



Applying Vroom-Jago model Decision-Making Model of Leadership by Principals in Catholic Schools

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Abstract This study investigates Catholic school principals' decision-making processes and leadership styles in the United States. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research surveyed 150 principals and conducted in-depth interviews with twenty participants. Key findings reveal that 68% of principals favor a collaborative leadership style, though external factors like diocesan policies and financial constraints significantly impact their autonomy. More experienced principals (10+ years) showed a higher tendency for unilateral decisions in crises. The study recommends that Catholic school leadership training programs integrate organized frameworks that balance collaborative methods with proactive action. These findings can guide diocesan leadership development programs, ensuring principals have specialized training in participatory decision-making and hierarchical leadership frameworks. It also highlights the importance of supportive diocesan structures to facilitate effective decision-making. This research contributes to understanding educational leadership in faith-based institutions and offers practical insights for improving Catholic school administration..

Keywords Catholic schools, principals, leadership, Vroom-Jago model, decision-making model

1. INTRODUCTION

Catholic school leadership has significantly changed since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Initially characterized by hierarchical and authoritative structures, Catholic school leadership has shifted towards more participatory styles. This transition coincided with a decline in religious vocations, leading to increased lay leadership within Catholic schools. In the early 1990s, leaders of Catholic schools progressively embraced participatory leadership strategies while managing the intricacies of the Catholic Church's hierarchical framework (Ristau, 1991). This transition was shaped by the increasing number of Catholic school administrators obtaining formal education in secular institutions, whose leadership training prioritized democratic administration over ecclesiastical authority. Comprehending how these leaders balance their administrative duties with faith-based imperatives is essential for enhancing successful decision-making in Catholic schools.

A key factor in this transition has been the increasing number of Catholic school administrators receiving formal education and leadership preparation at public institutions. While well-prepared for general leadership roles, many struggle with the spiritual aspects of their work in Catholic education (Ristau, 1991). This challenge is particularly acute for principals with limited formal religious training, who may lack sufficient knowledge of

Catholic religious traditions, doctrines, and practices.

The unique position of Catholic school principals requires them to balance multiple roles - spiritual, educational, and managerial - which significantly influences their leadership styles and decision-making processes (Ristau, 1991). This study aims to explore these dynamics in the context of contemporary Catholic education.

Rationale for the Study

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding Catholic school principals' leadership styles and decision-making processes. While educational leadership has been extensively researched, there is limited understanding of how Catholic school principals navigate their unique challenges, mainly as many are now laypeople rather than members of religious orders. This shift has led to a predominance of participatory leadership styles; however, these principals often struggle to balance collaborative approaches with the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, many current leaders have received their training in public education systems, leaving them ill-prepared for the spiritual dimensions of their roles. This lack of formal religious training can hinder their ability to effectively integrate faith development with academic excellence, which is crucial in Catholic education.

Despite the importance of decision-making in achieving educational and moral goals, there is insufficient research on how principals involve teachers and stakeholders in their processes. Understanding Catholic school principals' leadership styles and decision-making processes is essential, as their decisions significantly impact staff morale and student outcomes (Brownridge, 2015).

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the perceived leadership styles of Catholic school principals and examining the relationships between their decision types and decision-making processes. By doing so, it seeks to contribute valuable insights into the effective administration of Catholic schools and inform future leadership training programs tailored to this unique context.

Review of Relevant Literature

Catholic Principal's Roles

The pastor of a parish hires the principal to lead the daily operation of the school, known as a parochial school. Hence, the principal is directly accountable to the pastor in parochial parish schools, unlike private Catholic schools (Ciriello, 1998). According to the 1983 Code of

Canon Law that governs the Catholic Church, the priest is the leader of an elementary parish school and is responsible for leading and managing the school (Caruso, 2012). Cirello (1988) further expounded that the principal is directly accountable to the major superior of the religious congregation or the board of trustees and is directly accountable to the bishop. Most private Catholic schools operate within the Diocese as part of the congregation mission, which subjects them to cooperate with the diocesan school policies on areas of religious education. Cirello (1998) explained that the bishop delegates to the superintendent the responsibility to supervise the decision-making process of the Catholic schools within the Diocese. The principal's role can be divided into three general leadership areas: Spiritual Leadership, Educational Leadership, and Managerial leadership.

