

Empowerment Begins with Participation: A Systematic Review of Principals' Decision-Making and Its Impact on Teachers' Job Satisfaction and School Performance

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Abstract

Effective school leadership is essential for fostering teacher motivation, organizational effectiveness, and continuous school improvement. As principals' decision-making practices directly influence teachers' participation, empowerment, and job satisfaction, understanding the impact of different decision-making styles has become increasingly important for enhancing educational outcomes. This study aims to develop a systematic review of the predominantly adopted decision-making styles by the school principals and how it influences the teacher's empowerment, Job satisfaction of the teachers and School improvement. The Preferred Reporting items for Systematic Reviews and Meta- Analysis (PRISMA) is used as a guideline for systematic literature review to collect data. The selected journal timeframe is from 2021 to 2025, with 20 chosen research articles meeting the criteria. Analysis of the selected primary studies revealed that most frequently adopted decision-making styles by the principals are rational and dependent decision-making styles. Furthermore, the findings indicate that principals who actively involve teachers in school the decision-making processes contribute significantly to improved school outcomes, while simultaneously fostering teacher empowerment and enhancing job satisfaction. Novelty: This study provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature by elucidating the interconnected relationship between principals' decision-making styles, teacher job satisfaction, and school effectiveness, thereby offering a consolidated perspective that has been insufficiently explored in prior reviews.

Keywords: Decision-making, School education, Leadership, Job satisfaction, School effectiveness

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1. Introduction

Decision-making is a central function of organizational leadership that shapes how goals are chased and how individuals work within institutional structures (Olcum & Titrek, 2015; Parveen et al., 2022). Within organizations, effective decision-making enables goal attainment, strategic planning, and coordinated action toward desired objectives (Maral, 2022). In educational settings, decisions taken by school leaders guide instructional practices, resource allocation, staff development, and the overall function of the school. Researchers now focus on the need for new ways of how to lead schools as dynamic, living systems (Glanz, 2021; Kandemir, 2025), so they can react effectively to the complex needs of students, communities, and society. For school leaders, this involves adopting responsive leadership as an approach that encourages leaders to understand and engage with stakeholders' needs, values, goals, and strengths. With this approach, leaders can boost motivation, satisfaction and overall school performance (De Groot, 2016; Johnson, 2025). As decision-making involves choosing among alternatives to address challenges or spread institutional priorities (Kanuka & Anderson, 2008; Mintzberg et al., 1976), its quality and style significantly influence organizational effectiveness. Schools, as complex socio-educational systems, rely profoundly on leadership that is responsive, collaborative, and contextually informed. Principals, as the chief administrator of schools, are responsible for the guide to institution toward its academic and developmental goals through crafting an environment conducive to teaching

and learning (Abouelanein & Hossni, 2023). Their decision-making strategies thus play a decisive role in determining the instructional climate, teacher motivation, and student achievement (Ayeni & Ojo, 2022; Lunenburg, 2010).

Principals are the leaders of the school. As the school leader, the principal has to take many decisions and lead the stakeholders towards achieving the desired outcomes. So, decisions being taken at the school level by the principals are of utmost importance because they have a direct impact on the teachers' and students' lives. The decision-making process of the school principal affects the instructional performance of teachers' and students' academic performance (Lunenburg, 2010). The pattern in which the decisions are taken by the school principals becomes their decision-making style. Principal's decision-making styles (DMS) play an important role, along with their talent, skill, qualification, doing the right thing at the right time, and experience. The thought patterns and information process styles of every principal differ, which makes them make their decisions distinctly (Jabben & Akhtar, 2009). Principals are continuously making decisions in the school while planning, implementing, and evaluating daily activities. Effective principals are those who involve teachers in the decision-making of the school (Pashiardis, 1993; Hariri, 2011). Ultimately, the success of a school hinges not only on the individual decisions made by its principal but also on the collective efficacy of its stakeholders (teachers). Decision-making style is a variable that has a serious influence on the overall performance of the school. A principal must choose one style at a time to attain the desired results. However, no one style is best for all situations. Therefore, stress should be placed on identifying different decision-making styles and developing skills in the selection of an appropriate type as per the prevalent situation because serious consequences can result from poor decision-making. The decision-making process depends on the principal's preferences. Understanding the environment in which a particular issue arises is essential for effective leadership. Knowing the context well enough will make it easier to determine how much and what kind of participation is needed (Jabben & Akhtar, 2009).

