

A Study of Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers in Public Sector Universities of the Punjab

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the different decision making styles of academic managers in public sector universities of the Central Punjab. The theoretical structure for this study was based on Vroom-Yetton model of decision making styles. The multi-stage random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 186 heads from ten public sector universities. The instrument for data collection named as Decision Making Styles Questionnaire (DMSQ) developed by the researcher. The instrument validation was done under the guidance of a panel of experts in educational administration and educational research. The data was collected through survey research method and was analyzed by applying descriptive statistics i.e. mean and standard deviation and inferential statistical analysis technique (e.g. t-test and ANOVA). The results of the study revealed that autocratic I style of decision making had the highest mean score as compared to other decision making styles. In addition, there was no significant demographic difference regarding the gender and age of academic managers. However, their marital status and qualification both have significant effects on their decision making styles.

Keywords: Academic manager, Autocratic I, Decision making styles

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Introduction

Universities are unit of individuals that are formed and managed in order to follow the collective goals (Sandes, 2013). Universities are functioning under the leadership, direction and vision of their academic managers (heads of departments). Academic managers are continuously involved in taking decisions during planning, implementing and evaluation of routine tasks. It is necessary for academic managers to create a committed vision, line up curriculum, teaching, and assessment to promote learning among pupils and to concentrate on the needs of the workplace environment and staff (Ahmed & Al-Dhuwaihi, 2020). Decision making is the most significant element and primary activity in the functioning of any organization (Kumar & Gautam, 2018) and it also shapes the structure of management. It is a process of making choices from a number of alternatives in order to move forwards some desired course of action (Bratton, Callinan, Forshaw, & Sawchuk, 2007). Decision making is an action which shows that how a person defines, think about a problem and select an alternative solution to resolve it (Aboudahr & Olowoselu, 2018).

Academic managers make decisions about the universities regarding how departments should be organized, who should lead different workforce, how to evaluate the faculty performance, commitment and motivation, work schedule of faculty, vacation time, job rotation schedule and control on individuals for problematic behaviors (Hitt, Miller, & Colella, 2006). Decision making is embedded in the process of management, spreads all over the managerial function and covers all areas of organization. Management and decision making process go side by side in every activity performed by managers (Pal, 2008). Decision making is an important and continuous task being carried out by all managers. It needs specialized, systematic, timely attention and actions from the managers (Durai, 2015).

The success of any organization mostly depends upon the quality of decisions made by its managers. The difference of institute's culture and personality traits directly affects the decision making styles of academic managers (Jabeen & Akhtar, n.d). It is the decision making styles that in turn reflect nature and thinking of academic managers in universities. It depends on their mentality that how they use information, conceptualizes and envisions the future of their university. Decision making style is a learned, usual response pattern that a person shows in a decision situation (Ding, Xu, Yang, Li & Heughten, 2020). Decision making styles are a blend of how a person recognizes and understands the situation and a manner in which he/she selects the alternative to respond a particular situation (Greenberg, 2016). Decision making styles with alternatives are chosen by managers. Vroom-Yetton decision making styles are focused on such circumstances and conditions in which managers collaborate with others in decision

making. These styles present the matter of participation of subordinates in a more complex way and also assist the managers to judge the situation and determine the style of decision making which may be currently useful to resolve issue (Chitpin & Evers, 2015). Good, effective and successful decisions making styles always lead towards high quality, well organized, understandable and acceptable for those whose assistance is required for its implementation (Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2015).

According to Vroom and Yetton (1974), decision making is a social process. They developed five decision making styles which are available to managers for using in any problematic situation. These styles include two autocratic, two consultative and one group decision making styles. These styles are discussed as under:

- **AI-** In this style the managers solve problems and take decisions with the help of available information in time by himself. It is an autocratic I decision making style.
- **AII-** This is also referred as an autocratic II decision making style and managers use this style to collect required information from the subordinates and then take decision about the problem's solution. The subordinate's role is only to provide information rather than generating alternatives.
- **CI-** In this decision making style, managers share the problem with employees individually and take suggestions and ideas from them. Managers take decisions that may or may not reflect their subordinate influence and it refers as consultative I style of decision making.
- **CII-** It refers to consultative II style of decision making in which managers solve problem on the bases of information which they obtain from employees collectively.
- **G-** It is a consensus decision making style in which manager shares the problem with employees as a total group and engages them all in consensus in order to arrive at a final decision. Managers do not try to influence on the group to adopt their solution. (Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, & Uhl-Bien, 2011).

