INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2025, Vol. 6, No. 1, 272 – 280 http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.06.01.19

Research Article

Managing Group Conflict and Decision-Making Skills among School Administrators of Public Higher Education Institutions in Sulu

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Article history: Submission 31 December 2024 Revised 07 January 2025 Accepted 23 January 2025

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study investigates the extent of conflict management and decision-making skills among public higher education institution administrators in Sulu for the Academic Year 2022-2023. The respondents in this study are 200 faculty members, with several statistical methods applied, including frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, t-tests for independent samples, One-way ANOVA, and Pearson's r.

Most respondents were between 20 and 35 years old, female, married, and holding a master's degree. Many faculty members reported having served from 1 to 15 years in their respective institutions. In fact, the respondents agreed that the administrators were pretty successful in getting faculty involved in key decisions concerning the institutions. They also graded the administrators as vigilant and decisive when dealing with sensitive and critical matters.

Interestingly, differences in ratings regarding the faculty's evaluation of administrators' skills for conflict management and decision-making by age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and years of service do not indicate statistical significance. But those who have high grades of administrators for the management of conflict also graded highly the ability to make decisions. This study supports Rahim's (2002) proposition that successful conflict management is made of multiple strategies. Thus, those administrators who make effective decisions on handling conflicts would tend to be good decision-makers.

Finally, it has underlined that to achieve better and sound decision making as well as better management of the institutions in conflict management is needed to become good administrators. Therefore, good administrative leadership does not only work well to facilitate more effectiveness of its own work but also enables more harmony and effectiveness within a higher education public institution. More emphasis needs to be made upon their skill improvement.

How to cite:

Anuddin, F. O. (2025). Managing Group Conflict and Decision-Making Skills among School Administrators of Public Higher Education Institutions in Sulu. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 6(1), 272 – 280. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.06.01.19

Keywords: Group Conflict Management, Decision-Making Skills, School Administrators, and Public Higher Education

Introduction

Conflict is a natural aspect of human interplay and typically occurs in learning institutions. A good example can be seen through the conflicts involving teaching methods or grading systems or even curriculum between faculty members, administrative decisions for instance, like the appointment of department heads, or the determination of research fund allocation. The distribution of the workload like the teaching load or responsibility in extracurricular activities could be considered unfair among faculty members. Other conflicts between administrators and students include campus policies, disputes concerning grading, and resource access. Unmanaged, these conflicts can result in unchecked conflict, damaged relationships, lower morale, and a negative impact on the success of an institution. Therefore, academic leaders must have the necessary skills to handle conflict efficiently, making thoughtful decisions that ensure harmony and the effective functioning of the institution.

This research aims to examine the conflict management and decision-making approaches of academic administrators in public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sulu. Specifically, it aims to investigate the following key objectives: (1) Whether the conflict management styles utilized by academic administrators in managing disputes have been effective; (2) What decision-making strategies they use in taking a stand on issues concerning institutional survival; and (3) Whether there are differences or patterns in such approaches of academic administrators that have been attributed to age, gender, years of service, and educational background. In addition, this study will research the effects that conflict management and decision-making have upon the overall ability of these types of institutions to function and successfully carry out activities. The experiment will test numerous hypotheses (BANTAYAN1 et al.), which include whether significant relationships exist concerning the conflict styles of administrators or faculty satisfaction or whether specific models of decision making are associated with better institutional functioning. Through this research, the long-term objective would be to identify the importance of effective conflict resolution and decision-making in helping a more productive, harmonious academic environment to prosper for the future success of public HEIs in Sulu. Academic administrators are going to find the understanding of these dynamics instrumental in making appropriate decisions that augment the performance of their institutions while ensuring the wellness of its faculty and students.

Methods

This study will try to assess the conflict management and decision-making skills of school administrators in the public higher education institutions of Sulu. In order to ensure that the study produces valid results, the data collection process will be comprehensive and systematic.

