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DECISION MAKING AND DEMOGRAPHICS: A STUDY OF ACADEMICIANS IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract *Decisions are inter-related to the organisational life of a concern. Hence, the leader is committed to decisions not from the time he/she decides, but till such time that they are successfully implemented. The purpose of this paper is to examine the perception of faculty members towards decision making of their academic leaders in the sample select universities. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data for the study were collected both through the primary and secondary sources. The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. Descriptive statistics was employed to know the descriptive information across various demographic variables on a total sample of 719. The various demographic variables, which were considered for the study, were gender, age, designation and experience. The results revealed that the faculty members of the sample select universities perceived the quality of decision making of their academic leaders at an above-average level; presently, they are fairly satisfied with their academic leader's decision-making quality. The statistical analysis also revealed a significant effect of gender, age and experience on decision making except designation. It was found that designation has no impact on decision making of leaders. The results obtained from the present study have certain significant implications. Developing leaders' decision-making competency is paramount in order to increase their leadership behaviour. Besides, academic leaders who are involved in social interaction need decision-making competency to work effectively in a social setting. Therefore, developing the decision-making competencies might help the academic leader to improve work performance, such as maintaining high academic standards in the department/university, quality teaching and research.*

Keywords: *Decision Making, Academic Leaders, Faculty, Higher Education*

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of the leadership behaviour can be assessed on the basis of the overall organisational performance. Pertinently, organisational performance logically can be improved by appropriate leadership behaviour through appropriate decision making. The term 'decision' may refer to the choice of selecting a solution for a petty problem or it may just as well refer to a momentous and unprecedented sensational act. By and large, decision refers to the contemplation of the concerns of some act before undertaking it. Perrone (1968) defines decision as the 'the appropriate response of an intelligent being to a situation which demands action'. Decision making is the process through which administrators prescribe a particular action in view of the unique demands of a given situation. Duncan (1965) says that 'a decision is the appropriate response of an intelligent being to a situation which demands action'. Decision making is basically the process of choosing amongst alternatives. In most situations, there exist two or more alternatives and a leader must decide, which alternative to pursue. Before making a decision, he must thoroughly understand the problem and develop alternatives. Then, he must assess the merits and demerits of each of alternative and the probabilities of success in each case. So, decision making is not a smooth-flowing process dispensing choices when and where they are required. There is also the concept of commitment in every decision. Decisions are inter-related to the organisational life of a concern. Hence, the leader is committed to decisions not from the time he decides, but until such a time that they are successfully implemented.

Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the quality of decision making in higher education sector for it is not only one of the significant outcomes of the leadership behaviour, but also a significant antecedent to overall performance. This paper also explores differences in the nature of decisions across gender, age, experience and designation.

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This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of decision making reflected by academic leaders?

RQ2: What is the level of decision making of academic leaders in different universities and states in relationship to referred variables?

RQ3: What is the impact of various demographic factors of faculty members on their perception regarding decision making of their academic leaders?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Decision Making

The word decision has been defined as 'an answer to some question or a choice between two or more alternatives' (Rowe *et al*., 1984). At an exceptionally crucial level, the capacity to settle on a choice identifies with settling on decisions inside a pool of choices. Customarily, basic leadership hypothesis has concentrated itself on the psychological procedure by which an individual settles on a choice.

The decision-making process is a complex phenomenon that has been analysed extensively from both organisational and individual perspectives. March and Simon (1970) analysed decision making from a rational organisational perspective. Rational decision making, according to their premise, involves making optimal choices in a clearly defined environment. The rational decision-making process allows for decision makers to know the whole set of alternatives from which they will choose their action to understand the consequences that will follow the selection of each alternative, rank order the sets of consequences from the most preferred to the least preferred and select the alternative leading to the preferred set of consequences. This rational process incorporates options as 'givens', yet does not clarify how these choices are acquired. The investigation of decision making and decision styles has developed throughout the most recent century. In the late 1940s and mid-1950s, most research regarding decision making was led inside the zone of brain science under the themes of cognition and authority. In the 1960s, scientists started to focus particularly on the territory of decision making and individuals' decision styles. In 1969, Driver and Streufert built up a style display that analysed one's data handling and critical thinking capacities. This improvement depended on past work directed in the area of subjective brain science (Rowe & Boulgarides, 1983).