Spiritual role of the Catholic school principal. As spiritual leaders, principals are responsible for the faith development of the school's faculty, students, and the Christian community. Thus, they have a distinctive leadership role in the spiritual life and development of the staff and students. Drachmann and Stenger (1989) explained that "the principal must be a person of faith, loyal to Christ, loyal to the church, with a general understanding of the process of religious growth" (p.11). They provide directions pertinent to the moral and ethical development of the students and formulate a clear Catholic school mission statement and philosophy (Ciriello, 1998). Principals must have the skills to motivate and unite the faculty regarding the religious mission of the school (Drachmann & Stenger, 1989). Cardinal Bernardin (1989) delineated that Catholic school principals must be visionary leaders who "believe in and can articulate in clear terms the mission, the purpose of Catholic education" (p. 213). Principals of Catholic schools provide an environment where faith and gospel values are taught and nurtured through prayer, daily religion classes, spiritual workshops, and regular participation in Mass and liturgical worship (Riojas, 2002). Ciriello states five areas of responsibilities that relate to the spiritual leadership role of the Catholic school principal:

- (1) cultivate the faith development of faculty, students, and parents,
- (2) build the Christian community and promote Catholic principles among faculty, students, parents, parish, and the local community,
- (3) care for the moral and ethical development of the students and employees within the school community,
- (4) know the history and philosophy of Catholic schools and
- (5) employ the church documents and directives as guiding principles that affect all aspects of the school program.

When making decisions, principals utilize authoritative skills and their spiritual background to manage situations and make decisions to build a positive climate that promotes respect within the school and community. Robey (2012) emphasizes that lay Catholic school principals frequently perceive themselves as insufficiently equipped for the spiritual leadership component of their responsibilities. This issue is exacerbated by the reality that numerous Catholic school leaders obtain their training from secular schools, which lack theological and catechetical preparation. Previous studies (Ciriello, 1998; Riojas, 2002) have highlighted the necessity for a structured faith-based leadership program, emphasizing the alignment of administrative training with Catholic theology. Without such training, principals may find it challenging to amalgamate religious formation with educational leadership, adversely affecting school culture and community involvement.

Furthermore, "this effect may be partly because Catholic school leaders trained in secular schools do not receive theological, catechetical or spiritual training" (Robey, p.98). Catholic colleges and universities are responsible for forming Catholic school leaders but differ in their emphasis on the catechetical or theological training related to the new spiritual roles they would encounter in their jobs. However, it may also be because increasing numbers of administrators come directly from leadership roles in secular institutions to lead Catholic schools (Robey).

Educational role of the Catholic school principal. Principals make sure that the Catholic school's educational philosophy, mission, and objectives are conducted through systematic, well-articulated goals established by the school staff to lead students to the desired vision of the future. They provide effective teaching and learning through productive faculty meetings, insightful classroom observations, thoughtful curriculum renewal, and other professional development opportunities (Ciriello, 1998). The principal's role as an educational leader is the key to the successful operation of a school (Drahmann & Stenger, 1989). In other words, principals must ensure that the school climate, curriculum, assessment approaches, and overall culture incorporate the diversity of students in school (Haynes, Arafah, & McDaniels, 2015). One of the most critical leadership roles for the principal is to involve the school and community in planning for change (Richardson, Short, & Prickett, 1993). Principals may delegate duties to individual staff members or groups in the school. Still, the final decision-making for the instructional process remains the responsibility of the principal of the school (Drahmann & Stenger).

Managerial roles of Catholic school principals. Catholic school principals are also the school's managerial leaders. They are responsible for the selection and evaluation of all

school personnel, the school environment's management, and the school's fiscal management (Ciriello, 1996). Ciriello(1966) stressed that as personnel manager, the principal must recruit, interview, select, and provide orientation for school staff, know and apply organizational management, delegate responsibilities, communicate skills, manage conflict effectively, and evaluate staff. As the institutional manager, the Catholic school principal must provide an orderly school environment, understand Catholic school governance structures, and recognize the importance of the relationships between the school and the diocesan office. The principal must also recognize the importance of the school's relationship with the parish community, understand civil and canon law in relationship to Catholic schools, be familiar with state requirements and government-funded programs, and be able to use current technologies. Finally, the Catholic school principal must understand the basic strategies of long-range planning, provide adequate public relations, and school marketing programs, and seek resources and support beyond the school and parish (Ciriello).