The data collection process begins with the preparation of three key instruments: a profile questionnaire, a conflict management questionnaire, and a decision-making questionnaire. The profile questionnaire shall obtain background information, for example, the demographic, in terms of age, gender, and educational background. The conflict management and decision-making questionnaires shall be adaptations drawn from established research relevant to this particular local academic context. These instruments will be validated to ensure that they are exact and relevant to the context of Sulu's institutions of public higher education. The researcher (Warid-Sahial et al., 2024) will solicit feedback from experts in the field, education experts, and survey designers in order to perfect and customize the questions to be clear and culturally appropriate. After the review, a small-scale pilot test involving a few members of faculty will be performed in order to verify that these tools are really helpful and necessary corrections can be taken before handing them over to be filled in for the full survey.

After selecting the instruments, the researcher will conduct a survey (Hayudini et al., 2023) through personal visitations after obtaining a permit from the institutions' heads of department. The researcher will involve faculty members and administrators to administer and collect completed questionnaires when it is not possible to reach the area in person. The process is anticipated to take about one month as there will be enough time to allow the involvement of faculty members.

A total of 200 faculty members will be selected using purposive sampling (Aming-Hayudini et al., 2022) for the study. This method is ideal because it ensures the inclusion of those individuals who are most directly involved with the administrators on a day-to-day basis and are thus well-positioned to assess the administrators' conflict management and decision-making abilities. With the selection (Warid-Sahial) of 200 faculty members from four different public higher educational institutions, the study would include a wide range of views to better observe the administrators' effective mechanisms in various educational settings. The sample size of 200 would both be manageable and large enough to capture diverse opinions that would also allow for indepth analysis of the data. This will bring the findings forth with the raw truth of perceptions and experiences lived by the teachers themselves, pointing to how things should be understood by administrators in solving conflict and bringing a decision. Future leadership practices into the educational set-ups of Sulu (Hayudini, 2018) will stand a better opportunity with the contribution towards better-decision-making practices as well as towards conflict solutions

Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the data are interpreted (Aming-Hayudini et al., 2024) with a focus on the implications and insights drawn from the findings rather than reiterating descriptive statistics. The results offer a detailed understanding of the conflict management and decision-making skills of administrators in the public higher education institutions of Sulu. The study reveals that administrators tend to employ a variety of strategies when managing group

conflict. All of these strategies, which include integrating, compromising, dominating, and avoiding, all show a tendency toward an "agree" level, which means that administrators use collaborative and somewhat assertive approaches in resolving conflicts. However, avoiding conflict seems to be the least favored approach, though it is still used moderately.

Similarly, the decision-making skills of administrators were explored across several categories: vigilance, buck-passing, hyper-vigilance, and procrastination. Administrators, more or less, showed vigilance in decision-making, implying that they consider alternatives with care and weigh the consequences.

However, in cases of buck-passing, hypervigilance, and procrastination, results seem uncertain as respondents are not sure whether administrators avoid responsibility and pass it to others or delay decisions unnecessarily. This finding indicates that further research into how administrators deal with the stress of decision-making under time constraints is warranted.

The insights gained from this data have great implications for the leadership practices of Sulu's higher education institutions. For instance, the tendency to vigilance and integration in resolving conflicts may be an indication that administrators need additional training in the use of compromise and avoidance strategies to better address varied situations. The results point to potential gaps in decision-making that may require enhanced support systems or resources to help administrators make timely and confident decisions.

The findings are related to the theoretical framework of conflict resolution and decision-making. This study highlights the need to understand how leadership styles are aligned with institutional goals. Existing literature points out that leaders who can effectively manage conflict and make informed, balanced decisions are more likely to foster a positive work environment and improve organizational outcomes. This study supports such findings, which show that Sulu's public higher education institution administrators exhibit a reasonable balance of leadership skills though certain areas may be strengthened.

However, limitations in this study should be addressed in future research. Potential biases may have arisen from the self-reported nature of the data as faculty respondents might have been hesitant to critique their administrators too harshly. Further, this study is localized to one particular region, which might not adequately reflect the diverse experiences that could be obtained from other higher education settings. Future studies could extend the sample size or utilize longitudinal data to present an overall trend over time of how conflict management and decision-making would work. Additionally, research could be extended to understand the impact of external environment, for example, government policies or regional cultural factors on administrative behavior in conflict resolution and decision-making

