EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:10 |October 2025 -Peer Reviewed Journal

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra24344
DOI No: 10.36713/epra24344

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of community involvement and school climate on the decision-making processes in school management in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental, using a descriptive-correlational research design. A total of 262 elementary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling, and validated survey instruments were used for data collection. The findings revealed that community involvement was generally extensive, with active participation in decision-making emerging as the most evident, while collaboration with school administration was only moderately extensive. School climate was also rated extensive, particularly in perception of safety and positive relationships, though supportive learning environment and inclusive practices remained moderately extensive. Decision-making processes were extensively practiced, especially in data-driven strategies and transparent communication, while inclusive consultation showed moderate implementation. Correlation results showed significant positive relationships between community involvement and decision-making, most notably through engagement in student mentorship. Similarly, school climate demonstrated a strong correlation with decision-making, with perception of safety as the highest contributing factor. Regression analysis confirmed that both community involvement and school climate significantly influenced decision-making processes, with school climate exhibiting a stronger predictive value. These results affirm the relevance of systemic, participative, and organizational theories in educational governance.

KEYWORDS: *Community Involvement; School Climate; Decision-Making; Participative Leadership; School Governance*

INTRODUCTION

This study posits that community involvement and school climate significantly influence the decision-making processes in rural school management. However, many schools in these areas struggle with weak decision-making practices, partly due to limited stakeholder participation and support. These deficiencies hinder school progress and affect overall educational outcomes. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore how both community involvement and school climate can help strengthen decision-making in these settings. Thus, this research focuses on the Lupon West District, Davao Oriental to investigate and improve the effectiveness of decision-making processes in school management.

Enhancing decision-making processes is crucial, particularly by integrating community involvement and fostering a positive school climate. Community members should actively participate in school decisions to ensure that local needs and priorities are reflected in educational policies. A supportive school climate, characterized by transparent communication and collaboration, can improve the overall educational environment. In Lupon West District, where the researcher is stationed, enhancing these factors will promote more inclusive, transparent, and effective school management, benefiting both educators and students.

Poor decision-making processes in school management present significant challenges across various regions, including the USA, Arabian countries, Asia, and the Philippines. In the USA, Blake and Mestry (2020) explored how parental decision-making influences school choice, finding that a lack of transparent decision-making from school leaders often complicates the process for parents. This issue highlights the problematic gap between school management and the community's expectations, particularly when decisions are made without considering parental perspectives. Similarly, Dodman et al. (2019) discussed how equity audits and critical data-driven decision-making tools are underutilized, which limits schools' ability to address deeper issues beyond academic performance gaps. This points to a broader problem of ineffective decision-making processes that fail to address systemic inequities in U.S. schools.

In Arabian countries, poor decision-making processes are often linked to inadequate use of data in strategic planning. Aseeri and Kang (2023) examined how organizational culture and big data integration in Saudi Arabian higher education affect strategic decision-making. They found that many schools struggle to utilize big data effectively due to insufficient training and technological infrastructure, leading to suboptimal decisions that affect institutional development. In a similar context, AlShammari and AlAjmi (2024) studied the perspectives of school principals on applying data-driven decision-making (DDDM) in centralized school settings in Kuwait. Their findings indicated that while school leaders recognize the value of DDDM, they often face structural barriers, such as rigid policies and limited autonomy, which restrict their ability to make informed, data-backed decisions.

In Asia, the challenges of poor decision-making processes in school management are often compounded by political and governance issues. Mailool et al. (2020) investigated the effects of principals' decision-making on teacher performance in Indonesian vocational high schools. They found that a lack of organizational commitment and an unsupportive school climate further exacerbates poor decision-making, leading to diminished teacher performance and overall school effectiveness. Jarvis and Mok (2019) highlighted how political and economic factors influence higher education governance in Asia, particularly in countries like China and Japan. Their study reveals that decision-making processes in schools are often dictated by political agendas rather than educational needs, creating inefficiencies in school management. In the Philippines, decision-making processes in school management are similarly affected by a range of institutional and ethical issues. Catacutan and de Guzman (2015) examined ethical decision-making among academic administrators in the country and found that a lack of clear ethical frameworks often leads to inconsistent decisions that negatively impact school operations and student outcomes. Antonio and Lorenzo (2019) focused on the adoption and use of ICT in school management in Ilocos, highlighting that poor decision-making processes are exacerbated by the limited integration of technology in administrative functions. This issue limits the ability of schools to streamline operations and make more informed decisions, especially in public secondary schools where resources are already constrained.

