents are experienced and mature educators, with most aged 36 and above, predominantly female, and largely married. A significant portion has 6–10 years of service, while most hold bachelor’s degrees. This suggests a workforce with moderate experience and foundational academic qualifications.

Objective 2: Extent of Decision-Making Approaches

Table 4. Summary of Decision-Making Approaches

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Problem Identification and Analysis	4.62	0.29	Always
Participation and Involvement	4.62	0.29	Always
Transparency and Communication	4.55	0.34	Always
Implementation and Follow-up	4.55	0.31	Always
Overall Mean	4.59	—	Always

All dimensions of decision-making approaches were rated “Always,” indicating that school leaders consistently demonstrate effective practices. Participation and involvement, along with problem identification, obtained the highest ratings, suggesting strong engagement and systematic decision processes. Transparency and implementation also showed high levels, reflecting consistent communication and execution of decisions.

Objective 3: Differences in Decision-Making Approaches

Table 5. Summary of Significant Differences

Variable	Result	Interpretation
Age	Significant in Participation	Partial Difference
Gender	Significant in Participation & Transparency	Significant
Civil Status	Significant in Transparency & Implementation	Significant
Length of Service	Significant in Participation, Transparency, Implementation	Significant
Educational Attainment	No Significant Difference	Not Significant

Differences in perceptions were observed across several demographic variables. Age showed limited influence, affecting only participation. Gender differences suggest that female teachers tend to perceive higher levels of participation and communication. Civil status and length of service were found to influence perceptions more strongly, particularly in communication and implementation aspects. Educational attainment, however, did not significantly affect perceptions, indicating consistency across academic levels.

Objective 4: Correlation among Decision-Making Dimensions

Table 6. Correlation Matrix of Decision-Making Approaches

Variables	r-value	Interpretation
Problem Identification ↔ Participation	0.473	Moderate
Problem Identification ↔ Transparency	0.385	Moderate
Problem Identification ↔ Implementation	0.415	Moderate
Participation ↔ Transparency	0.699	High
Participation ↔ Implementation	0.781	Very High
Transparency ↔ Implementation	0.748	Very High

The results reveal strong positive relationships among decision-making dimensions. The strongest associations were observed between participation and implementation, as well as transparency and implementation. This suggests that when teachers are actively involved and well-informed, decision execution becomes more effective. Problem identification showed moderate relationships, indicating its foundational but less dominant role compared to interaction-driven factors.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that school leaders in Parang West District consistently demonstrate effective decision-making practices across all measured dimensions, particularly in problem identification, participation, communication, and implementation. The overall “always” ratings suggest that leadership in the district is characterized by systematic processes, inclusivity, and operational consistency. This reflects a leadership environment where decision-making is not only structured but also responsive to the needs of the school community. Such results support the assertion that effective leadership is closely tied to the ability to analyze situations and translate decisions into actionable outcomes (Bush, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2019).

In the domain of problem identification and analysis, school leaders were perceived to exhibit strong analytical and evidence-based practices. Teachers reported that problems are identified promptly and examined using logical and systematic approaches. This suggests that leaders in the district prioritize informed decision-making grounded in data and multiple perspectives. The findings reinforce the argument of Quinal and Dupa (2024), who emphasized that the ability of administrators to accurately diagnose and analyze school-related issues is fundamental to effective school management.

Participation and involvement also emerged as one of the most highly rated dimensions, indicating that teachers are actively engaged in the decision-making process. The consistent inclusion of teachers in planning, policy formulation, and goal-setting reflects a participatory leadership approach. This supports earlier studies suggesting that shared decision-making enhances teacher commitment, strengthens collaboration, and contributes to improved school

outcomes (Leithwood & Sun, 2020; Musengamana et al., 2024; Boughton, 2024). The findings further highlight that when teachers are given opportunities to contribute, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and accountability in implementing decisions.