Most literature regarding decision styles is based on the work of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung and his theory of personalities. Jung developed his theories of personality types in the early 1900s. His theories were based on the belief that individual behaviour affects the way one thinks, perceives and evaluates the world (Jung, 1923).

The majority of decision-making research attributes to the belief that decision making is a process. Krumboltz and Hamel (1977) believe that decision making is a sequence of steps, whereby one defines, examines, creates and acts upon composed or collected information. Rowe *et al*. (1984) proposed a five-stage process for decision making. The steps are as: 1) defining a problem, 2) finding and analysing solutions, 3) implementing the decision, 4) achieving the results, and 5) managing the consequences. Supporting Rowe et al. (1984), Phillips (1997) proposed the stages of decision making but in a reorganised manner. The steps are as follows: 1) identifying all existing alternatives, 2) valuing the alternatives according to preferences and potential outcomes, 3) assembling the information, 4) choosing between preferences and outcomes, and 5) selecting the most favourable alternative. Other researchers believe that decision making is a more personal experience. Many authors argue that decision making is based upon an individual's experience, experimentation, and research. Weiss (1983) claims basic decision making is a component of one's data, belief system and individual intrigue. Further, Petrides and Guiney (2002) are of the opinion that decision making is a persuasive procedure by which one's central qualities and convictions are essential to the basic decision-making process. These scientists, alongside others, perceive decision making as a psychological procedure.

Decision Making in Educational Institutions

Higher Educational Institutions operate under the direction, leadership and vision of their educational leaders. In order to effectively lead an organisation, educational leaders must possess the ability to make valued decisions. Decisions are in part, a fundamental means by which opportunities for change and development are possible. The successes and/or failures of an organisation may be directly linked to its leaders' decisions (Yukl, 1994). According to Dimmock and Walker (2002), educational leadership is ineffective without decision-making dimension. In educational leadership, new alternative forms of decision making are promoted, which may question the leader's traditional established role as the ultimate or sole decision maker and, perhaps, make the leader more of a 'ratifier' of decisions arrived at in collaborative contexts (Law and Glover, 2000). Any policy or plan is established in the educational institute through decision making. Without decision making, no plans and policies are performed. In the process of making plans, appropriate decisions must be made from different available alternatives. Therefore, decision making of the leader is an important

process, which is helpful in planning. It is necessary for leader in every educational institute because there are many alternatives. So, decision making helps them to evaluate various advantages and disadvantages of every alternative and select the best alternative for the overall development of the institute/department as a whole. Tawney (1976) says that the administrator can't straightway choose issues. In case of deciding, the accessible data impacts the decision maker. Ultimately, he chooses the alternative, which results in educational improvement.

Gender, Age, Experience, Designation and Decision Making

Gender, age, experience and designation are amongst the variables that affect decision making, or rather, that allow one to establish individual differences.

The fact is that our decisions are affected by our beliefs about the characteristics that differentiate the sexes. Despite the fact that society is progressing towards social and labour equality between men and women, it is necessary to continue to examine – from a psychological perspective – whether there are gender differences in the importance that people allocate to factors that determine the decision process. Till now, the results of research are somewhat ambiguous because, although some significant differences have been identified, most of them are minimal (Crow *et al*., 1991; Hatala and Case, 2000; Hawkins and Power, 1999; Venkatesh *et al*., 2000). It appears that women are more influenced by the environment; they search for more data and devote more opportunity to the choice procedure (Gill et al., 1987). Men, in actuality, are more overwhelming, self-assured, objective and sensible (Wood, 1990).

Regarding age, many studies within the naturalistic approach have been carried out with adults and, to a lesser extent, with youths and retired persons. Therefore, it would be interesting to analyse these three age groups (25–35 years, 35–45 years, and 45 & above) conjointly. As with sex, researchers debate, without much conviction, about whether there are differences in the quality of the processes used by youths, adults and retired persons. Some authors believe there are differences (Gardner *et al*., 1989; Dror *et al*., 1998) and others disagree (Chen and Sun, 2003; Moshman, 1993). Despite this, the variable age should be taken into account, especially when attempting to investigate from a naturalistic perspective, because this focus is specifically based on subjects' experience and competence, which are normally acquired with age. Craik and Salthouse (1992), for example, maintain this same interpretation in a study on information processing in older people. Further, Spaniol and Bayen (2005) are of the opinion that the rulings are more placid amongst old aged people. Keeping the aforementioned points in consideration, the objective of the present study was to study the impact of age and sex demographics on decision making. This valuation was done without associating the factors and subfactors that determine a decision in a specific situation, for example, a health problem, an economic problem or a feeding problem. Finucane *et al*. (2005) established a significant difference in decision making across age. In addition, older people may be more overconfident regarding their ability to make decisions, which inhibits their ability to apply strategies (de Bruin *et al*., 2007). Finally, with respect to age, there is evidence to support the notion that older adults prefer fewer choices than younger adults (Reed *et al*., 2008).