Meanwhile, the research gap that led to the conduct of the current study, stems from the lack of comprehensive studies examining the intersection between community involvement, school climate, and decision-making in rural educational settings. Existing literature often focuses on urban or national contexts, overlooking the unique challenges rural schools face in fostering collaborative governance. In rural districts like Lupon West, the dynamics of community involvement and school climate are significantly different due to limited resources, cultural factors, and often weaker community-school partnerships. Despite the known importance of inclusive decision-making, studies on how local stakeholders, including parents and community leaders, influence decision-making processes in rural schools remain underexplored. This gap creates an urgent need to investigate how community engagement and school climate impact the effectiveness of decision-making in these settings, where external support and resources are often limited.

The urgency of this study also arises from the evolving demands on school management due to educational reforms and increasing expectations from both the Department of Education and local communities. School leaders in Lupon West District face the challenge of making informed decisions that address not only academic concerns but also the well-being of students, the professional development of teachers, and the integration of community values into the educational system. Given these challenges, there is a pressing need to examine how school climate factors, such as relationships between staff, student safety, and inclusivity, intersect with decision-making processes. Understanding these dynamics will provide crucial insights into how schools in rural areas can improve management practices by fostering stronger community collaboration and enhancing the overall school climate, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

This section covers discussions on variables and their indicators. It includes analyses of concepts, ideas, and perspectives sourced from various authors through a range of books, journals, and electronic platforms.

Community Involvement

Community involvement refers to the active participation and collaboration of parents, local organizations, community members, and other stakeholders in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of school policies and programs. It is a crucial aspect of creating a supportive educational environment that promotes student achievement and school development (Tadle-Zaragosa & Sonsona, 2021). In the study by Bashir et al. (2021), community involvement in public secondary schools was examined through the perceptions of students, emphasizing the essential role that stakeholders, including parents, local leaders, and community members, play in enhancing educational outcomes. The study highlighted that active participation from the community fosters a collaborative environment that supports school management, improves student behavior, and boosts overall school performance. Moreover, the research found that stakeholders' engagement in school activities contributes to better resource allocation and helps in addressing local educational challenges, particularly in underprivileged areas like district Kech, Balochistan.

The study by Lauwo and Mkulu (2021) explored the challenges facing community involvement in ensuring quality education in public secondary schools in the Meru District, Arusha Region, Tanzania. They found that despite moderate levels of community participation, there were significant challenges such as limited awareness, financial constraints, and

cultural barriers that hindered deeper engagement in school governance and educational activities. This moderate involvement contributed to uneven support for school development and inconsistent participation in decision-making processes. Similarly, Mo and Abdulle (2019) highlighted in their study of community participation in health education in Mogadishu, Somalia, that moderate involvement from community stakeholders often led to challenges in effective program implementation. Community members were not fully engaged, resulting in limited impact on the overall quality of health education initiatives, which parallels the need for stronger involvement in school settings to ensure consistent and impactful educational outcomes.

In a different context, Hetherington and Forrester (2022) examined community and parental involvement in the governance of the Co-operative Academies Trust in the UK. Their findings indicated that although community engagement was present, it remained at a moderate level due to systemic barriers in the neoliberal education system, which limited stakeholders' ability to influence governance meaningfully. This moderate engagement restricted the potential for truly values-led governance, where community input could shape educational priorities and policies. In Indonesia, Suwandi (2019) also examined community participation in local development planning and found that while community stakeholders were moderately involved in the planning process, strategic participation strategies were required to deepen their engagement. The moderate level of involvement hindered the full realization of community-driven educational development, similar to the need for increased stakeholder participation in schools to ensure holistic educational improvement.

Community involvement plays a critical role in the decision-making processes in school management, as highlighted by Gemechu (2014), who examined teacher involvement in decision-making in Jimma, Ethiopia. Gemechu found that when teachers and the broader community were involved in decision-making, there was a notable improvement in school management outcomes, as it fostered shared responsibility and collaboration among stakeholders. Similarly, Tijani (2020) in his study on teachers' involvement in decision-making in Kwara State, Nigeria, noted that active community and teacher participation positively influenced job performance and school effectiveness. The study underscored the importance of democratic decision-making processes, suggesting that when communities are meaningfully engaged, school leaders can create more supportive environments that enhance both student and teacher performance.

In Kenya, Dinah, Onyango, and Kyalo (2019) explored the extent of student involvement in decision-making in secondary school management. Their research in Tharaka-Nithi and Nairobi Counties revealed that moderate levels of student and community participation in governance led to more balanced and transparent decision-making processes, promoting a more inclusive school culture. Similarly, Mulwa, Akala, and Kalai (2020) examined the influence of principals' use of collaborative decision-making on student discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya. They found that when school principals actively engaged teachers, parents, and students in decision-making, the schools experienced improved discipline and student outcomes. These studies demonstrate that community participation in decision-making not only enhances the transparency of governance processes but also positively impacts the overall school climate and student behavior.