Decision making is one of the most primary responsibilities of the management but it varies on the bases of individual's differences because every person has different thinking and information processing style that makes a difference among their decision making styles. Universities are functioning under the supervision, leadership, and vision of their academic managers. Academic managers need the abilities to take a right decision at the right time and to set up quality assurances in its real essence in universities (Greenberg, 2016). In any organization, decision making process cannot be done in a vacuum. Every organization has some external and internal factors that directly or indirectly influence on decisions. It is essential for managers to recognize the influence and role of such factors on decision making process in order to improve it (Durai, 2015).

In Pakistan, the teaching sector suffers with excessive workload, low income, poor working environment, less appreciation, less involvement in decisions making, low quality management and lack of financial incentives which are the main reasons of lack of competent and committed teachers in teaching profession (Ehsan & Naeem, 2011). To deal with these issues, it is of great significance to improve the work settings and encourage the young generation to join this profession with full commitment for the fact that teachers are one of the most essential components who can play an important role in the success of institutes in competitive environment. In this perspective, this study provides evidence to the university management to understand how the better decision making styles may motivate the faculty. The study reflects the importance of providing a favorable environment to the teachers along with provision of an opportunity in participating important decisions. Satisfactory access of information and involvement in decision making of faculty helps them to get their work done properly. This study is important by considering the fact that the academic managers are the mediators between faculty members and upper authority (e.g. Deans and Vice Chancellors), so the decisions made by them not only have a direct effect on faculty members' perceptions of equity but also the upper authority's perceptions of performance. So the aim of this research is to study the decision making styles of universities' academic managers in order to investigate the differences among their styles. In this way, this study can help the academic managers in selection of better decision making styles in future decision making process of the universities. Because good decisions always lead towards the quality oriented organization and make employees to be more committed to do their tasks which are crucial in the success of any institute.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study were to:

- i. identify the decision making styles of academic managers at university level
- ii. find out the demographic differences regarding decision making styles of academic managers

Method and Procedure

Research Design

This study was quantitative in nature and used cross sectional survey under the survey research method.

Population and Sample

All heads of public sector universities of the Punjab constituted the population of the study. Total number of heads is 337 in ten general public sector universities of the Central Zone of Punjab. The data with respect to heads was taken from each university prospectus. Multi stage random sampling technique was used to select the sample. At 1st stage, census was used to select the ten universities. At 2nd stage, four common faculties from each university were selected and at the 3rd stage, five departments from each university were selected randomly. Lottery method was used to draw the departments and 200 heads from ten public sector universities were selected as a sample of the study.

Instrument of the Study

The instrument named as Decision Making Styles Questionnaire (DMSQ) was used for data collection. Literature regarding decision making styles was thoroughly explored and instrument was developed by the researcher on five decision making styles given by Vroom-Yetton model of decision making. These five styles are recognizing as AI, AII, CI, CII, and G. AI and AII styles are based on autocratic decision making style, CI and CII styles based on consultative decision making styles and G style is based on team or consensus decision making style. A self-developed scale was used for measuring perceptions of academic managers regarding their decision making styles. Pilot study of the instrument was also conducted. Twenty heads were taken as sample of pilot study which was exempted later on. The 0.89 reliability was found for questionnaire of decision making styles. Likert type scale was used in above mentioned scale to measure the respondent attitude on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis techniques were used to analyze the collected data. Mean and standard deviation were calculated in the descriptive statistical analysis to know the percentage of the subjects according to their demographic representation. Independent sample t-test was used on demographic variables like: gender and marital status and ANOVA was used on demographic variables like: qualification and age.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Autocratic I style of Decision Making

No	Statement	M	SD
1	I have faith in my decisions.	4.35	.700
2	I make impulsive decisions.	3.93	1.003
3	I rely upon my instinct while taking decisions.	3.55	1.186
4	My decision making requires careful thought.	4.31	.790
5	I feel confident about my ability to make decisions.	3.99	1.204
6	I usually have a rational basis for making decisions.	3.75	1.215
7	I do not seek advice from others when I make decisions.	3.65	1.249
8	I place a high value to myself in making decisions and don't influence by my faculty.	3.70	.984
9	My approach towards decision making is emphasizing on thinking about the decision and selecting the most logical solution without involving the faculty.	3.46	1.217

n=186

The Table 1 showed, that item 1 “I have faith in my decisions” had the highest Mean score i.e. $M = 4.35$. This indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that they had faith on their decisions. Items 9 have lowest Mean score i.e. $M = 3.46$ indicated that the respondents agreed somewhat about selection of logical solution without involving the faculty. The range of Mean scores (4.35 to 3.46) indicates that distribution of scores is centered between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Strongly Agree (5.0).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Autocratic II style of Decision Making

