

Private Educational Institution's Community Engagement: Its Influence on Decision-Making in Public Administration Sectors of Bus-Bus LGU

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the influence of private educational institution community engagement on the decision-making processes of the public administration sector, focusing on the collaboration between Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) and the Barangay Bus-Bus Local Government Unit (LGU) in Sulu. A quantitative correlational design was used, involving 73 LGU staff and employees selected through total enumeration. Data were gathered using a 38-item self-constructed questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and simple linear regression. NDJC community engagement was rated very high (overall $M = 4.65$), with fire relief operations, blood pressure checks, and medical missions among the highest-rated activities. LGU decision-making effectiveness was also rated

very high (overall $M = 4.67$). Among the identified influences on decision-making, external pressure received the highest overall rating ($M = 4.74$), followed by stakeholder involvement ($M = 4.65$) and organizational culture ($M = 4.61$). Community engagement significantly predicted decision-making effectiveness ($B = .537$, $\beta = .535$, $t = 5.343$, $p < .001$), with the model explaining 28.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .287$). The findings indicate that institutional community engagement is an important contributor to collaborative and responsive local governance, while other organizational and external factors remain important in public-sector decision-making.

Keywords: *community engagement, private educational institutions, public administration, decision-making, local government units, governance collaboration*

INTRODUCTION

Community engagement has become increasingly important in governance because it creates channels through which institutions and communities can exchange knowledge, identify needs, and participate in decisions. Private educational institutions can contribute beyond formal instruction by collaborating with public agencies and local communities on programs that address social, educational, health, and development concerns. Evidence on education partnerships and university-industry-government relationships has likewise shown that institutional collaboration can strengthen service outcomes, innovation, and shared problem solving (Bold et al., 2019; Guerrero & Urbano, 2017).

Within higher education, community engagement also functions as an institutional responsibility and a means of strengthening relationships with stakeholders. Studies have associated sustained engagement with greater institutional credibility, reciprocal community benefit, and stronger social responsibility (Ayala-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Thompson, 2019; Turner, 2018). In local governance, participatory consultation can support more

transparent and responsive decision-making by creating opportunities for community actors to contribute information, feedback, and perspectives to public-sector processes (Kintz, 2011; Rijal, 2023).

In Sulu, Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) has undertaken community-oriented activities and has collaborated with local public administration sectors. The institution's Peace Center and outreach orientation reflect its role in community development and partnership-building in a setting affected by complex social and economic conditions (Notre Dame of Jolo College - Peace Center, n.d.). The collaboration between NDJC and the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU provides a local setting in which the relationship between institutional engagement and public decision-making can be examined.

Despite increasing recognition of community participation, the thesis identified a local research gap in understanding how engagement by a private educational institution is associated with the effectiveness of decision-making within an LGU. Existing literature explains the value of collaboration and shared governance, but fewer studies address how concrete community activities, organizational culture, stakeholder involvement, and external pressure operate together in a barangay-level public administration context. Addressing this gap is important for strengthening evidence-based collaboration between educational institutions and local government.

Accordingly, the study examined the community engagement activities carried out by NDJC in collaboration with the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU, assessed the effectiveness of LGU decision-making in relation to those activities, identified factors influencing public-sector decision-making, and determined whether NDJC community engagement significantly influenced decision-making effectiveness. The study was intended to provide practical evidence for institutional leaders and local officials seeking to strengthen participation, coordination, accountability, and community-responsive public service.

Literature Review

Private Educational Institutions and Community Engagement

Private educational institutions increasingly extend their mission through partnerships that connect academic resources with community needs. Ayala-Rodríguez et al. (2020) emphasized that university engagement can shape institutional reputation by building trust and visibility among external stakeholders. Similarly, Maier et al. (2017) described community-centered educational strategies as approaches that integrate academic functions with social services and community support. These perspectives situate engagement as both a social contribution and an institutional mechanism for developing durable relationships with communities.

Research on private higher education also highlights the reciprocal character of community partnerships. Thompson (2019) noted that meaningful engagement can support knowledge exchange and social impact, while Rodriguez (2021) emphasized the broader community value generated when universities work beyond campus boundaries. Turner (2018) further synthesized the diversity of engagement models and the continuing challenges of sustaining effective partnerships. Taken together, these studies support the view that institutional engagement is most useful when activities are responsive, collaborative, and connected to specific community needs.

Community Engagement and Public-Sector Decision-Making

Decision-making in public administration involves selecting among alternatives while responding to legal, organizational, political, and community considerations. Breul and McKinney (2016) discussed how public-sector decisions are shaped by more than purely rational procedures because administrators operate within institutional and stakeholder environments. Kells (2017) likewise emphasized shared governance and the value of involving different groups in decisions, suggesting that inclusive processes can improve transparency, responsiveness, and ownership of outcomes.