Past experiences can impact future decision making. Juliusson *et al*. (2005) specified past decisions effect the decisions people make in the future. It stands to reason that when something positive results from a decision, people are more likely to decide in a similar way, given a similar situation. Then again, individuals have a tendency to abstain from repeating past mistakes (Sagi and Friedland, 2007). Designation also impacts decision making in the sense that more the higher designated person, the more he/she will be having experience in taking effective decisions. In the present study, there are three designation groups – Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor. A professor is having more experience in years as compared to the other two groups, that is, Associate and Assistant professor, which he/she can utilise in the decisions to be taken in the centre/department/university. Similarly, the numbers of years, which the other two groups have served in a university, can be utilise for their decisions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducted in higher education sector with the following objectives:

- To examine the level of decision making amongst academic leaders in higher education sector as perceived by the faculty members in the sample select organisations.
- To make a comparison of universities under study in relationship to referred variables.
- To make state-wise comparison in relationship to referred variables.
- To study the impact of various demographic factors of faculty members on their perception regarding decision making of their academic leaders.
- To offer suggestions as to how the decision making amongst the academic leaders can be improved on the basis of analysis and results, and relevant literature in the past.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed for the present study:

H_1: There is a significant impact of gender on decision making.

H_2: There is a significant impact of age on decision making.

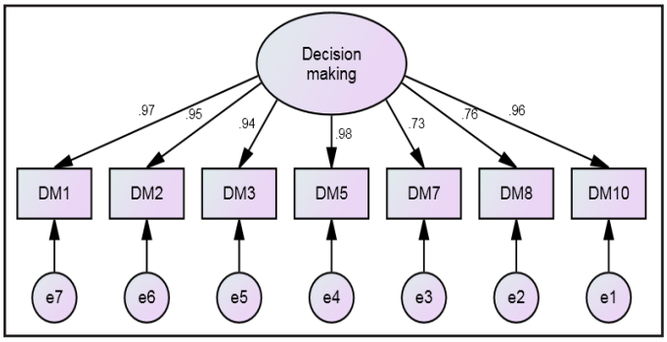
H_3: There is a significant impact of experience on decision making.

H_4: There is a significant impact of designation on decision making.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was exploratory-cum-descriptive in nature and the sample comprised of Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors from the selected universities. The study has been conducted in north Indian states, that is, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir and the Union Territory of Delhi. Out of the seven states in north India, these four states were chosen based on the maximum number of universities (both central universities and those state universities offering multidisciplinary courses). The higher educational institutions of north Indian states under study were included that comprised of central and state universities. The sample size was calculated according to the number of items in the study. Every item requires minimum five respondents and maximum 10 respondents for the determination of representative sample size (Hair et al. 1998). Keeping in view the sampling error, it was proposed to take the sample of 850. In return, 719 questionnaires were found to be fit for analysis. The data for the study were collected both through the primary and secondary sources. The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section 'A' included demographic information of respondents, whilst Section 'B' included statements of decision making. The demographic characteristics were gender, age, experience and designation. The questionnaire comprised of 10 items. All the items were framed keeping in view the context of the study. HOD's decision making was judged by the Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors working under them. For the purpose of conducting the present study, the north Indian states under study were first divided into two strata. The stratification variable used for this purpose was type of university, that is, central and state universities. There are total 14 central universities and 19 state universities (offering multidisciplinary courses) in the selected states. In this way, two strata were framed; first one was central universities and the second one of state universities. Out of each stratum, five universities were taken randomly. The selection of the universities was based on stratified random sampling. The employees included from each university were governed by the principles of proportionate sampling.