No	Statement	M	SD
1	I always retain the final decision-making authority after taking suggestions from faculty by myself.	3.48	1.266
2	I used my decision making power to emphasize my leadership position over faculty.	3.60	1.112
3	I like to use my leadership power to collect information from faculty.	4.15	.734
4	In most decision making situations, I prefer taking suggestions from my faculty.	3.85	.939
5	In some situation, I give consider to faculty suggestions without mentioning their name.	3.54	1.120
6	Faculty is not allowed to make independent decisions unless it is approved by me first.	3.98	.863

n=186

The Table 2 showed, that item 3 “I like to use my leadership power to collect information from faculty” had the highest Mean score i.e. $M = 4.15$. This indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that they were using their leadership power to collect information from faculty. Items 1 had lowest Mean score i.e. $M = 3.48$ indicated that the respondents agreed to have the final decision making authority by themselves. The range of Mean scores (4.15 to 3.48) is centered between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Strongly Agree (5.0).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Consultative I style of Decision Making

No	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I try to include one or more staff members to determine what to do and how to do it. However, I maintain the final decision-making authority.	3.98	.863
2	When making decisions I like to collect lots of information from my faculty individually.	4.04	.878
3	To get information out, I send email, memos, or voice mail and my faculty are then expected to act upon the information.	4.04	.929
4	I like to have someone to steer me in the right direction when I faced some important decisions.	3.97	.932

n=186

The Table 3 showed, that item 2 & 3 “When making decisions I like to collect lots of information from my faculty individually” and “To get information out, I send email, memos, or voice mail and my faculty are then expected to act upon the information” had the highest Mean score i.e. $M = 4.04$. This indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that they were using their leadership power to collect information from faculty individually and also by sending emails etc. Items 4 with lowest Mean score i.e. $M = 3.97$ indicated that the respondents liked to have faculty guidance while taking important decisions. The range of Mean scores (4.04 to 3.97) is centered between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Strongly Agree (5.0).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Consultative II style of Decision Making

No	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I usually call meetings to take suggestions from faculty.	4.10	.904
2	The support of my faculty, make it easier for me to take important decisions.	4.09	.794
3	I like to consider all the alternatives.	4.08	.818
4	I often use the assistance of faculty when making important decisions.	4.11	.794
5	I ask for staff members' ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects but I retain a final decision making authority.	4.18	.734
6	I make workable decisions that others will accept easily.	4.17	.635
7	I double-check my information sources to be sure I have the right facts before making decisions.	4.14	.722
8	I prepare the work in advance and then seek faculty opinion.	3.92	.918

n=186

The Table 4 reflected, item 5 “I ask for staff members’ ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects but I retain a final decision making authority” was on top with highest Mean score i.e. $M = 4.18$. This revealed that respondents welcomed strongly to take staff ideas on upcoming projects of university but kept themselves as a final decision making authority. Items 8 with lowest Mean score i.e. $M = 3.92$ indicated that the respondents were not decisive for the preparation of work in advance unless take faculty opinion. The range of Mean scores (3.92 to 4.18) is centered between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Agree (4.0).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Consensus style of Decision Making

No	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I place a high value on arriving at sound decisions based on understanding and agreement of all staff.	4.17	.756
2	I look for decisions that maintain good relations and encourage staff to make decisions.	4.15	.756
3	I prefer to have decisions made in my institute by group consensus.	3.94	.925
4	I believe that taking more time to reach consensus on a strategic decision is generally worth it.	4.16	.670
5	Better decisions are made in a group than by individuals.	3.98	1.000
6	Everyone’s input is incorporated into most important university decisions.	3.91	.843
7	I want to create an environment where staff members take ownership of the project. I allow them to participate in the decision making process.	4.14	.691
8	When making decisions, the faculty works hard to reach an agreement.	3.95	.824

n=186

The Table 5 showed, that item 1 “I place a high value on arriving at sound decisions based on understanding and agreement of all staff” with the highest Mean score i.e. $M = 4.17$. This indicated that the respondents strongly agreed to take decisions with the agreement and understanding of staff. Items 6 with lowest Mean score i.e. $M = 3.91$ signified the undecided view of respondents to take feedback of every staff member. The range of Mean scores (4.17 to 3.91) is centered between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Strongly Agree (5.0).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for the Opinions regarding Overall Decision Making Styles