In contemporary educational discourse, two outcome variables linked most strongly to administrative decision-making are teacher empowerment and school performance. Teacher participation in school decision making has become a dominant theme in current educational reforms (Conley, 1991; Johnson, 1990; Musengamana et al., 2024). The growing prominence of participative decision-making (PDM) has become especially critical in the current educational landscape, where schools are compelled to transform themselves to meet rise in expectations for flexibility, quality, and heightened teacher commitment (Scott-Ladd et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Researchers and practitioners alike recognize that the challenges confront schools are too complex for a single individual to address effectively. Engage teachers in decision-making compromises multiple advantages that can strengthen a school's shared capacity for excellence. Such involvement has been uncovered to improve the quality of decisions (Scully et al., 1995), boost teacher motivation (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1997), and improve teachers' overall quality of work life (Somech, 2002).

Conversely, authoritarian or unilateral styles may hinder teacher involvement and diminish motivation. Therefore, the inclusion of teachers in the decision making plays a significant role in improving their morale and motivation, increase levels of job satisfaction, and promote a sense of responsibility and commitment towards effectiveness and improvement of the whole school organization. The participation of teachers in school-based decision-making processes facilitates school leaders' acquisition of essential and necessary perspectives of staff of underlying factors contribute to various school-related challenges (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). Failure to involve teachers in school-based decision-making may hinder the way of informed decisions; ultimately affect the effectiveness of school functions (Obi & Obiorah, 2023).

Similarly, school performance or school effectiveness covers academic achievement, student engagement, teacher satisfaction, robust leadership, effective practices to teach, a positive school climate and parental involvement (Javornik & Mirazchiyski, 2023). Decision-making styles shape these outcomes by the influence of communication flow, team cohesion, conflict resolution, distributed leadership, and strategic plan. Studies have revealed that principals who employ collaborative or data-driven decision-making practices nurture more effective schools compared to those who rely on rigid or top-down approaches.

Despite the importance of decision-making styles to shape the educational outcomes, present researches are fragmented; with studies vary widely in conceptual frameworks, contexts, methodologies, and outcome measures. The period from 2021 to 2025 has been particularly transformative for schools worldwide due to post-pandemic restructure, heightened emphasis on distributed leadership, teacher well-being, and renewed focus on instructional quality. These shifts have produced a significant body of research, yet no systematic review has synthesized evidence from this recent period to understand how administrators' decision-making styles affect teacher empowerment and school improvement. Therefore, the broad aim of this PRISMA-based systematic

review is to synthesize empirical evidence from studies published between 2021 and 2025 to identify the predominant decision-making styles adopted by school principals and to examine how these styles influence school performance, teacher empowerment, and job satisfaction. Through the synthesis of current empirical evidence, the review addresses existing gaps, offers clarity on current decision-making patterns, and reflects actionable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational leadership researchers.

Based on the aims, the objectives of the present study are the following:

1. To identify the predominant decision-making styles practiced by school principals as reported in empirical studies published from 2021 to 2025.
2. To examine patterns and trends across studies to determine which decision-making styles are most frequently associated with enhanced school performance.
3. To investigate the association between decision-making styles and teachers' empowerment and Job Satisfaction.

2. Material and Methods

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, as described by Page et al. (2021), is a widely recognized standard for conducting systematic literature reviews (SLRs), ensuring transparency, thoroughness, and consistency. Adherence to PRISMA guidelines allows researchers to progress the accuracy and rigor of their reviews through a structured approach to systematically identifying, screening, and including relevant studies. It also stresses the importance of randomized studies to reduce bias and boost the robustness of the evidence base. For this review, Google Scholar and the ERIC databases were chosen due to their comprehensive coverage and reliability. This protocol outlines four key phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and data extraction. In the identification phase, databases are searched to retrieve all potentially relevant studies. During screening, predefined criteria are applied to exclude irrelevant or low-quality studies. The eligibility phase involves assessing the left-out studies to confirm they meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, data extraction entails collection and synthesis of data from the selected studies, which is critical for reliable and meaningful insights. This systematic approach confirms a thorough and rigorous review, yielding trustworthy findings that can guide future research and practical applications.

2.1 Identification

The identification stage aimed to retrieve the maximum number of relevant studies from a selected database using well-defined and replicable keyword combinations. This stage resulted in the initial pool of articles prior to eligibility screening. This study followed a systematic review process to collect a broad set of relevant literature. It started through keywords and identified related terms using dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, and prior studies. These terms were compiled, and search strings were created for the Google Scholar and ERIC databases (as outlined in Table 1). This initial phase of the systematic review resulted in 449 publications from the two databases pertinent to the study's focus, with 419 records identified through Google Scholar and 30 through ERIC.

Table 1: The Search String

Google Scholar	ERIC
"Decision making styles" AND "school principals" AND "school performance" (Topic) and 2021 or 2025 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Article (Document Types)	"Decision making styles" AND "school principals" AND "school performance" (Topic) and 2021 or 2025 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Article (Document Types)
Date of Access: August, 2025	

For this study, two major databases Google Scholar and ERIC were used to capture the breadth of literature on "decision making styles" and "school performance." These databases were selected for their extensive coverage and importance in educational and social sciences research. Notably, Google Scholar provides access to a widespread range of scholarly articles, which includes peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and other scholarly sources, making it a critical resource to capture diverse perspectives on decision-making styles and school performance while ERIC is standard for its thorough indexing and inclusion of high-quality, peer-

reviewed sources detailed to education, offers a robust foundation for the review process.