Reliability of the questionnaire during pilot study was assessed through Overall Cronbach's Alpha. The overall 'Cronbach Alpha' calculated through SPSS is 0.921, which is much higher than the acceptable level in social science research (Hair *et al*., 1998). In order to compact the instrument, only those items and factors were considered, which had well discrimination and high consistency. This was checked by (a) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) followed by (b) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The EFA for this study was performed by SPSS using the principle component method of extraction with varimax rotation, as it enhances the interpretability of factors by maximizing the number of items with high loadings (Malhotra, 2003). The suitability of the data was assessed through two tests; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. KMO was higher than 0.50. KMO shows sampling adequacy and appropriateness of factor analysis. On the other side, Bartlett's test of sphericity is 0.00, that is, significant. The items explained 76.969 percent of the total variance. The items whose loadings were greater than >0.50 were retained whilst as those whose loadings were below <0.50 were dropped in the final component matrix. EFA results identified two items unreliable because of their low item loadings (0.22 & 0.29, respectively) in communalities (i.e. <0.50). The items deleted were DM6 and DM9. After EFA, the decision-making scale consisted of eight items. Application of CFA (Figure 1) resulted in the acceptance of seven items due to high standardised regression weight (SRWs). Item DM4 was deleted due to poor CFA loading. The fit indices of the specified model have also yielded good results (CMIN/DF= 1.429, GFI= 0.986, CFI=.939, RMSEA=0.079, RMR=0.041). From the model, it is clear that all the factor loadings are well above 0.70 threshold and hence support the EFA findings (Hair *et al*., 1998).



Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Fig. 1: CFA of Decision Making

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

Descriptive statistics was employed to know the descriptive information across various demographic variables on a total sample of 719. The various demographic variables, which were considered for the study, were gender, age, designation and experience. The analysis of the sample revealed the characteristics as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Overall		
	Particulars	Frequency	%age
Gender	Male	420	58.4
	Female	299	41.6
Age	25-35 years	305	42.4
	35-45 years	248	34.5
	45 & above	166	23.1
Designation	Professor	140	19.5
	Associate professor	231	32.1
	Assistant professor	348	48.4
Experience	Less than 10 years	348	48.4
	10-20 years	232	32.3
	20 years and above	139	19.3

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Decision Making

The perception of faculty members about their HOD's decision making in 10 sample universities is provided in Table 2. A mean score of 3.79 and percentage score of 75.8% indicate that an above-average level of decision making is perceived by faculty members about their HOD's in the 10 universities under study. In view of statistics, it is safe to conclude that the faculty members are satisfied with the decision-making capability of their HOD's. The standard deviation of 0.654 also supports that the results are reasonably trustworthy.

Table 2: Decision Making of HOD's as perceived by faculty members

S. No.	Variable	Mean Score	Percentage of Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1.	Decision Making	3.79	75.8	.654

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

The overall mean score depicts a favourable and positive perception of faculty members with regard to their HOD's decision making. This observation is also vindicated by the fact that all of the seven statements measuring decision making have reported a mean score higher than 3.50 and percentage score above 70%. The statement-wise analysis of decision making provided in Table 3 shows that the mean scores for all the seven statements measuring decision-making range between 3.68 and 3.84.

Table 3: Item Wise Analysis of Faculty Perception about HOD's Decision Making

S.No.	Statement	Mean score	S.D.	Percentage Score*
1	The decisions made in department are characterized by less error because alternatives have been identified carefully by my HOD	3.83	.963	76.6
2	My HOD builds decisions based on his/her knowledge he/she possesses about facts	3.81	.984	76.2
3	My HOD takes decisions in a deliberate and orderly manner	3.68	.982	73.6
4	My HOD weighs the consequences of the decision he/she makes	3.84	.941	76.8
5	Follows up the implementation of the decision and makes sure that it matches with desired goals	3.81	.962	76.2
6	Rarely makes the decision alone, without consulting other staff members	3.78	.901	75.6
7	Considers himself/herself as one of the employees who are participating in decision-making process and then finally takes the decision.	3.79	.971	75.8
Overall DM		3.79	.654	75.8

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study
*Percentage score= Mean score × 20

DECISION MAKING ACROSS STATES: A COMPARISON BASED ON FACULTY PERCEPTION

A comparison between faculty members of the four states under study, with respect to the decision making of their HOD's in their respective institutions, is given in Table 4. From a comparative point of view, the faculty members of Delhi state have reported the most favourable perception regarding the decision making of their HOD's, with a mean score of 3.85 or percentage score of 77.0%. Amongst the four states, faculty members of Haryana have reported the

lowest mean score (3.72) or percentage score of 74.4 with respect to the decision making of their HOD's. Uttar Pradesh stands at second with the mean score of 3.82 or percentage score of 76.4 and Jammu and Kashmir figures at third with the mean score of 3.80 or the percentage score of 76.0.