Overall Scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Maximum Possible Overall Score
Autocratic I	34.68	4.668	44
Autocratic II	22.55	2.870	30
Consultative I	16.03	2.487	20
Consultative II	32.80	3.456	39
Consensus	32.40	3.801	40
Overall Decision Making Styles	138.46	12.690	163

n=186

The Table 6 showed, that the Autocratic I had the highest Mean score ($M = 34.68 - 4 / 9 = 3.40$) and exists between the scale marks from Undecided (3.0) to Agree (4.0); followed by Autocratic II score ($M = 22.55 - 2 / 6 = 3.42$) that was above the scale mark Undecided (3.0); followed by Consultative I ($M = 16.03 - 2 / 4 = 3.50$) lying close to scale mark Agree (4.0) and next was Consultative II ($M = 32.80 - 3 / 8 = 3.72$) that was very close to scale mark Agree (4.0); followed by Consensus ($M = 32.40 - 3 / 8 = 3.67$) moving toward scale mark Agree (4.0). The Overall Decision Making Styles had the mean score ($M = 138.46 - 12 / 35 = 3.61$) that was above the scale mark Undecided (3.0)

Table 7

Gender-wise Comparison for Overall Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers

Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Male	94	139.66	13.470	1.309	.198
Female	92	137.23	11.787		

Note. N = 186. df = 181 (Equal variances not assumed)

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the decision making styles' scores for males and females. The Table 7 showed that there was no significant difference in scores for males ($M = 139.66$, $SD = 13.470$) and females ($M = 137.23$, $SD = 11.787$); $t(181) = 1.309$, $p = .198$, regarding their decision making styles. So the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference among decision making styles of academic managers with reference to gender' was retained.

Table 8

Marital status -wise Comparison for Overall Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers

Marital Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Married	179	138.40	12.887	-.297	.013
Single	7	139.86	6.012		

Note. N = 186. df = 184 (Equal variances assumed)

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the decision making styles scores with reference to marital status. The Table 8 showed significant difference in scores for married ($M = 138.40$, $SD = 12.887$) and single ($M = 139.86$, $SD = 6.012$); $t(184) = -.297$, $p = .013$, regarding their decision making styles. So the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference among decision making styles of academic managers with reference to marital status' was rejected.

Table 9

Qualification-wise Comparison for Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers

Qualification	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
MA/MSc	17	144.24	12.925	3	2.904	.036
Mphil/MS	24	141.88	11.881	182		
Phd	135	136.83	12.782			
Post Doc	10	142.40	8.276			
Total	186	138.46	12.690	185		

A one-way ANOVA between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the effect of qualification on decision making styles of academic managers. Subjects were divided into four groups according to their qualification (Group 1: MA/MSc; Group 2: MPhil/MS; Group 3: Phd; Group 4: Post Doc). There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in decision making styles of academic managers for the four qualification groups. ($F = .990$, $p = .036$). So the null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference among decision making styles of academic managers with reference to qualification' was rejected.

Table 10

Age-wise Comparison for Decision Making Styles of Academic Managers

Qualification	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
25-35	10	139.00	11.709	4	.584	.675
36-45	107	138.08	12.660	181		
46-55	61	139.56	13.486			
above 55	7	132.71	6.775			
Total	186	138.46	12.690	185		

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the effect of age on decision making styles of academic managers. Subjects were divided into four groups according to their age (Group 1: 25-35; Group 2: 36-45; Group 3: 46-55; Group 4: above 55). There was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in decision making styles of academic managers for the four age groups. ($F = .584$, $p = .675$). So the null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference among decision making styles of academic managers with reference to age' was retained.