2.2 Screening

In refining the initial pool of 449 studies identified in the systematic literature review (SLR), a stern set of inclusion criteria was functional to confirm the selection of highly relevant and high-quality studies. The criteria included studies published since 2021, written in English, and intensive exclusively on school principals or leaders, with specific emphasis on decision-making styles or processes, school effectiveness, performance, or improvement. Additionally, only peer-reviewed journal articles of any research type were engaged, that excludes conference proceedings, book chapters, reviews, and in-press publications. This initial screening phase eliminated 389 studies, which reduced the pool to 60 articles across the two databases: 45 from Google Scholar and 15 from ERIC. This curated choice reflects the rigorous filter process, which ensures that only studies closely aligned with the research objectives were kept for further analysis. A subsequent replica examination was conducted, which identifies and removes no duplicate articles, as each study was unique. This careful screening and reduplication process yielded a final dataset of 60 unique articles provide a robust and focused body of literature for thorough analysis and synthesis.

Table 2: Selection Criteria in the Screening Phase

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English language only	Other than English language
Timeline	2021-2025	<2021
Keywords	Decision-making styles, school principals or leaders, school effectiveness, performance	Other than school context
Literature type	Empirical studies, review papers, thesis	Conceptual papers

2.3 Eligibility

In the eligibility phase, the third step of the systematic literature review, 60 articles were thoroughly evaluated. During this stage, the titles, abstracts, and key content of each article were accurately reviewed to ensure alignment with the inclusion criteria and the research objectives, which focused on decision-making styles or processes, school effectiveness, performance, or improvement among school principals or leaders. As a result, 40 articles were omitted as they were not suitable due to the out-of-field; title not noteworthy, abstract not related to the study's objective, and no full-text access founded on empirical evidence. Consequently, 20 articles i.e., 12 from Google Scholar and 8 from ERIC met all the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis stage.

2.4 Data Abstraction and Analysis

This study adopted an integrative analysis method as a central strategy to synthesize findings from diverse research designs, mainly quantitative, across 20 selected studies (12 from Google Scholar and 8 from ERIC). The primary target was to classify key themes and subthemes related to decision-making styles or processes, school effectiveness, performance, or improvement among the school principals or leaders. The theme expansion process commenced with systematic data collection. In the present paper, authors' careful analysis of the 20 publications focus on statements and content aligned with the study's core topics has been done. Subsequently, the authors evaluated prominent studies on decision-making and school effectiveness, scrutinized their methodologies and findings to confirm a complete understanding. Collaborative efforts among the authors facilitated the identification of evidence-based themes. A detailed log was maintained throughout the analysis to record observations, reflections, challenges, and insights relevant to data interpretation. To safeguard rigor, findings were cross compared among the authors to preserve consistency in theme development. Any conceptual divergences were thoroughly discussed to achieve consensus, ensures the reliability and validity of the thematic outcomes.

Table 3: Number and Details of Primary Studies Database

S.No	Authors	Title	Year	Google Scholar	ERIC
P1	Chang, H. & Abdullah, M.Y.	Principal Decision-Making and Its Influence on School Performance in China	2025	√	
P2	Faundo, F.F., Antonio, M.L.R., & Carina,M.	Decision Making Styles of School Administrators and the Level of Trust of Teachers in Public Schools	2023	√	
P3	Capulong, R.O	Assessment of School Heads' Technology Leadership and Its Influence on Decision-Making Styles and School Culture	2022		√
P4	Olaifa, A.S., Odumosu, F.A., Alao, M.I., Ibrahim, H.B., & Sagaya, A.A.	Principals' Decision-Making Strategies and Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Kwara State Schools, Nigeria	2025	√	
P5	Esther, A.N. & Julius, L	Administrators' Decision-Making Styles for Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State	2022		√
P6	Ayikut, O & Cinkir, S	Teachers' and Administrators' Perspectives on School Principals' Self-Regulation Skills and Decision-Making Styles: A Mixed-Methods Study	2025	√	
P7	Mawajdeh, E	The Impact of Teacher's Involvement on Decision Making for School Improvement: A Study Among Teachers and School Leaders in Selected Private Schools in Dubai	2022		√
P8	Ladines, E	Organizational Conflicts and Decision-Making Styles of School Heads as an Input in Developing a Training-Workshop	2025	√	
P9	Obadimeji, C. C. & Oredein, A. O	Digital Leadership and Decision-Making Styles as Determinants of Public Primary School Teachers' Job Performance for Sustainable Education in Oyo State	2022	√	
P10	Shikokoti, H., Okoth, P., and Chepkonga, S	Influence of Principals' Involvement of Teachers in Decision Making on Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya	2023	√	