Community participation provides a practical route for bringing local knowledge and stakeholder preferences into governance. Kintz (2011) linked participatory consultation with changes in community dynamics, while Rijal (2023) associated participation with transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and responsiveness. Simmons (2022) similarly framed collaboration between private universities and local governance as a mechanism

for civic participation and joint community development. These studies provide a basis for examining whether NDJC's activities are reflected in how the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU makes and implements decisions.

Factors Influencing Decision-Making in Public Administration

The thesis identified organizational culture, stakeholder involvement, and external pressure as central factors that may shape decision-making. Organizational culture establishes shared values, expectations, and patterns of communication that influence how officials interpret problems and respond to community initiatives. Williams (2017) emphasized these organizational and participatory influences, while Smith and Jones (2020) associated effective local-government decision-making with collaboration, timeliness, relevance, motivation, and organizational competence.

Stakeholder involvement can broaden the information available to decision-makers and make policies more sensitive to community priorities. External pressure, meanwhile, can arise from government regulations, funding constraints, emergencies, higher-level authorities, and community expectations. Public administration reform literature also shows that institutional decisions are frequently constrained by resources, political support, and demands for accountability and improved service delivery (Martineau & Williamson, 2019; Okolie & Okereka, 2022). These conditions make it necessary to assess both internal and external influences when evaluating LGU decision-making.

Theoretical Foundations of Institutional-Community Collaboration

Social Capital Theory provides one foundation for understanding the study. Putnam (2000) emphasized the value of networks, trust, and shared norms in enabling cooperation and collective action. Applied to the present context, community engagement can create relationships through which NDJC and the LGU exchange information, coordinate activities, and develop mutual confidence. This perspective supports the expectation that stronger engagement may be associated with more collaborative decision-making.

Community-Based Participatory Research principles provide a second foundation by emphasizing co-learning, shared decision-making, partnership, and equitable participation. Israel et al. (1998) described community-based partnership approaches as mechanisms for involving community members in processes that affect them. Although the present study used a quantitative survey rather than a participatory research design, the framework remains relevant because it explains why stakeholder involvement and community voice can strengthen the relevance of institutional and public-sector actions.

Institutional Theory adds attention to the effect of norms and external expectations on organizational behavior. Meyer and Rowan (1977) explained how organizations respond to institutionalized rules and social expectations, a perspective consistent with the study's inclusion of external pressure as a decision-making factor. The conceptual framework therefore treated NDJC community engagement as the independent variable and effectiveness of decision-making as the dependent variable, while organizational culture, stakeholder involvement, and external pressure represented contextual influences on LGU decisions (Owen & Thomas, 2017).

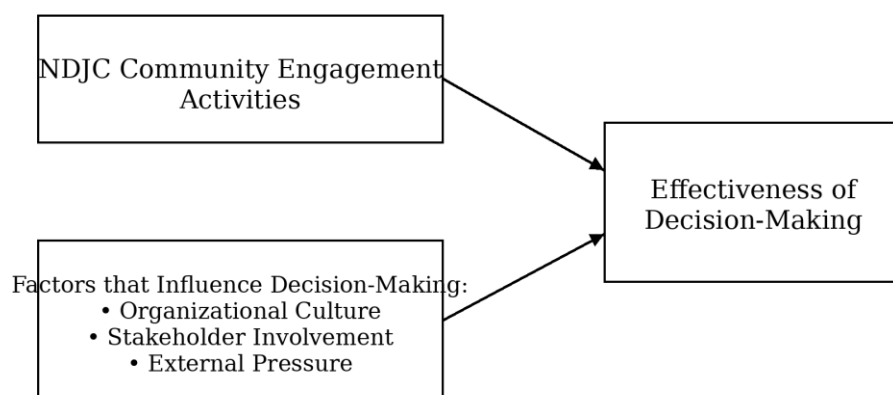


Figure 1. *Private Educational Institution's Community Engagement: Its Influence on Decision-Making in Public Administration Sectors of Bus-Bus LGU*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational research design. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondents' assessments of community engagement, decision-making effectiveness, and factors influencing decision-making, while correlational analysis through simple linear regression was used to determine whether private educational institution community engagement significantly predicted decision-making effectiveness. This design was consistent with the study's objective of examining measurable relationships without manipulating the research variables.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Barangay Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu, and focused on the collaboration between Notre Dame of Jolo College and the Barangay Bus-Bus Local Government Unit. The locale was selected because NDJC had implemented community-oriented activities in the barangay, including health education, fire hazard prevention, newborn screening seminars, blood pressure checking, medical missions, fire relief operations, and storm surge relief operations.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were 73 staff and employees of the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU who were directly involved in governance and decision-making processes. Total enumeration, or a census approach, was used so that all relevant personnel within the identified LGU population were included. This approach allowed the study to obtain perspectives from the full group identified as directly relevant to the research objectives.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a self-constructed questionnaire tailored to the variables of the study. The instrument contained 38 items distributed across community engagement (7 items), decision-making (13 items), organizational culture (5 items), stakeholder involvement (7 items), and external pressure (6 items). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with mean ranges interpreted from Very Low (1.00-1.80) to Very High (4.21-5.00). The questionnaire was designed to capture respondent perceptions and attitudes toward the study variables (Tan, 2011).