Moreover, Guaralda et al. (2019) emphasized the significance of interactive methodologies for community involvement in decision-making in their study on place-making in urban planning. The InstaBooth methodology, which facilitated community engagement in urban planning decisions, proved that active stakeholder involvement leads to better planning outcomes and more inclusive governance processes. Similarly, Ordóñez et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review on urban forest governance and concluded that community participation in decision-making greatly influences the success of environmental management initiatives. These findings reinforce the idea that engaging community stakeholders in school management decisions can lead to more sustainable and effective governance, ensuring that the decisions made reflect the needs and priorities of all stakeholders involved.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main aim of this study was to assess the joint impact of community involvement and school climate on the decision-making processes in school management in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental. Consequently, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the level of community involvement in terms of:
    - 1.1 active participation in decision-making;
    - 1.2 collaboration with school administration;
    - 1.3 support for extracurricular activities; and
    - 1.4 engagement in student mentorship and development programs?
2. What is the status of school climate in terms of:
    - 2.1 perception of safety;
    - 2.2 positive relationships;
    - 2.3 supportive learning environment; and
    - 2.4 inclusive practices?
3. What is the extent of decision-making processes in school management in terms of:
    - 3.1 inclusive consultation;

3.2 data-driven decision making;
3.3 transparency in communication; and
3.4 delegation of responsibilities?

4. Is there a significant relationship between:
4.1 community involvement and decision-making processes in school management?; and
4.2 school climate and decision-making processes in school management?

5. Do community involvement and school climate significantly predict the decision-making processes in school management?

METHODOLOGY

This section provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, including details on the research respondents, ethical considerations, research instruments, and procedural steps. It also outlined the methods for data collection and analysis, ensuring a clear framework for the study.

Research Design

For this study, the researcher utilized a quantitative research approach, applying a descriptive-correlational method to gather data, insights, and relevant information. A quantitative research approach involved the systematic investigation of phenomena by collecting numerical data and applying statistical techniques to test hypotheses or examine relationships between variables. It focused on objective measurements and the analysis of data using mathematical, statistical, or computational tools (Ahmad et al., 2019). A quantitative approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to objectively measure and analyze the extent of community involvement and its impact on school management. By utilizing statistical methods, the study identified patterns, relationships, and significant factors affecting decision-making processes. Additionally, this approach facilitated the generalization of findings to broader contexts, providing valuable insights for educational policy and practice.

Further, the descriptive method of research was a quantitative approach that involved gathering, analyzing, and presenting data to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon without manipulating variables. It aimed to provide an accurate snapshot of the current situation by observing and recording behaviors, opinions, and conditions (Mohajan, 2020). The descriptive method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to objectively examine and document the existing practices and perceptions of teachers within Lupon West District. This method helped identify patterns in how community involvement and school climate influenced decision-making processes, without altering any of the natural settings. By using this approach, the researcher generated data-driven insights that were reflective of the current educational environment and its stakeholders.

Furthermore, the correlational method of research was a quantitative approach that examined the relationship between two or more variables to determine whether and how they were related, without manipulating the variables. This method identified the strength and direction of relationships, often using statistical tools such as correlation coefficients to analyze the data (Hassan, 2024). The correlational method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to assess how community involvement and school climate influenced decision-making processes without altering any of the natural conditions. This approach was useful in identifying whether a significant relationship existed between these factors and school management practices. Additionally, it provided insights into how school climate and community involvement interacted, helping to inform strategies for improving school governance.

Vulnerability of Research Respondents

The researcher carefully considered the vulnerability of the teacher-respondents in Lupon West District, especially with respect to their professional roles and potential concerns about sharing candid opinions. The study adopted measures to minimize any psychological discomfort or concern that respondents might have had about participating in research that involved school management and decision-making processes. Teachers may have felt vulnerable when discussing sensitive topics related to school climate and leadership; hence, the researcher ensured that a supportive, non-threatening environment was maintained throughout the data collection process.

The researcher also acknowledged that some respondents might have felt hesitant to share critical feedback on their school's management due to concerns of repercussions. To address this, the researcher assured them of complete anonymity and emphasized that their responses would not be traced back to them personally. By taking these precautions, the researcher created a sense of trust, ensuring respondents could participate freely without fear of judgment or negative consequences.