P11	Ayeni, A.J. & Ojo, R.T	Decision – Making Model and Productivity in Public Secondary Schools in Ondo North Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria	2022		√
P12	Scutt, C	Are school leaders' decisions about teaching and learning policy really driven by research evidence? An investigation of decision-making practices in English schools	2025		√
P13	Maral, M	Exploring School Administrators' Perceptions on Participative Decision-Making Process	2022	√	
P14	Saad, K.M. & Yakubu, S	Perceived Impact of Principals' Decision Making Strategies on the Management of Secondary Schools in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State Nigeria	2022	√	
P15	Lessy, Z; Pary, L.K. & Adamek, M.E	Communication Methods for Moving from Authoritarian to Allocative or Distributed Leadership, in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, as Adopted by a High School Principal: A Case Study	2024		√
P16	Delmonte, C.R	Decision-Making Styles of School Heads and their Perceived Work Performance of Teachers in Public Elementary Schools	2022	√	
P17	Demirbilek, N., Han, F., & Atila, F.	Examination of the Relationship Between the Decision-Making Styles and Time Management Skills of School Managers	2022	√	
P18	Musengamana, I.; Shaoan, M. M.R.; Namanyane, T.; Lafferty, N.; & Uzochukwu, O.M.	Teachers' Role in School Decision-Making Process: A Case Study of Teachers and School Leaders Perceptions in Rwanda Public Secondary School	2024		√
P19	Alamri, A.T.	Perceptions of school leaders and teachers about shared decision making in Saudi Arabia	2021	√	
P20	Japaah, S. W.	Teachers participation in decision making in selected senior high schools in Kumawu district of the Ashanti Region	2021		√

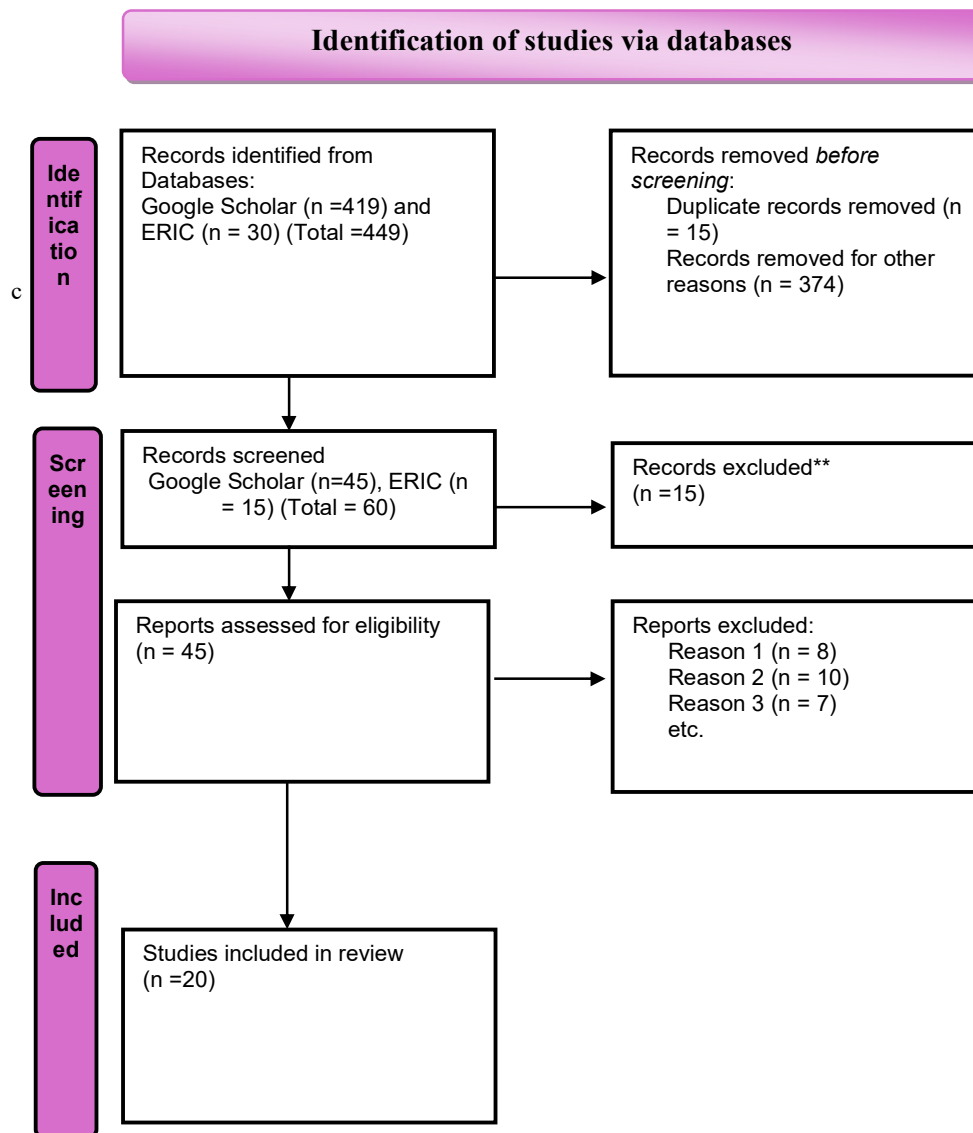


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Source: Page MJ, et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