The reported reliability coefficients for the self-constructed instrument were .874 for Community Engagement, .921 for Decision Making, .888 for Organizational Culture, .850 for Stakeholder Involvement, and .906 for External Pressure. These coefficients were retained from the thesis as the basis for documenting the internal consistency of the instrument across its major constructs.

Table 1. *Reliability Results of the Self-Constructed Questionnaire*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Community Engagement	.874	7
Decision Making	.921	13
Organizational Culture	.888	5
Stakeholder Involvement	.850	7
External Pressure	.906	6
Total		38

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first sought permission and ethical approval from the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU. After authorization, the self-constructed questionnaire was administered to the identified participants. The survey gathered quantitative assessments of NDJC community engagement, LGU decision-making, and the identified influencing factors. Completed responses were checked for completeness and consistency before the data were encoded, summarized, and subjected to the statistical analyses specified in the study.

Data Analysis

Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to describe community engagement activities, decision-making effectiveness, organizational culture, stakeholder involvement, and external pressure. Simple linear regression was used to assess the influence of community engagement on decision-making effectiveness. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level, consistent with the thesis analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Participation was treated as voluntary, and the study emphasized informed consent and confidentiality. The survey materials informed participants that their responses would be kept confidential and secured. The researcher sought approval from the LGU before data collection and used the information solely for the stated academic research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

NDJC Community Engagement Activities

The respondents rated the entire construct of NDJC community engagement at a Very High level (overall $M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.55$). All seven activities received mean scores above 4.60. Fire relief operations obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.55$), followed closely by blood pressure checking ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.47$) and medical missions ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.55$). Health teaching, storm surge relief operations, newborn screening seminars, and fire hazard prevention were likewise rated Very High.

Table 2. *Mean Distribution of NDJC Community Engagement Activities*

Community Engagement Activity	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Health teaching on environmental sanitation	4.66	0.48	Very High
Education on fire hazard prevention	4.60	0.57	Very High
Seminars on newborn screening	4.62	0.57	Very High
Blood pressure check-up activities	4.67	0.47	Very High
Medical missions	4.67	0.55	Very High
Fire relief operations	4.68	0.55	Very High
Storm surge relief operations	4.64	0.63	Very High

Overall Mean	4.65	0.55	Very High
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The pattern suggests that participants viewed NDJC as a highly active partner in local community programs rather than as an institution whose involvement was limited to academic functions. The prominence of relief and health activities indicates that engagement was most visible when it directly addressed immediate community needs. This finding is consistent with literature describing community partnerships as mechanisms for reciprocal service, social impact, and stronger institutional-community relationships (Thompson, 2019; Rodriguez, 2021). It also supports participatory perspectives in which sustained interaction can strengthen local cooperation and responsiveness (Kintz, 2011; Rijal, 2023).

Effectiveness of Decision-Making in the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU

LGU decision-making in relation to NDJC community engagement was rated Very High, with an overall mean of 4.67 (SD = 0.56). The highest-rated indicator was the statement that the LGU was motivated to make decisions influenced by NDJC community engagement (M = 4.77, SD = 0.46). The LGU's ability to act quickly on community needs (M = 4.71, SD = 0.49), revise strategies for vulnerable groups (M = 4.70, SD = 0.52), and ensure well-organized fire hazard prevention programs (M = 4.70, SD = 0.52) were also rated Very High.

Table 3. *Mean Distribution of the Effectiveness of LGU Decision-Making*

Decision-Making Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
LGU supports NDJC health education	4.62	0.68	Very High
LGU collaborates in fire hazard prevention education	4.63	0.54	Very High
Fire hazard prevention programs are well-organized and accessible	4.70	0.52	Very High
LGU supports blood pressure check-ups	4.59	0.64	Very High
Blood pressure check-ups are well-coordinated and efficiently delivered	4.64	0.65	Very High
LGU revises strategies for vulnerable groups during medical missions	4.70	0.52	Very High
LGU acts quickly and precisely on community needs	4.71	0.49	Very High
LGU is motivated to make decisions influenced by NDJC engagement	4.77	0.46	Very High
Overall Mean	4.67	0.56	Very High

These results portray the LGU as collaborative, responsive, and willing to adjust its strategies in response to community needs. The findings are consistent with public-administration literature emphasizing that effective decision-making is shaped by organizational capacity, stakeholder participation, and the ability to respond to changing conditions (Breul & McKinney, 2016; Smith & Jones, 2020). They also parallel shared-governance arguments that inclusive processes can strengthen responsiveness and accountability when multiple actors contribute to decision-making (Kells, 2017; Simmons, 2022).