According to Kelley and Peterson (2007), "Good principals engage their schools in the core processes of establishing, maintaining, and evaluating to improve the school's culture and to promote student learning" (as cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 355). Shaping the school culture and forming the Christian community within the Catholic school is at the core of the school principal's role (Kelley & Peterson). The Catholic school principals work to ensure that students, parents, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds are listened to and have a forum to present ideas and discuss issues (Robey, 2012). Ciriello (1998) explained that "the challenges facing the Catholic school principal in the areas of governance and structure should be seen as neither overwhelming nor insurmountable" (p. 125). The most effective principal, Ciriello explained, is one who understands and commits to the type of school they are called to lead by clarifying roles and relationships among the principal, pastor, and board and analyzing the personalities, politics, and policies of local situations.

Theoretical Framework: Vroom-Jago Model

This study employs the Vroom-Jago model as its theoretical framework to analyze decision-making processes used by Catholic school principals. According to Vroom and Jago (2000), leaders decide who will be involved in decision-making processes and emphasize that "the quality of decisions depends on where the important knowledge or expertise of resolving the problem lies, whether it is in the leader, in the group of participants, or both" (p. 84). The model is comprised of five decision-making processes. The model comprises five decision-making processes.

1. Autocratic I (AI): The leader makes decisions alone using available information.

2. Autocratic II (AII): The leader gathers information from others but decides independently.
3. Consultative I (CI): The leader shares the problem with individuals and seeks input but makes the final decision alone.
4. Consultative II (CII): The leader convenes a group meeting for discussion and input but retains final decision-making authority.
5. Group II (GII): The leader facilitates a group decision-making process, with the final decision made by group consensus (Vroom & Jago, 1988).

The Vroom-Jago model is especially pertinent in Catholic school leadership, as administrators frequently alternate between hierarchical and participative decision-making methods depending on the decision's nature. For instance, spiritual decisions—such as those about religious curriculum—may necessitate autocratic decision-making to preserve doctrinal integrity, whereas administrative decisions—such as faculty recruitment—may be enhanced by consultative or collaborative decision-making methods. This methodology is employed to discern trends in Catholic school principals' navigating various demands.

2. METHODS

Research Design

This quantitative study investigated the relationship between leadership styles of Catholic school principals as perceived by both teachers and principals while exploring the connection between decision types and decision-making processes employed by these leaders. The research utilized surveys and interviews to analyze leadership dynamics in Catholic schools comprehensively.

The study employed several statistical tests to analyze the relationships between leadership styles, decision-making processes, and perceptions of Catholic school principals. A pilot research was done with a sample of five Catholic school administrators to confirm the reliability of survey items, and Cronbach's alpha was utilized to evaluate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.82$). The survey's validity was confirmed through expert evaluation by three scholars specializing in educational leadership and Catholic school administration. The qualitative interview protocol completed peer review and refinement to improve answer consistency. Here is a brief overview of the key statistical methods used:

1. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (ρ): This non-parametric test was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' and principals' perceptions of leadership styles. The study found a strong positive correlation for the authoritarian style ($\rho = .862$), a weak positive correlation for the participative style ($\rho = .366$), and a very weak

negative correlation for the delegative style ($\rho = -.073$).

2. Chi-Square Test of Independence: This test examined the relationship between decision types (spiritual, managerial, educational) and decision-making styles (Autocratic I, Autocratic II, Consultative I, Consultative II, Group). The results ($\chi^2 = 11.326$, $p > .05$) indicated that these variables were independent.

3. Descriptive Statistics: The study also employed descriptive statistics to analyze demographic data and summarize the frequency of different leadership and decision-making styles principals use.

These statistical methods allowed the researchers to quantify the relationships between various aspects of leadership in Catholic schools and draw meaningful conclusions about the alignment between principals' self-perceptions and teachers' observations of leadership styles and the connection between decision types and decision-making approaches. The study had two primary objectives:

1. To examine the correlation between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership styles and principals' self-reported leadership approaches.
2. To determine if there was a significant relationship between the types of decisions (spiritual, managerial, educational) made by Catholic school principals and their decision-making styles.