2.5 Quality of Appraisal

Following the guidelines outlined by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), the quality of the 20 primary studies selected for this systematic literature review (SLR) was evaluated to confirm their rigor and relevance. Primary studies mention the original research articles straightly included after the eligibility phase, serves as the core sources of evidence to address the research questions (RQs). To evaluate these studies, we adopted the Quality Assessment (QA) outline proposed by Abouzahra et al. (2020), which comprises six QA criteria personalized for this SLR. Each criterion was scored by three independent experts by a three-point scale: “Yes” (Y, 1 point) if the criterion is fully met, “Partly” (P, 0.5 points) if the criterion is somewhat met with some gaps, and “No” (N, 0 points) if the criterion is not met. The six QA criteria are as follows:

- Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?

This criterion assesses whether the study’s objectives are clearly defined, that shows a clear direction and scope

for the research.

- Are the interest and usefulness of the work clearly presented?

This evaluates whether the study's suggestion and potential contributions to decision-making and educational leadership are well-articulated, highlighting its relevance and impact.

- Is the study methodology clearly established?

This examines whether the research methodology is clearly defined and suitable to achieve the study's objectives, ensures validity and reproducibility.

- Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?

This checks whether the theoretical outline and key concepts related to decision-making styles, school effectiveness, performance, or improvement are clearly articulated.

- Is the work compared and measured with other similar work?

This assesses whether the study is benchmarked in contradiction of existing research, position it within the broader academic context and emphasize its contributions.

- Are the limitations of the work clearly mentioned?

This evaluates whether the study explicitly addresses its limitations that ensures transparency and credibility.

Each of the 20 studies was independently evaluated by three experts based on these criteria. The scores for each criterion were summed across the experts, and a study was vital to achieve a total mark exceeding 3.0 to proceed to the next phase of the review. This verge confirmed that only studies meeting a high usual of quality, particularly in their relevance to decision-making styles or processes and school effectiveness, performance, or improvement among school principals or leaders, were included. The rigorous QA process provided a robust mechanism to filter studies, ensuring that the final set of articles contributed meaningful and reliable insights to the SLR.

3. Results and Findings

Result and Finding Background of the selected study: based on QA, Table 3 precise the result of assessment performance for selected primary studies.

Table 4: Quality Assessment Table for Selected Papers

No	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total Marks	Percentage (%)
P1	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	83.3%
P2	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	50%
P3	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	100%
P4	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	83.3%
P5	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	83.3%
P6	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	100%
P7	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	100%
P8	1	1	1	0	0	1	4	66.6%
P9	1	1	1	0.5	1	0	4.5	75%
P10	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	83.3%
P11	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	83.3%
P12	1	0	1	0	1	1	4	66.6%
P13	1	1	1	0	1	1	5	83.3%

P14	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	83.3%
P15	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	66.6%
P16	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	33.3%
P17	1	0	1	1	1	0	4	66.6%
P18	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	66.6%
P19	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	100%
P20	1	1	1	0	1	1	5	83.3%

3.1 Summary

- Highest Score: The paper by Capulong, 2022; Aykut & Cinkir, 2025; Mawajdeh, 2022 and Alamri, 2021 achieved the highest score of 100% due to clear articulation of purpose, usefulness, methodology, defined concepts, comparison with other work, and limitations.
- Lowest Score: The paper by Faundo et al., 2023 and Delmonte, 2022 scored the lowest (50% and 33.3%), as it does not meet the standards for the purpose, significance of the study, concepts of method and contrast with other work, and did not indicate the limitations.

The generated themes were advanced to maintain consistency. Experts in decision-making and educational leadership conducted the analysis to verify the problems' validity. The expert review phase established each subtheme's clarity, significance, and appropriateness through a domain validity. The authors cross-checked the findings of the studies to discourse any discrepancies in the theme development. Any inconsistencies in the themes were determined through collaboration among the authors. The review process ensured the clarity, importance, and suitability of each subtheme through domain validity. Adjustments were made to the authors' option based on feedback and expert input.