Table 4: Decision Making Across States: A Comparison on the Basis of Faculty Perception

S.No.	State	Mean score	Percentage of Mean score	Ranking	F-value	Sig. *
1.	Jammu & Kashmir	3.80	76.0	3rd	1.485	.217ns
2.	Delhi	3.85	77.0	1st		
3.	Haryana	3.72	74.4	4th		
4.	Uttar Pradesh	3.82	76.4	2nd		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study
*Note: **p<.05; ns = not significant*

A one way ANOVA test was employed to examine whether the differences in the mean scores of the respondents from four states are statistically significant or not. The results revealed that the perception of the respondent faculty members regarding the decision making of their HOD's in different states is more or less the same (F-value =1.485; sig=.217).

Decision Making Across Universities

In the present study, an attempt is also made to analyse and compare the perception of faculty members regarding decision making of their HOD's across the 10 sample universities. Overall, the faculty members of all the 10 sample universities report a fairly positive and satisfied perception with respect to the decision making of their HOD's in their respective institutions. From a comparative point of view (Table 5), the faculty members of Delhi University have reported the most favourable perception regarding the decision making of their HOD's, with a mean score of 3.98 or percentage score of 79.6%. Amongst the 10 sample universities, the faculty members of Central University of Haryana have reported the lowest mean score (3.42) with respect to the decision making of their HOD's. Additionally, Delhi University is followed by Jammia Millia Islamia with the mean score of 3.95 or the percentage score of 79.0, Aligarh Muslim University with the mean score of 3.88 or the percentage score of 77.6, University of Jammu with the mean score of 3.86 or the percentage score of 77.2, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University with the mean score of 3.81 or the percentage score of 76.2, University of Kashmir with the mean score of 3.79 or the percentage score of 75.8, Maharishi Dayanand University with the mean score of 3.77 or the percentage score of 75.4, University of Lucknow with the mean score of 3.73 or percentage score of 74.6, Central University of Kashmir with the mean score of 3.71 or the percentage score of 74.2, and Central University of Haryana with the least mean score of 3.42 or the percentage score of 68.4.

Table 5: Decision Making Across Universities and Their Comparison

S.No.	University Code**	Mean Score	Percentage Score	F-value	Sig.*
1.	UOK	3.73	74.6	1.192	.297ns
2.	GGSIU	3.79	75.8		
3.	UOJ	3.77	75.4		
4.	UOL	3.71	74.2		
5	MDU	3.86	77.2		
6.	CUK	3.81	76.2		
7.	DU	3.98	79.6		
8.	JMI	3.88	77.6		
9.	AMU	3.95	79.0		
10.	CUH	3.42	68.4		
	Total	3.79	75.8		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

*Note: **UOK: University of Kashmir; GGSIU: Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, UOJ: University of Jammu; UOL: University of Lucknow; MDU: Maharishi Dayanand University; CUK: Central University of Kashmir, DU: Delhi University; JMI: Jammia Millia Islamia; AMU: Aligarh Muslim University; CUH: Central University of Haryana; *p<.05; ns = not significant*

A one way ANOVA test was employed to examine whether the differences in the mean scores of the 10 respondent universities are statistically significant or not. The results revealed that the perception of the respondent faculty members about their HOD's from different universities is more or less the same (F-value =1.192; sig. =.297).

Decision Making: A Comparison of State and Central Universities

From a comparative stand point (Table 6), decision making in central universities appears to be better (mean score = 3.82; percentage of mean score = 76.4%) than the state universities (mean score = 3.76; percentage of mean score = 75. 2%).