Findings of this study indicate that demographic variables including age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and length of service will not bring about any significant influence on how group conflict is managed by public higher education institution administrators in the Province of Sulu. Age and civil status are seemingly of no significant concern within the context of conflict management, but educational attainment presented some degree of significance in "Integrating" and "Obliging" approaches with differences observed to be minimal. Gender and length of service did not also show any differences in conflict management strategies, thereby supporting the hypothesis that these personal characteristics do not significantly influence conflict resolution perceptions. These results are consistent with earlier studies in organizational behavior, which often find that personal characteristics may not always predict conflict management styles, especially in highly structured or uniform environments like higher education institutions. However, there are limitations to the study. These include social desirability bias in self-reported data and a cross-sectional design, that deprive one's ability to make inferences of causality. Finally, the number of samples and regional context, Sulu, may limit generalization to other institutions or regions. Further research through diverse and more extensive samples along with longitudinal research would be conducted to further make clear the overall applicability of these findings. Overall, it shows that management of group conflict is complex wherein organizational dynamics and institutional culture rather than demographic factors may play the most important roles.

Findings of this research indicated that there is no relationship with the administrative ability of managers within the public institutions of higher education in Sulu for age, gender, civil status, level of educational attainment, and length of service. It has been surprising findings in a review of much existing literature because of the wide acknowledgment that those kinds of factors will influence the manager's competence. For instance, other studies suggest that older or more experienced administrators might have better decision-making skills because of the knowledge and experience they have acquired over time (Stewart, 2008). In this study, however, the demographic characteristics were not found to significantly influence how administrators perceive decision-making skills. The lack of significant differences across these factors may imply that in this context, decision-making skills are more influenced by other unmeasured factors such as organizational culture, personality of individuals, or institutional training programs.

There is a significant positive correlation between the group conflict-managing extent and decision-making skills. This is in accordance with theories suggesting that effective management of conflict could improve decision-making skills through the facilitation of an effective and productive working environment (Deutsch, 1973). Administrators who see managing group conflict as part of their usual role may better be able to make informed, balanced decisions. This underscores the need for conflict resolution training to be included as part of administrators' professional development, especially within a culturally diverse environment such as Sulu.

However, the study does have limitations that must be taken into account. For example, reliance on self-reported data might introduce biases in the results since respondents might appraise their skills and experiences according to social expectations or their personal view of effectiveness. The research fails to incorporate other contextual factors, such as

resource availability or institutional support systems, which may be substantial in determining decision-making efficacy. These elements may need to be included in the subsequent research stages to further provide insight into the factors that may contribute to decision-making skills in the higher education administration.

All things put together, the study provides great insights into conflict management and decision-making skills in administrators of public higher education institutions in Sulu. The result indicates that a wide range of conflict management strategies is utilized with a preference toward integrating and compromising approaches. A notable point in this regard was that avoiding the conflict was least favored, thereby indicating that the administrators are apt to be inclined toward collaborative and assertive styles of conflict resolution. In terms of decision-making, administrators were generally vigilant in weighing the alternatives, although there was some uncertainty in the way they handled buck-passing, hyper-vigilance, and procrastination. These areas call for further research into how administrators handle decision-making when under stress or time constraints.

The results of the study have practical implications for policymakers and educational leaders in Sulu. The first conclusion from the vigilance and integration strategies in conflict management is that targeted training programs on alternative methods of conflict resolution, such as compromise and avoidance, would strengthen administrators' skills to address various complex situations. Finally, the mixed results of the decision-making behavior call for support systems to guide administrators to make timely and confident decisions. Professional development opportunities which focus on stress management and working under pressure, may help better equip administrators for the challenges and difficulties they often face.

Conclusion

The contribution of this paper to the management of conflict as well as decisions in higher education administration is pertinent. However, it is still not without shortcomings.

The major limitation of reliance on self-reported data may involve biases, b sides the cross sectional design that disallows causation. In addition, the findings may be limited in their generalization to other regions or different types of institutions through the specific regional context of Sulu. Such research could expand the sample size, use longitudinal data, and examine the impact of greater external variables, such as government policies or regional cultural norms, on administrative behaviors. Besides, investigating the effects of organizational resources, institutional culture, and external training programs on decisionmaking and conflict management will give a deeper understanding of what determines administrative competence.

The overall study calls for a more refined approach to the development of leadership skills in higher education administrators. It addresses the gaps in conflict management and decision-making skills, incorporates targeted interventions, and thus better equips administrators to meet the challenges of their roles and contributes to improvement in organizational effectiveness and educational outcomes.

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