3.2 Theme 1: Predominance of Decision-Making Styles among the School Principals

This theme includes papers on decision-making styles implemented by principals of the school predominantly while making decisions. It echoes how principals increasingly rely on evidence-based practices, and engage diverse stakeholders to enhance the quality, transparency, and efficiency of decisions in school management. Chang & Abdullah (2025) found that principals mostly display concerted and data-informed decision-making styles while making decisions in the school. They integrate the inputs from the teachers and attempt to rely more on evidence before making decisions. Additionally, Aykut & Cinkir (2025) findings indicate that administrators with robust self-regulation skills inclined to rely on rational and intuitive decision-making styles, both of which contribute to more effective school management and better educational outcomes. Furthermore, Ladines (2025) results demonstrate that principals which are heads of the schools mostly assumed rational decision-making styles while making decisions. In addition to that research carried by Obadimeji & Oredein (2022) proved that the most exhibited style by the principals in Nigeria is directive decision-making style. Further, Shikokoti et al., (2023) approved out a research and the findings show that principals commonly adopt inclusive and participatory decision-making styles. It specifies that school administrators routinely involve teachers in key decisions, value their professional input, and endorse teamwork as a core operational practice. Moreover, Maral (2022) results showed that most of the school principals adopted participative decision-making style which means they consider the view of teachers before making any decision in the school. In addition to it, Delmonte (2022) found that the popular elementary school principals frequently use dependent decision-making styles, while their teachers perform the expected seven key result areas the majority of the time. Further, as a result of the research findings Demirbilek et al., (2022) revealed that school administrators frequently use rational decision-making style in their decisions and pass the decisions and alternatives through a logical filter. In addition to this, Capulong (2022) also revealed in their findings that most exhibited style by the school principals are rational decision-making style followed by dependent decision-making style. Furthermore, Scutt (2025) found that the school leader decision-making is based on the research evidence alongside multiple information sources, using them selectively and differently according to the nature of the decision.

3.3 Theme 2: Collaborative and Participative Decision-Making as a Catalyst for School performance

This theme emphasizes the role of shared and participative decision-making practiced by school leaders within the educational context. The reviewed studies collectively indicate that school improvement primarily stems from the active involvement of subordinates such as teachers and staff in the decision-making processes. An examination of recent research abstracts on collaborative and participative leadership in schools reveals several emerge in patterns and trends in this area. A major trend across multiple studies indicates that collaborative and participative decision-making by school principals meaningfully increases school performance across academic, organizational, and well-being dimensions. Correlation analysis from various studies highlights that principals who actively include teachers in decision processes achieve higher levels of school effectiveness. Chang & Abdullah (2025) established that a collaborative decision-making approach by principals is consistently and significantly positively correlated with all the aspects of school performance, which includes improved instructional strategies, heightened student's engagement and well-being, improved teacher's morale, and greater parental participation. Similarly, Faundo et al., (2023) emphasized that collective decision-making by school principals is a vital determinant of school effectiveness and overall improvement. The findings exposed that when principals adopting a participative approach actively involve teachers, students, and parents in decision-making, which leads to significant optimistic outcomes across multiple dimensions of school functioning. Similarly, Shikokoti et al., (2023) findings strengthen the idea that participative leadership where principals seek and integrate teachers' input into decision processes shows a crucial role to improve the overall functioning of the school. Furthermore, Maral (2022) highlights collaborative decision-making as a driving force in school improvement, demonstrating that principals who engage teachers at every stage of school decision-making foster shared ownership, accountability, and trust. By involving teachers across multiple domains of school management, this approach strengthens teamwork, enhances teacher empowerment and satisfaction, and ultimately supports holistic school development. Furthermore, Saad & Yakubu (2022) findings indicated that an autocratic, one-person approach to decision-making by principals negatively shakes the overall management of secondary schools. In contrast, a participatory decision-making style was shown to facilitate smoother operations and more effective school management within the study area. The study therefore recommended that principals adopt a more democratic approach to leadership by employing diverse decision-making strategies and promoting active participation among staff. Encourage collaborative involvement in decision processes can help lessen conflicts within educational institutions, thereby support from effective administration, quality teaching and learning, better academic performance, and the successful achievement of educational goals and objectives. Similarly, Delmonte (2022) underscores school principals by adopting a shared decision-making approach fosters collaboration and contributes to improved school effectiveness and educational outcomes. In addition to this, Esther & Julius (2022) came to the assumption that delegate and collaborative decision-making approaches significantly contribute to the effective administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. When principals share authority and involve teachers in important decisions, it promotes organizational efficiency, transparency, and a more cohesive school environment. Moreover, Mawajdeh (2022) exposed that teacher involvement in decision-making has a direct and positive impact on overall school achievement. Teachers play a pivotal part for the rise in the quality of education and institutional progress. The findings stress that when principals actively consult and collaborate with teachers in decision-making processes, school performance advances notably across multiple domains. Hence, leaders are encouraged to engage in open dialogue and shared consultation with teachers to strengthen educational outcomes and adopt a more collaborative school environment. Additionally, Ayeni & Ojo (2022) findings revealed a significant association between principals' decision-making policies and students' academic performance. However, the study also noted that teachers' involvement in decision-making continued moderate, which resembled with only moderate levels of teacher productivity and student achievement. This suggests that increasing teacher participation in decision-making processes could raise both instructional effectiveness and academic outcomes. Similarly, Lessy et al., (2024) results discovered that the principals' collaborative communication and common decision-making nurtured collective participation among staff. Their co-decision-making and delegation of authority enhanced academic achievement strengthened school management, and improved student-centered activities, reflects the positive impact of participative leadership on overall school performance. Furthermore, study conducted by Musengamana et al., (2024) found that by integrating teachers' perspectives into key decisions was recommended as essential for the overall quality of educational leadership and institutional effectiveness. Additionally, Japaah (2021) found that involving teachers in the decision-making of the school boosts their morale and contributes to improved academic performance.