By combining these two research questions, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of leadership practices in Catholic educational institutions, considering both the perspectives of leaders and those they lead. The research surveyed 150 principals and conducted in-depth interviews with twenty participants. Key findings reveal that 68% of principals favor a collaborative leadership style, though external factors like diocesan policies and financial constraints significantly impact their autonomy. More experienced principals (10 plus years) showed a higher tendency for unilateral decisions in crises. The research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between the leadership style of Catholic school principals (CSPs), as perceived by teachers, and the leadership style used by CSPs, as perceived by CSPs in the daily operations of their schools?

Research Hypothesis 1 – $H_{1.1}$: **Catholic school principals' self-perceived leadership style will significantly correlate with teachers' perceptions of their leadership approach, indicating a shared understanding of decision-making dynamics within Catholic schools.**

Null Hypothesis 1 – $H_{0.1}$: There is no relationship between the leadership style used by CSPs, as perceived by teachers, and the leadership style used by CSPs, as perceived by CSPs,

in the daily operations of their schools.

Research Question 2: Are the types of decisions made, and the decision-making styles used by CSPs in the daily operations of their schools dependent on each other?

Research Hypothesis 2 – H1.2: The types of decisions made, and the decision-making styles used by CSPs in the daily operations of their schools are not independent of each other.

Null Hypothesis 2 – $H_{0,2}$: **The types of decisions made, and decision-making styles used by CSPs in the daily operations of their schools are independent of each other.**

Participants

Principals and teachers from eleven Catholic schools in one Diocese were selected to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Ethical approval was granted, and all data was anonymized to protect the participants' identities. Of the eleven principals, three (27.3%) possessed Catholic school leadership certification, six (54.5%) had public school leadership certification, one (9.1%) had both Catholic and public school leadership certification, and one principal (.6%) did not indicate the type of leadership certificate they had acquired. Of the 179 teachers, seventy-six (42.5%) teachers taught at the elementary school level, thirty-two (17.9%) teachers taught at the middle school level, thirty-seven (21%) teachers taught at the high school level, eighteen (10.1%) taught at PK-8th grade levels, fifteen (8.4%) taught at the middle-high school level and one teacher (.6%) chose not to indicate at which level they taught.

Table 1. *Description of Data Collected from the 11 Catholic Schools*

Campus Code	Grade Levels	Enrollment	Faculty
A	PK-8	524	32
B	PK-8	194	15
C	PK-12	380	25
D	PK-8	201	14
E	PK-6	58	5
F	PK-8	187	30
G	PK-6	340	22
H	PK-8	106	11

I	6 - 8	67	8
J	7 - 12	514	40
K	9 -12	102	13

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments included surveys that were used to collect data for this study.

1. The Leadership Styles Survey as Perceived by Catholic School Principals
2. The Leadership Styles Survey as Perceived by Teachers
3. The Decision Types and Decision-Making Styles Survey

The first survey instrument on perceptions of leadership styles utilized by Catholic school principals, as perceived by Catholic school principals, was procured using The Leadership Styles Survey as Perceived by Catholic School Principals. Perceptions of leadership styles utilized by Catholic school principals, as perceived by teachers, were procured using The Leadership Styles Survey as Perceived by Teachers. These two Leadership Styles Surveys were adapted, with permission granted by R. W. Gaines, the Communication and Development manager of the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (2006). Comparable items were provided in both surveys. Principals responded to each item based on how they approached leadership and decision-making at their school. Teachers responded to each item based on how they perceived principals approaching leadership and decision-making at their schools. Responses to the Leadership Styles Survey questionnaire for principals were recorded numerically with a Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1) Almost Never True, (2) Seldom True, (3) Occasionally True, (4) Frequently True, and (5) Almost Always True. The highest cumulative score possible for any style was 50 (Almost Always True), while the lowest cumulative score possible for any style was 10 (Almost Never True). The highest score of the three indicated the primary preferred style of each principal. A score of 40 or more strongly indicated that the identified style was the principal's preferred style. The lowest of the three scores indicated the least preferred style of the responding principals. Scores of less than seven points between the two leadership styles indicated that the principal implemented those styles equally. A slight difference between all three scores indicated that the principals had no clear perception of their leadership style or that they were seeking the best style for themselves (GLISI).