Discussion

Results of the present study have highlighted the significance of decision making behavior of academic managers who are holding a mediator position between the faculty and upper management in any institute. The success of an institute is highly dependent on its management, so it is important for academic managers to understand their decision making styles and choose them properly (Ngussa & Galbriel, 2017). The higher mean score of autocratic 'I' style of decision making than other decision making styles showed that academic managers were more interested in choosing autocratic I style of decision making in their universities. They believed that they had collected the information from faculty with the use of power and had taken the logical decisions by themselves. In Pakistan, this style seems to be highly preferable at workplace usually because the sharing of information and power is considered as a matter of ego and self-respect in the country which in turn effect on the quality of education. It was also verified by Olayo (2005) that if employees got less opportunities of participation in decision making process, it reduced their work performance which, in turn have an effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of university.

In 2010, Rehman conducted a study on the decision making styles of managers in Pakistan. He found that dependent and rational decision making styles being more preferred decision making styles instead of avoidant decision making styles by managers within organizations in Pakistan. The study also concluded that decision making styles differ among managers because of their organizational sector and status of managers. Azeska, Starc and Keverski (2017) investigated the principal's decision making styles and the results found that principals were lean towards the directive style of decision making with a blend of democratic-participatory style that involved the teachers in the process of decision making.

The findings also showed that consultative II and consensus styles of decision making were also followed in universities by academic managers. Although academic managers arranged meetings to discuss institutional matters but at the same time results also showed that academic managers hold all power of final decision making. This finding is in line with Han, Chiang, and Chang (2010) stating that currently many institutes are trying to shift from the old customs of authoritarian decision making style to a more democratic and participative. Academic managers are authorizing their faculty to contribute opinions because faculty contribution in decision making is necessary and raise a positive behavior and attitude in faculty. Loveren (2007) also stated that consultative and consensus styles of decision making were more admired by faculty.

Decision making is a thinking process based on a rational option from one of the available choices. As Shaked and Schechter (2019), suggested that academic managers must understand that there are more than one way of actions in any given situation. Decision making is always based on the values, knowledge and preferences of a decision maker. The study findings depict that principals' rational style of decision making is best and also contribute towards the teachers' commitment and satisfaction (Hariri, Monypenny & Prideaux, 2016).

The results of the study endorsed the findings of Brezicha, Ikoma, Park and LeTendre (2020) that while principals involved teachers regarding curricular decisions and pedagogical practices then such kind of involvement makes teachers more committed which is ultimately in the benefits of students' academic achievements. Results of different studies indicate that decision making styles as well as work environment are jointly related to employee functioning (Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatailat & Elci, 2017). One study (Boussif, 2010) has explored the decision making styles of Arab Executives. The result of the study showed that business attitude of any country depends on the values of those people who are in management and by their decision making styles. The result of the study is also consistent with non-western countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait where consultative and participative styles are more preferred (Spice & Sadler 2005; Boussif, 2010).

Irawanto (2015) reported the positive finding that organizations allow their employees to involve in decision making process because it made them more motivated and committed for work. Zulfqar, Valcke, Devos, Tuytens and Shahzad (2016) concluded that deans and heads of universities to adopt a collaborative approach and they suggested that in Pakistani public and private universities decision making practices to turn into transformational and participative in nature. This study was also supported by (Appelbaum et al., 2013) who's confirmed that participation of faculty in decision making process developed their trust on organization. Furthermore, the findings of the study are in line with the study of (Joehnsen, 1978); Coscarelli, 1983; Druckker, 2003) who emphasized that manager should choose a systematic approach to arrive on one logical solution of selecting a combination of decision making styles.

The results of current study also pointed out that there is no significant demographic difference regarding gender and age of academic managers whereas their marital status and qualification significantly effected on their decision making styles.

The positive perception of employee about environment is helping them to achieve organizational goals rather than ineffective environment. It is the responsibility of academic managers to create an environment which is reciprocal, fair for sharing of ideas, and fulfills the expectations of faculty and lead university towards quality. The academic

managers should change their decision making styles and become more participative so that the faculty feels that they have a voice at top management and their opinions do matter for their academic managers. A balanced rapport between academic managers and faculty is essential because enhancing fair exchange of ideas for decision making may strengthen positively their level of trust on institute (Abubakar et al, 2017).

Recommendation

On the basis of major findings, following recommendation is suggested:

- The universities should arrange trainings/workshops/seminars on the importance of decision making styles to educate academic managers and to make them aware about their decision making style along with strength and weakness of their style. This awareness will help them in selection of right decision making style to handle any situation in hand and improve the overall performance of the university and make it a healthy organization.
- Academic managers may adopt a balanced approach in selecting decision making styles.

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