Research Instrument

The study made use of adopted survey questionnaires to suit the current investigation. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first part focused on community involvement. This section of the questionnaire was distributed among four indicators: active participation in decision-making; collaboration with school administration; support for extracurricular activities; and engagement in student mentorship and development programs. The Cronbach alpha value for this instrument

is 0.967, described as excellent and interpreted as highly reliable and consistent. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale, and the determination was based on the following ranges of means:

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were utilized by the researcher in processing the gathered data:

Weighted Mean

This referred to the average score of teacher responses on decision-making processes, community involvement, and school climate, providing a general indication of trends within the data. It helped to summarize the overall perceptions of the respondents in key areas related to school management practices.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

This statistical tool was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between community involvement and school climate with decision-making processes in school management. It helped the researcher understand if a positive or negative correlation existed between these variables

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was employed to predict the influence of community involvement and school climate on the decision-making processes in school management. It assessed how much these factors contributed to shaping effective decision-making in the educational context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results generated from the data gathered. It is sequenced based on the objectives of the study as presented in the first chapter. Thus, it presents the extents of community involvement, school climate, and decision-making processes in school management in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental; the significant relationship among these variables; and the influence of community involvement and school climate on the decision-making processes in school management in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental.

Community Involvement

The community involvement in this study is measured in terms of active participation in decision-making; collaboration with school administration; support for extracurricular activities; and engagement in student mentorship and development programs. The extent of this variable and its domains are presented in Tables 1-4.

Active Participation in Decision-Making

On Table 1, the findings indicate that the extent of community involvement in terms of active participation in decision-making is extensive, as evidenced by an overall mean of 3.70. This suggests that schools frequently engage community members, including parents and local stakeholders, in key discussions and decision-making processes. Such involvement reinforces the democratic nature of school governance and helps ensure that educational practices reflect the values and needs of the community (Sideri et al., 2019). As emphasized by Machimana et al. (2021), meaningful community engagement fosters a sense of shared responsibility, leading to more effective and sustainable educational reforms.

The mean values range from 3.51 to 3.87, both classified as extensive. The highest-rated item, Involving parents in discussions about school policies and initiatives, received a mean of 3.87. Conversely, the lowest-rated item, Valuing the community's voice in shaping the school's vision and goals, garnered a mean of 3.51. This aligns with the observation of Behravesh et al. (2021), who noted that while schools often solicit community feedback, translating that input into long-term vision planning requires stronger institutional commitment. These results underscore the importance of not only inviting community participation but also integrating their perspectives into the core mission and leadership strategies of the school.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the paper presents the conclusion and recommendation of the researcher. The discussion is supported by the literature presented in the first chapters and the conclusion is in accordance with statements of the problem presented in this study.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of community involvement and school climate on the decision-making processes in school management in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental utilizing non-experimental quantitative design using descriptive-correlation technique. The researcher selected the 262 elementary school teachers within the district as the respondents through simple random sampling method. The researcher made use of modified and enhanced adapted survey questionnaires which was pilot tested in a nearby school to ensure high reliability and internal consistency of the items in the instrument. The result of the study are summarize as follows:

The extent of community involvement in Lupon West District, Davao Oriental is rated as extensive, indicating that schools regularly engage parents, local leaders, and organizations in school-related initiatives. Among the four dimensions, active

participation in decision-making is the most evident, highlighting consistent efforts to include stakeholders in policy formulation and school governance. Meanwhile, collaboration with school administration is rated moderately extensive, suggesting the need to strengthen institutional partnerships and enhance structured community dialogues.

Regarding school climate, the findings reveal that it is generally experienced to an extensive degree across the district. Perception of safety and positive relationships are the most prominent indicators, reflecting secure and respectful environments conducive to learning. However, both supportive learning environment and inclusive practices are only moderately extensive, indicating areas where schools could enhance emotional support, differentiated instruction, and equitable treatment of all students.

In terms of decision-making processes in school management, the results show an overall extensive level of practice. Data-driven decision-making and transparency in communication are the most evident indicators, highlighting the systematic use of information and open channels of leadership communication. On the other hand, inclusive consultation is only moderately extensive, which implies that teacher involvement in planning and feedback integration could be more thoroughly embedded in administrative processes.

The correlation analysis confirms significant positive relationships between community involvement and decision-making processes in school management. Engagement in student mentorship and development programs shows the strongest relationship, followed closely by collaboration with school administration. While support for extracurricular activities has a weaker association, all dimensions demonstrate statistically significant links, affirming that community engagement is a meaningful contributor to school governance.