In terms of transparency and communication, the results demonstrate that school leaders maintain open channels of information and clearly communicate the rationale behind decisions. This indicates that transparency is a key feature of leadership practice in the district. Effective communication ensures that teachers are well-informed and aligned with school objectives, thereby reducing uncertainty and enhancing cooperation. This aligns with the view of Shilling (2017), who emphasized that clear and transparent communication is essential in fostering trust and facilitating effective decision-making within organizations.

Similarly, implementation and follow-up were rated highly, suggesting that decisions are not only made effectively but are also properly executed and monitored. Teachers acknowledged that leaders provide guidance, conduct follow-up activities, and evaluate the outcomes of decisions. This reflects a strong emphasis on accountability and continuous improvement. The findings are consistent with Al-Omari (2025), who highlighted that the success of leadership decisions depends largely on effective implementation and systematic monitoring processes.

With regard to differences in perceptions, the results indicate that demographic variables influence certain aspects of decision-making. Age showed limited variation, affecting only participation and involvement, suggesting that generational differences may shape how teachers engage in collaborative processes. Gender differences revealed that female teachers tend to perceive higher levels of participation and transparency, which may indicate differences in sensitivity to inclusive and communicative leadership practices. Civil status and length of service were found to significantly influence perceptions, particularly in communication and implementation. These findings suggest that personal and professional experiences shape how teachers interpret leadership behaviors. However, educational attainment did not yield significant differences, indicating that perceptions of leadership practices remain consistent regardless of academic qualifications.

The correlation analysis further revealed strong positive relationships among all dimensions of decision-making approaches. The highest correlations were observed between participation and implementation, as well as transparency and implementation. These results suggest that inclusive and communicative practices play a crucial role in ensuring effective execution of decisions. When teachers are actively involved and adequately informed, the likelihood of successful implementation increases. Meanwhile, problem identification demonstrated moderate correlations with other variables, indicating that while analytical processes are important, relational and interactive factors such as participation and communication exert a stronger influence on overall decision-making effectiveness. These findings support the perspective that leadership effectiveness is enhanced when both cognitive and social dimensions of decision-making are integrated (Northouse, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2019).

Overall, the study highlights that decision-making in Parang West District is characterized by a balanced integration of analytical rigor and participatory practices. The strong interrelationships among decision-making dimensions emphasize that effective leadership is not dependent on a single approach but rather on the alignment of multiple processes. By fostering collaboration, maintaining transparency, and ensuring consistent implementation, school leaders

create an environment that supports both organizational efficiency and professional engagement among teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that school leaders in Parang West District, Division of Sulu consistently apply sound decision-making practices across essential areas, namely problem identification and analysis, participation and involvement, transparency and communication, and implementation and follow-up. The uniformly high ratings across these dimensions suggest that leadership practices within the district are well-structured, collaborative, and effectively carried out.

The results also show that certain demographic characteristics influence teachers' perceptions of decision-making approaches. Variations were evident in areas related to participation, communication, and implementation when respondents were grouped according to gender, civil status, and length of service. In contrast, age and educational attainment did not produce significant differences, indicating that perceptions remain generally consistent across these groups.

In addition, the strong positive relationships observed among all decision-making dimensions highlight the interconnected nature of leadership practices. Effective decision-making is not confined to a single aspect but is achieved through the combined influence of analytical processes, inclusive engagement, clear communication, and consistent execution. These elements work together to support efficient school management and enhance teacher involvement.

Overall, the study underscores that effective school leadership is characterized by the integration of multiple decision-making processes that promote cooperation, transparency, and accountability within the educational setting.

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The author confirms that this research is the result of independent academic work and personal analysis. All ideas, interpretations, and written discussions in this study were developed by the author. Artificial intelligence tools were used only in a limited way for minor grammar checking and language improvement. They were not used to create the research content, generate ideas, perform the analysis, interpret the results, or write the main parts of the paper. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of this study, including its analysis, discussion, and conclusions.

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