Factors Influencing Public-Sector Decision-Making

All three identified factors were rated Very High. External pressure recorded the highest overall mean (M = 4.74, SD = 0.45), followed by stakeholder involvement (M = 4.65, SD = 0.50) and organizational culture (M = 4.61, SD = 0.53). Within the external-pressure construct, the mandate for LGUs to take a leading role in disaster risk reduction and management received the highest mean (M = 4.79, SD = 0.41), while the availability of funding was also highly influential (M = 4.78, SD = 0.42).

Table 4. *Summary of Factors Influencing Decision-Making*

Factor	Overall Mean	SD	Interpretation
Organizational Culture	4.61	0.53	Very High
Stakeholder Involvement	4.65	0.50	Very High

External Pressure	4.74	0.45	Very High
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The ranking indicates that decision-making in Barangay Bus-Bus was perceived as strongly conditioned by forces outside the immediate organization, including policy mandates, resource availability, emergencies, and higher-level government expectations. At the same time, the Very High ratings for stakeholder involvement and organizational culture show that internal norms and participatory practices remained important. This pattern is consistent with Williams (2017), who identified organizational culture, stakeholder involvement, and external pressure as important decision-making influences, and with Institutional Theory, which explains how organizations respond to external rules and expectations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Influence of Community Engagement on Decision-Making Effectiveness

Simple linear regression was used to determine whether private educational institution community engagement significantly predicted LGU decision-making effectiveness. Community engagement was a statistically significant predictor ($B = .537$, $SE = .100$, $\beta = .535$, $t = 5.343$, $p < .001$). The model yielded $R = .535$ and $R^2 = .287$, with an adjusted R^2 of .277. The thesis regression table reported $F(1, 71) = 28.543$, $p < .001$.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients and Model Fit for Decision-Making Effectiveness

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	2.167	.469		4.623	< .001
Community Engagement	.537	.100	.535	5.343	< .001

Model fit: $R = .535$; $R^2 = .287$; Adjusted $R^2 = .277$; $F(1, 71) = 28.543$; $p < .001$.

The regression results led to rejection of the null hypothesis and support the conclusion that NDJC community engagement was significantly associated with decision-making effectiveness. However, the R^2 value indicates that community engagement explained 28.7% of the observed variance, so the findings should not be interpreted as showing that engagement alone determined LGU decisions. The remaining variance is consistent with the study's descriptive results showing substantial roles for external pressure, stakeholder involvement, and organizational culture. The result therefore supports a collaborative governance interpretation in which institutional engagement matters, but operates within a broader network of organizational and environmental influences (Putnam, 2000; Owen & Thomas, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that NDJC community engagement was highly visible and positively regarded by Barangay Bus-Bus LGU personnel. Fire relief operations, blood pressure checking, medical missions, health education, storm surge relief, newborn screening, and fire hazard prevention were all rated at a Very High level. The LGU's decision-making in relation to these activities was likewise rated Very High, reflecting strong perceptions of collaboration, responsiveness, organization, and willingness to revise strategies in response to community needs.

External pressure emerged as the highest-rated influence on decision-making, followed by stakeholder involvement and organizational culture. Regression analysis further showed that NDJC community engagement significantly predicted decision-making effectiveness and accounted for 28.7% of its variance. The findings therefore support the study's central conclusion that private educational institution community engagement is an important contributor to local public-administration decision-making, while also confirming that decision-making remains shaped by multiple internal and external factors. The study contributes a localized evidence base for strengthening education-LGU collaboration in community-responsive governance.

Recommendation

Notre Dame of Jolo College and the Barangay Bus-Bus LGU should institutionalize a structured community engagement framework that identifies priority activities, defines the responsibilities of partner units, allocates resources, and includes regular monitoring and evaluation. Regular coordination meetings and formal feedback channels should be maintained so that community needs and stakeholder perspectives are considered in planning, implementation, and review.

A joint community engagement committee composed of institutional personnel, faculty, student representatives, LGU officials, and community leaders may be established to coordinate programs. The partners should also develop accessible feedback mechanisms, assign clear community engagement coordinators, and periodically review whether programs remain responsive to vulnerable groups, disaster-related needs, health priorities, and available resources.

Future research should replicate the study in other barangays, municipalities, educational institutions, and public-sector settings to examine the generalizability of the findings. Further studies may investigate stakeholder involvement, external pressure, leadership, feedback mechanisms, resource availability, and the long-term outcomes of institutional-community partnerships using broader samples and complementary qualitative approaches.

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