A strong positive correlation also emerges between school climate and decision-making processes. Perception of safety demonstrates the most robust association, followed by positive relationships and supportive learning environments. Although inclusive practices exhibit a slightly weaker correlation, the results collectively suggest that positive internal school environments foster more participative and transparent decision-making cultures.
The regression analysis further reveals that both community involvement and school climate significantly influence decision-making processes in school management. School climate exhibits a stronger predictive influence, suggesting that internal relational dynamics play a central role in shaping governance practices. The model accounts for variance in decision-making.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study several conclusions were generated:
The findings conclude that community involvement in Lupon West District is extensively observed, especially in terms of active participation in decision-making, support for extracurricular activities, and engagement in student mentorship programs. This indicates that schools have successfully integrated community stakeholders into various educational initiatives and governance processes. However, the moderately extensive rating on collaboration with school administration suggests a need to formalize and expand school-community partnerships to ensure sustained and meaningful engagement in leadership activities.

As to the school climate, results show that it is extensively experienced, particularly in perception of safety and fostering positive relationships among school stakeholders. This implies that schools provide a generally supportive and secure environment conducive to learning and collaboration. Nonetheless, the moderately extensive ratings in supportive learning environments and inclusive practices suggest that schools must continue improving differentiated instruction and equitable policies to fully address the diverse needs of learners and teachers.

Regarding the decision-making processes in school management, the findings reveal that practices are generally extensive, with strengths observed in data-driven decision-making and transparency in communication. These findings imply that schools are utilizing empirical data and open dialogue to shape policies and operational decisions effectively. However, inclusive consultation remains moderately extensive, indicating a need to further empower teachers and staff in participatory leadership to foster collective ownership of school directions.

The study reveals that community involvement significantly correlates with decision-making processes in school management, with engagement in student mentorship programs having the strongest relationship. This suggests that when communities are meaningfully engaged, particularly in supporting student development, school leaders are more likely to make inclusive and effective decisions. The weaker but still significant correlation with extracurricular support emphasizes that while such engagement contributes positively, deeper integration is needed to maximize its governance impact.

In relation to school climate, a strong and significant positive correlation is established with decision-making processes, with perception of safety showing the highest association. This underscores the essential role of a positive and secure

environment in promoting participative and responsive school leadership. The findings suggest that when school stakeholders feel safe and valued, they are more likely to engage actively in shaping school policies and initiatives.

Finally, result affirms that both community involvement and school climate significantly influence the decision-making processes in school management, with school climate exerting a stronger predictive effect. The model demonstrates a high explanatory power, supporting Bertalanffy's (1968) Systems Theory by showing that interconnected elements like climate and community shape institutional outcomes. Moreover, the findings uphold Vroom and Yetton's (1973) Participative Decision-Making Theory and Litwin and Stringer's (1968) Organizational Climate Theory, as they confirm that participatory structures and a conducive school environment jointly enhance governance effectiveness.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are offered to inform policy, school leadership, teaching practice, and future research:

DepEd officials. Based on the findings, collaboration with school administration emerged as the lowest-rated indicator of community involvement. To address this, DepEd officials are encouraged to institutionalize regular school-community dialogue mechanisms that formalize participation in planning and program development. Establishing local stakeholder committees may bridge gaps between school leadership and community involvement, ensuring shared accountability and consistent collaboration.

Also, support for extracurricular activities had the weakest correlation with decision-making processes. Hence, DepEd officials are encouraged to integrate co-curricular engagement in school governance frameworks by allocating resources and recognizing community-led programs. Doing so would highlight the importance of non-academic contributions to student development and community cohesion.

Teachers. The supportive learning environment scored the lowest in terms of school climate. Therefore, teachers are advised to foster inclusive classroom practices by co-developing learner-centered strategies that promote engagement, emotional safety, and well-being. This may include differentiated instruction, accessible learning materials, and active monitoring of learner experiences to build trust and motivation.

Inclusive practices received the lowest rating in school climate dimensions. In response, teachers are recommended to undergo targeted professional development on inclusive education and culturally responsive pedagogy. Strengthening these competencies will help ensure that every learner, regardless of background, feels valued and supported within the learning environment.

School Heads. Inclusive consultation was found to be only moderately extensive among the indicators of decision-making processes in school management. Thus, school heads should adopt participatory leadership models that integrate teacher voices in key decision-making areas. Organizing consultation sessions, suggestion systems, and co-planning activities can empower teachers and reinforce their role in shaping effective school policies.

Future Researchers. Both community involvement and school climate significantly influence decision-making processes, but attention must still be given to their implementation in specific contexts. Future researchers are encouraged to explore how school typologies, community culture, and leadership styles mediate these influences.

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