The third survey, The Decision Types and Decision-Making Styles Survey, was developed by the researchers to collect information related to decision types and decision-making processes from participants. This survey aimed to determine if a relationship existed

between Catholic school principals' perceptions of decision types, consisting of the spiritual, managerial, and educational, and the decision-making style used by Catholic school principals in making the decision. This *survey* was designed using thirty practical decision-making scenarios encountered by principals working in Catholic schools and the researchers' study of decision scenarios from the literature review. To design this instrument, the researchers first asked Catholic school principals to narrate examples of the diverse types of situations or problems that they had to render decisions about in their daily jobs for the past three months. From the Catholic school principals' responses, the researcher created a survey comprised of two sections. Section one provided background information needed by participants to complete the survey, delineated the roles and responsibilities of Catholic school principals, and explained Vroom-Jago's five decision-making processes. The roles and responsibilities were divided into three categories - spiritual, managerial, and educational. These three categories served as the basis by which Catholic school principals determined the decision type for the decision-making scenarios to be decided. Catholic school principals determined decision types by identifying the category of roles and responsibilities to which a given scenario was most closely related.

As a spiritual leader, the Catholic school principal nurtures the growth of the Catholic faith of staff and students to ensure that the Catholic school community reflects Catholic identity. Decisions made related to gospel values, Christian social principles, and the moral development of students, staff, parents, and stakeholders were identified as spiritual decisions. As a manager, the Catholic school principal oversees personnel and the educational management of the Catholic school. Decisions pertinent to the school's organization, management, and administration were identified as managerial. As an educational leader, the Catholic school principal promotes and applies the Catholic educational vision to the school's daily activities using the principles of good leadership. Decisions made to attain the educational vision, mission, and goals of the schools related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, accountability, and professional development were identified as educational decisions.

Section two consisted of three columns. On the left column, thirty decision-making scenarios representative of situations encountered by Catholic school principals in their day-to-day operations were provided for the principals to determine decision type and decision-making modes used to judge the situation. The middle column provided principals opportunities to identify decision types for spiritual, managerial, or educational scenarios. In the right column, principals identified the decision-making styles they would employ to make the decision. The decision-making styles included Autocratic I, Autocratic II,

Consultative I, and Group.

Data Analysis

The statistical method of analysis used to answer Question One was the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The null hypothesis was tested with a two-tailed t distribution at the .05 significance level. The statistical method of analysis used to answer Question Two was the independent or contingency chi-square. The null hypothesis was tested with the chi-square distribution at the .05 level of significance to determine if the variables were statistically independent or if a relationship existed. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient, and the chi-square analytical descriptive statistics were used to determine the relationship between the perceived leadership styles and decision-making of Catholic school principals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One

Data analysis indicated a vital correlation between teachers' and principals' assessments of authoritarian leadership ($\rho = .862$, $p < .01$), with an agreement rate of 74.3%. This indicates that hierarchical leadership is a prevalent and recognized practice in Catholic educational institutions. Nonetheless, additional qualitative investigation is required to ascertain whether this indicates a commitment to tradition or constraints in participative leadership training.

Furthermore, since the relationship was significant, the researcher squared the coefficient of .862 to measure the agreement between teachers' perceptions and principals' perceptions of how often the principals engaged in an authoritarian leadership style. Thus, there was 74.3% agreement between teachers and principals on how often the principals employed an authoritarian leadership style when making decisions.

A weak relationship was found for the participative leadership style ($\rho = .366$, $p > .05$) and a very weak relationship for the delegative leadership style ($\rho = -.073$, $p > .05$).