Table 6: A Comparison between State Universities and Central Universities on the Basis of Decision Making

	Mean Score	Percentage of Mean Score	Z -Value	Sig.*
State Universities	3.76	75.2	-1.004	0.316^{ns}
Central Universities	3.82	76.4		
Overall	3.79	75.8		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05; ns = not significant

However, z-test was employed to examine whether the differences between the state and central universities are statistically significant or not. The results revealed that the difference is merely an outcome of chance factor and not statistically significant (z value = -1.004; p value = 0.316).

PERCEPTUAL GAP

The differences in the perception of respondents related to the variables that have been examined in this study are considered quite relevant irrespective of their statistical significance. Thus, the following section inspects the differences in perceptions of respondents about the variables under study.

Table 7 shows a comparison of male and female group of respondents. It becomes clear from Table 7 that the overall mean scores of male respondents was high as compared to female respondents in decision making. The mean score for male respondents is 3.81 and for female respondents is 3.77.

Table 7: Decision Making and Gender

Group Statistics (N=719); Male=420, Female=299						
Variables	**Gender**	**Mean****	**Overall Mean score**	**Std. Deviation**	**Z-value**	**Sig.***
Decision Making	Male	3.81	3.79	.622	.964	.035
	Female	3.77		.697		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: **Higher mean score indicates more favourable perception of faculty members about the Decision Making of their HOD's in the sample universities and the lower mean scores indicate the vice versa; *p<.05.

The results indicate that the perceptual differences of faculty members are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender as the *p* value is less than .05, indicating that the male faculty members are more satisfied with their HOD's decision making as compared to the female faculty members of the sample universities (Table 7). Hence, hypotheses H_1 is supported.

Table 8 shows a comparison between the mean scores of respondents across different age groups. For Decision Making, the highest mean score was for age group 25-35 years (3.89) and lowest for age group 35-45 years (3.72). In order to analyse the perception of faculty members towards the Decision Making across different age groups, one way ANOVA was used and F-value was computed. The results revealed that there is significant difference in the perception of faculty members across different age groups towards the variable decision making as its calculated *p*-value is less than 0.05. Hence hypotheses H_2 is supported.

Table 8: Decision Making and Age

Variable	Factor	Group	Mean score	Overall Mean score	F-value	Sig.
Decision Making	Age	25-35 years	3.89	3.79	3.209	.041*
		35-45 years	3.72			
		45 & above	3.76			

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study
Note: *p<.05

Decision Making and Experience

Table 9 shows a comparison between the mean scores of respondents on the basis of experience. For Decision Making, the highest mean score was for employees having experience of less than 10 years (3.84) and lowest for employees having experience of 10-20 years (3.73). The results revealed that there is significant difference in the perception of faculty members across different experience groups towards the variable Decision Making as its calculated p-value is less than 0.05 as confirmed by ANOVA test. Hence hypotheses H_3 is supported.

Table 9: Decision Making and Experience

Variable	Factor	Group	Mean score	Overall Mean score	F-value	Sig.
Decision Making	Experience	Less than 10 years	3.84	3.79	2.462	.046*
		10-20 years	3.73			
		20 years & above	3.80			

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05

Table 10 shows a comparison between the mean scores of respondents across different designations. For Decision Making, the highest mean score was for Assistant Professor (3.84) and lowest for Associate Professor (3.73). The results of ANOVA test revealed that there is insignificant difference in the perception of faculty members across different designations towards the variable decision making as its calculated *p*-value is greater than 0.05. Hence, hypotheses H_4 is not supported.

Table 10: Decision Making and Designation

Variable	Factor	Group	Mean score	Overall Mean score	F-value	Sig.
Decision Making	Designation	Professor	3.80	3.79	2.466	.086^{ns}
		Associate Professor	3.73			
		Assistant Professor	3.84			

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: ns = not significant

FINDINGS

The results revealed that the faculty members of the sample universities perceived the quality of decision making of their academic leaders at an above-average level and are fairly satisfied with their academic leaders' decision-making quality.

Further, state-wise descriptive statistics and comparison thereof were studied, which showed that decision making of academic leaders to be of higher order in Delhi state followed by Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana, respectively. Amongst the four states under study, it was also found that there is statistical insignificant difference in the quality of decision making amongst the academic leaders as perceived by the faculty members across the states under study.