3.4 Theme 3: Collaborative Decision-Making as a Driver of Teacher Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

This theme highlights that involving teachers in the decision-making of the school fosters empowerment and job satisfaction, which results in overall school improvement. Olaifa et al., (2025) reported a significant association between collaborative decision-making strategies and teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools in Kwara State. The study established that when principals adopt collaborative approaches and actively engage teachers in planning, problem-solving, and policy formulation, leads to higher levels of satisfaction among the teaching staff. Similarly, Shikokoti et al., (2023) established that principals who actively involve teachers in the decision-making process definitely influence teacher job satisfaction. The study highlighted that when teachers are assumed opportunities to contribute to school-related decisions, they feel more valued, respected, and professionally empowered. Similarly, Alamri (2021) study highlighted that devolving school-level decision-making raise the effective collaboration between principals and teachers, increase the educational leadership and student outcomes. It highlighted to create a supportive school culture that encourages teacher participation in decision-making. It is recommended that principals provide regular opportunities for teachers to contribute to key decisions, ensures their perspectives are valued and integrated into school improvement efforts. Additionally, Maral (2022) originates that most school administrators believe they actively comprise teachers in every stage of the decision-making process, ensures the important decisions are made collaboratively. The study exposed that teachers are meaningfully involved in multiple domains of school management, including community-oriented, organizational-oriented, decision-oriented, individual-oriented, and implementation-oriented areas. This comprehensive approach not only values teachers' expertise but also increases a sense of ownership and shared accountability within the school environment. Through open communication and collective problem-solving, principals strengthen trust and teamwork among staff. These findings support closely with **theme 3**, that collaborative and participative decision-making across diverse domains promotes teacher empowerment, professional satisfaction, and holistic school improvement. Additionally, Delmonte (2022) stated that maximum elementary school principals predominantly adopt a dependent decision-making style, rely on input and guidance from others when making a key administrative choice. This approach appears to increase a collaborative environment in which teachers actively fulfill the expected seven key result areas of their professional roles. Furthermore, the study established a strong and optimistic relationship between the dependent decision-making style of school heads and the overall work performance of teachers, suggesting that when principals involve and depend on their subordinates' insights, it boosts teacher accountability, motivation, and performance. . Furthermore, study conducted by Musengamana et al., (2024) found that the schools should reinforce teacher involvement in decision-making processes to adopt collaboration and a sense of ownership. Encouraging active participation would not only enhance teacher motivation and job satisfaction but also promote flexibility and innovation in school management.

4. Discussion

The first theme exhibits that rational decision-making remains the most frequently used style by the principals. Studies conducted by Aykut & Cinkir (2025), Demirbilek et al. (2022), Capulong (2022), and Ladines (2025) demonstrated the predominance of rational and data-informed decision-making approaches, which indicated that principals rely more on the evidence, logical analysis, and systematic way of approaching things while making school related decisions. This tendency reflects the growing importance of rationality based educational leadership, where responsibility frameworks and performance metrics impose organized decision processes. Further, Chang & Abdullah (2025) and Scutt (2025) highlighted that principals involve stakeholders into decision-making depending on the intricacy and nature of the decisions. Such findings advocate that modern-day school principals often unify rational and participative styles rather than adhering rigidly to a single approach. Interestingly, Obadimeji and Oredein (2022) reported that directive decision-making is widespread in certain contexts, indicating contextual and cultural influences on leadership practices. Additionally, Delmonte (2022) indicated that some principals depend on inputs from others, which may reflect the reflect institutional culture or structural expectations. In nutshell, while rational decision-making dominates at a structural level, participative and inclusive styles function as complementary mechanisms that enhance effectiveness. This hybridization of styles appears to shape modern educational leadership.