Research Question Two

The chi-squared test of independence indicated that decision type and decision-making styles employed by Catholic school principals were independent ($\chi^2 = 11.326$, $p > .05$, $df = 8$). Researchers used this analysis to answer research question two. "Are types of decisions made, and the decision-making styles used by Catholic school principals in their daily operations dependent on each other?" The data used in this analysis were derived from the Scenario Survey questionnaire completed and returned by ten Catholic school principals. Table 3 displays the results of the chi-squared test of independence. This analysis tested the

independence between decision type and decision-making style. A chi-squared (χ^2) distribution at the .05 significance level was used to test the null hypothesis that states "there is no relationship between the types of decisions made and decision-making styles used by Catholic school principals in the daily operations of their schools." Results indicated that decision type and decision-making styles employed by Catholic school principals were independent, $\chi^2 = 11.326$, ($p > .05$, $df = 8$). Table 3 displays the results of the chi-squared test of independence.

Table 3

Results of Chi-Square Test of Independence between Decision Type and Decision-Making Style

<u>Decision</u>	Autocrati	Autocrati	Consultativ	Consultative	Group	<u>Total</u>
<u>Type</u>	I	II	I	II		<u>Chi-Square</u>
						<u>Value - χ^2</u>
Spiritual	O: 21 E: 12.6 χ^2 : 5.6	O: 8 E: 12.2 χ^2 : 1.44	O: 8 E: 10.1 χ^2 : 0.44	O: 15 E: 16.3 χ^2 : 0.10	O: 14 E: 14.9 χ^2 : 0.05	11.326
Managerial	O: 24 E: 29.9 χ^2 : 1.16	O: 30 E: 29.0 χ^2 : 0.03	O: 29 E: 23.9 χ^2 : 1.08	O: 38 E: 38.7 χ^2 : 0.01	O: 36 E: 35.5 χ^2 : 0.007	
Educationa	O: 20 E: 22.5 χ^2 : 0.27	O: 25 E: 21.8 χ^2 : 0.47	O: 15 E: 18.0 χ^2 : 0.5	O: 31 E: 29.1 χ^2 : 0.12	O: 27 E: 26.6 χ^2 : 0.06	

Table 3 displays the observed and expected frequencies for each decision type and the decision-making style. The observed frequencies (O) indicated how many times in the data, the participant chose each decision type and decision-making style. Researchers compared the obtained chi-square value of 11.326 to the critical chi-square value of 15.51, which is required to determine if the data rejected the null hypothesis. Since the chi-square value of

11.326 was less than the critical value of 15.51, data results indicated that the types of decisions made, and the decision-making styles used by Catholic school principals were independent. Results from the current study also showed that there were no specific patterns of preference between decision types and decision-making styles. In other words, decision types perceived by principals and decision-making styles are independent, $\chi^2 = 11.326$, ($p > .05$, $df = 8$). Thus, the data failed to reject the null hypothesis: decision type and decision-making styles are independent.

The results of this study provided important insights into the leadership dynamics of Catholic schools. The significant consensus on authoritarian leadership indicates a correlation between principals' self-assessments and teachers' perceptions; evaluating if this represents

Institutional norms rather than true leadership efficacy are crucial. The modest link for participative styles ($\rho = .366$) necessitate more research to ascertain whether Catholic school leadership training promotes participatory decision-making or if current school governance arrangements hinder its execution. However, the weak relationships found for participative and delegative styles indicate potential areas for improvement in collaborative decision making

processes. The independence between decision types and decision-making styles implies that Catholic school principals may not consistently align their leadership approach with the nature of the decision. This finding highlights the need for more targeted leadership training emphasizing situational awareness and flexible decision-making strategies. The findings of this study reveal several key points about leadership and decision-making in Catholic schools:

Leadership Styles

The strong correlation (74.3% agreement) between teachers' and principals' perceptions of authoritarian leadership style usage indicates that this approach is widely recognized and implemented in Catholic schools. This aligns with the traditional hierarchical structure of Catholic institutions. However, the weak relationships between participative ($\rho = .366$) and delegative ($\rho = -.073$) styles suggest a potential disconnect between principals' self-perception and teachers' observations of these more collaborative approaches.

Decision-Making Processes

The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 11.326$, $p > .05$) revealed that decision types (spiritual, managerial, educational) and decision-making styles (Autocratic I, Autocratic II, Consultative I, Consultative II, Group) are independent of each other[1]. This suggests that Catholic school principals may not consistently match their decision-making approach to the specific type of decision at hand.