The faculty members of Delhi University have reported the most favourable perception regarding the quality of decision making amongst their academic leaders whilst as the faculty members of Central University of Haryana have reported the lowest mean score with respect to the decision-making quality of their academic leaders.

Amongst the universities under study, it was also found that there is statistically insignificant difference in the quality of decision making amongst the academic leaders indicating that the perception of the respondent faculty members about

their academic leaders across universities is more or less the same.

The quality of decision making of academic leaders in central universities appears to be better than that of in state universities. However, there is statistically insignificant difference between central and state universities regarding the quality of decision making amongst academic leaders as perceived by the faculty members.

Decision Making: A Perceptual Study

The difference in the perception of faculty members was also examined with respect to the decision making on the basis of four demographic variables namely gender, age, experience and designation.

Perceptual Gap based on Gender

The overall mean scores of male respondents are of higher end, compared to female respondents regarding decision-making variable, indicating that the male faculty members are more satisfied with their academic leaders' decision making as compared to the female faculty members of the sample universities. The results of z-test indicated that the perceptual differences between the male and female respondent faculty members are statistically significant as the *p* value is less than .05, supporting the idea that gender influences on how the faculty members perceive the decision making quality of their academic leaders.

Perceptual Gap based on Age

The overall highest mean score for decision making was associated with the age group of 25-35 years and lowest was with age group of 35-45 years. The results of one-way ANOVA test indicated that the perceptual differences between the different respondent age groups about decision-making quality of their academic leaders are statistically significant as the *p* value is less than .05, indicating age influences on how the faculty members perceive the decision-making quality of their academic leaders.

Perceptual Gap based on Experience

The overall highest mean score for variable decision making was reported by employees having experience of less than 10 years and lowest by employees having experience of 10-20. The results of one-way ANOVA test indicated that the perceptual differences between the different experience groups about the decision-making quality of their academic leaders are statistically significant as the *p* value is less than .05, indicating experience influences on how the faculty members perceive the quality of decision making of their academic leaders.

Perceptual Gap based on Designation

The overall highest mean score for decision making was reported by Assistant Professors and lowest by Associate Professors. The results of one-way ANOVA test indicated that the perceptual differences between the different designations about decision making of their academic leaders are statistically insignificant as the *p* value is greater than .05, indicating designation has no influence on how the faculty members perceive the quality of decision making of their academic leaders.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

This investigation shows that there are significant gender, age and experience differences in the decision processes of the participants of this study except designation. The present study was aimed to know the perception of faculty members regarding their HOD's decision making. The results revealed that the faculty members of the sample universities perceived the quality of decision making of their academic leaders at an above-average level and are fairly satisfied with their academic leaders' decision-making quality. Decision making is related to transformational leadership. If a leader is able to lead the group in an effective manner and with the cooperation of staff, it will ultimately lead to good decision making. Decision making is also found better here in central universities as compared to the state universities amongst the academic leaders. In the central universities, academic leaders make decision that are characterised by less error and involve their staff whilst taking decisions. They take decisions in such a way that it matches with the desired goals. These results are reflected in Delhi University, Jammia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University. Higher educational institutions are the backbone of any society. It is this sector that provides skilled, qualified and competent human resource. Unfortunately, no Indian university is figuring in the list of top 100 universities of the world. In this study, an effort has been made to provide an insight that how the quality of Indian universities can be improved with the help of decision making.

The results obtained from the present study have certain significant implications. *First*, it contributes to the body of

existing literature as the variable decision making has not been studied too much in education setting. *Second*, if the higher learning institutions want to excel, attention must be given to developing programs for the leaders' quality decision making.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the present study, the research approach and design used are based on previous related studies, but still following limitations have been observed:

In the present study, the universities of north India were included to investigate the influence between the variables under study, including greater number of institutes from other regions as well in the future research could reveal more generalisable results.

The study was confined to central and state universities. Private universities, deemed to be universities, colleges, universities with the potential of excellence should be included in the future research.

The study focused on higher education sector only. The scope of the research could be widened by including more levels like primary, middle, undergraduate levels in the future research.

Perception of faculty members towards their HOD's was the focus of the present study. In the future studies, non-academic staff should also be included in order to generalise the results.

HOD's were treated as immediate academic leaders in the present study. Other academic leaders, such as Vice-Chancellors/Registrars/Deans, should be included in the future research.

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