The second theme affirms that collaborative decision-making significantly led to school improvement. It indicates that a strong positive relationship exists between the principal's collaborative decision-making and school outcomes. Studies concluded by Chang & Abdullah (2025), Faundo et al. (2023), and Shikokoti et al. (2023) consistently found that when school principals involve teachers in the decision-making of the school, it contributes to school improvement in terms of instructional quality, student engagement, and teacher morale.

These findings are consistent with the participative leadership theory, which stated that inclusive governance structures boost collective efficacy and organizational commitment. It proposes that collaborative leadership boosts shared ownership, trust, and accountability. Additionally, Maral (2022) & Lessy et al. (2024) highlights that shared decision-making and delegation of power strengthens teamwork and encourages student-centered practices, thereby leading to organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, studies by Saad & Yakubu (2022) emphasize that autocratic decision-making negatively impacts the school management. This contrast strengthens the idea that democratic and participatory practices are more favorable for effective school administration.

The third theme indicates a strong relationship between collaborative decision-making and teacher empowerment and job satisfaction. Studies such as Olaifa et al. (2025), Shikokoti et al. (2023), and Alamri (2021) found that teachers who are actively engaged by the principals in school planning, policy formulation, and problem-solving experiences a higher level of empowerment and organizational commitment. When teachers perceive that they are being valued and included in decision-making, they demonstrate the increased motivation, satisfaction, accountability, and instructional effectiveness. Maral (2022) demonstrated that involvement in various domains such as organizational, instructional, community-oriented, and implementation related boosts shared accountability and trust within the school culture. Further, Delmonte (2022) and Musengamana et al. (2024) strengthen the significance of dependent and collaborative decision-making styles in enhancing teacher performance. Their findings advocate that when principals rely on teachers' expertise and professional judgment, they cultivate a culture of shared leadership, flexibility, and innovation. Importantly, the review indicates that collaborative leadership is not only associated with teacher satisfaction but also indirectly influences student achievement through enhanced instructional quality and professional engagement. Thus, teacher empowerment emerges as both an outcome and a strategic pathway toward institutional excellence.

4.1 Limitations of the Study

There are certain limitations even after this systematic review has been conducted as per the PRISMA guidelines to ensure methodological rigor and transparency. Firstly, only two academic databases have been selected to conduct the review, which resulted in the exclusion of other relevant studies published in other databases. Secondly, only those studies are taken into the research which is published in the English language and within a specified time frame, potentially leading to language and publication bias. Thirdly, variability in the research measurement tools, design, features of the sample, and contextual settings across the included studies may restrict the comparability and synthesis of the findings. Furthermore, the elimination of unpublished dissertations, conference papers, and non-peer-reviewed reports may have narrowed the richness of evidence. Finally, even after the adoption of systematic screening procedures, there is a possibility of reviewer biasness during selection of the study and data extraction. Future research may enlarge database coverage, include multilingual sources, and use meta-analytic techniques to reinforce evidence synthesis and generalizability.

4.2 Implications of the Study and Future Research Direction

This study is significant as it highlights how school administrators' decision-making styles directly influence teacher's empowerment, teacher's job satisfaction and school performance. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and educational institutions to design leadership training programs that promote collaborative and supportive practices, thereby fostering teacher satisfaction and a positive work environment. For school principals and administrators, the study serves as a reflective tool to evaluate and improve their leadership approaches, ultimately contributing to employee retention and the alignment of staff efforts with school goals. Furthermore, it adds to the existing body of knowledge in educational leadership and underscores the critical role of effective decision-making in achieving sustainable school success.

Future research should examine the long-term effects of different principal decision-making styles on teacher empowerment, job satisfaction, and student learning outcomes using longitudinal research designs. Comparative studies across different educational levels, school types, and cultural contexts are also recommended to improve the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future studies may explore mediating or moderating factors, such as organizational culture, teacher self-efficacy, and leadership competencies, that influence the relationship between principals' decision-making styles and school performance.

5. Conclusion

Across the reviewed literature, a clear pattern appears regarding the decision-making styles most frequently

adopted by school principals. The collective evidence indicates that while principals employ a range of styles including rational, intuitive, directive, and dependent but collaborative and participative approaches consistently remain the utmost dominant and influential in contemporary school leadership practice. Additionally, these studies demonstrated that principals who vigorously involve teachers in decision-making foster higher levels of teacher commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction. School administrator that boosts teamwork, value teacher contributions, and involves staff in discussions prior to implement decisions creates an environment of shared responsibility and mutual respect. Such wide range of practices not only strengthen staff morale but also improve the overall functioning of the school. The convergence of findings across diverse educational settings recommends that collaborative and participative decision-making styles are powerfully associated with improved academic performance, smoother organizational processes, and heightened teacher empowerment. Thus, it features that modern school leadership is increasingly defined by decentralized authority, open communication, and shared leadership elements that collectively pay to more effective and sustainable school improvement.

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