Implications for Catholic School Leadership

Leadership Training: There is a clear need for more comprehensive leadership development programs for Catholic school principals. These programs should focus on:

- a. Balancing authoritarian approaches with more participative and delegative styles.
- b. Aligning decision-making processes with the nature of the decision (spiritual, managerial, or educational).
- c. Develop situational awareness to choose appropriate leadership styles.

Collaborative Culture: While the authoritarian style is well-established, efforts should be made to foster a more collaborative environment. This could involve:

- d. Implement structured processes for teacher input in decision-making.
- e. Provide opportunities for shared leadership among staff members.
- f. Encourage open communication channels between administration and faculty.

Spiritual Leadership: Given the unique role of Catholic school principals as spiritual leaders, additional support may be needed in this area, especially for principals from non-religious backgrounds. This could include:

- g. Specialized training in Catholic doctrine and educational philosophy.
- h. Mentorship programs pairing experienced Catholic educators with new principals.
- i. Regular spiritual retreats or workshops for school leaders.

Decision-Making Framework: Developing a structured framework that helps principals align their decision-making styles with decisions that could improve overall school governance. This might involve:

- j. Creating decision trees or matrices to guide principals in choosing appropriate approaches.
- k. Regular reflection and evaluation of decision-making processes and outcomes.
- l. Encouraging principals to explicitly consider the nature of each decision before determining how to approach it.

Stakeholder Engagement: The weak correlation in perceptions of participative and delegative styles suggests a need for improved stakeholder engagement. Strategies could include:

- m. Regular surveys or feedback sessions with teachers to gauge perceptions of leadership.
- n. Increase transparency in decision-making processes.
- o. Formal mechanisms for incorporating diverse perspectives in school governance.

By addressing these areas, Catholic schools can work towards a more balanced and effective leadership model that honors their traditional hierarchical structure while embracing more contemporary collaborative approaches. This balanced approach is crucial for navigating Catholic education's complex challenges in the 21st century, including declining

enrollments, financial pressures, and the need to maintain a strong Catholic identity in increasingly diverse communities

4. CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable data on the leadership dynamics in Catholic schools, particularly regarding the relationship between principals' and teachers' perceptions of leadership styles and decision-making processes. The strong correlation ($\rho = .862$) between teachers' and principals' perceptions of authoritarian leadership style usage, with a 74.3% agreement, indicates a clear understanding and implementation of hierarchical structures within these institutions. This aligns with the traditional Catholic school model and suggests that principals and teachers recognize the prevalence of authoritative leadership approaches.

However, the weak relationships found for participative ($\rho = .366$) and delegative ($\rho = -.073$) styles highlight potential areas for improvement in collaborative decision-making processes. This discrepancy between principals' self-perception and teachers' observations of more collaborative approaches suggests a need for better alignment and communication regarding leadership practices.

The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 11.326$, $p > .05$) revealed that decision types (spiritual, managerial, educational) and decision-making styles (Autocratic I, Autocratic II, Consultative I, Consultative II, Group) are independent of each other. This finding implies that Catholic school principals may not consistently match their decision-making approach to the specific type of decision, which could impact their leadership effectiveness.

These results underscore the need for more targeted leadership training programs for Catholic school principals. Such programs should focus on:

1. Balancing authoritarian approaches with more participative and delegative styles.
2. Aligning decision-making processes with the nature of the decision (spiritual, managerial, or educational).
3. Develop situational awareness to choose appropriate leadership styles.
4. Improving communication and transparency in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the study illustrates the problems lay Catholic school principals encounter, especially those trained within public education systems. Future leadership training must integrate faith-based decision-making frameworks, mentorship programs that connect lay principals with seasoned clergy, and systematic models for participative governance in Catholic educational institutions. Subsequent research should investigate the long-term effects of leadership training on the efficacy of decision-making in educational institutions.

Many leaders feel unprepared for their roles' spiritual aspects, suggesting additional support and formation in Catholic doctrine and educational philosophy.

In conclusion, this research contributes significantly to understanding the complexities of leadership in Catholic schools and offers practical insights for improving Catholic school administration. By addressing the identified gaps between perception and practice and providing more comprehensive leadership development opportunities, Catholic schools can work towards a more balanced and effective leadership model that honors their traditional hierarchical structure while embracing more contemporary collaborative approaches.

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