

# Collaborative Decision-Making In School: School Property Custodians In Focus

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**Abstract.** The study examined the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management. This study employed a phenomenological research design to determine the experiences and perceptions of the eight (8) participants. Two primary themes were revealed in the experiences of property custodians: challenges faced and positive impacts. Among the obstacles were opposing perspectives, availability of time, and decision is a prerogative of a selected few. Conversely, positive impacts included improved decision quality and effective resource allocation. Property custodians' survival mechanism themes were ensuring evidence-based decisions, revitalizing collaborative culture, and engaging in leadership training. Lastly, on the educational cognizance drawn from the experiences, the themes were ensuring a secure work environment, embracing open-mindedness, and cultivating a growth mindset. These themes implied that school property custodians should implement decision-making strategies to give teachers the responsibility and power to create a more effective school setting. Property custodians should consider that each member makes an effort to pay attention, take part, and listen to each other's ideas because they know they will also be heard.

## KEY WORDS

1. Collaborative decision-making
2. school property custodians
3. coping mechanism

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, teachers' roles have begun to change when collaborative approaches in decision-making and teacher leadership have become two prominent strategies for addressing schools' problems: low student outcomes, low teacher morale, property management, and ineffective organization within school leadership. Many researchers have credited successful solutions to these problems to collaborative decision-making because it successfully empowers teachers. Williamson and Blackburn (2019) stated that collaborative decision-making is still taking place as school leaders strive to utilize practices and improve leadership styles to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. As per Owens (2018), adopting a collaborative approach to decision-making involves the interplay of influence and power between property custodians and other stakeholders, specifically teachers. He suggests that this shared decision-making approach yields significant and beneficial effects within the school environment. Encouraging the involvement of the entire staff in decision-making regarding

the management of school properties motivates them to take necessary actions for safeguarding and properly documenting school assets. Furthermore, when teachers participate in such decision-making processes, it enhances their ambition, attitude, and positive engagement in all aspects of school facilities and equipment development and growth. Ultimately, this fosters cooperation, commitment, and shared accountability among all involved parties. Due to the growing recognition of teachers' valuable and well-informed contributions to collaborative decision-making within schools, they are highly motivated to ensure these decisions hold significance (Wekesa, 2019). When teachers are directly involved in the decision-making process at schools, leveraging their expertise as professionals in various subject areas, they become better equipped to fulfill their responsibilities as stewards of school belongings and assets. Scholars and practitioners overwhelmingly agree that teachers play a crucial role in overall school success, especially when actively engaging in decision-making. As a result, teachers enhance their opportunities to gain insights and acquire new knowledge related to the care of facilities or equipment entrusted to them. Across the globe, the involvement of teachers in school decision-making regarding the management of school property has gained widespread acceptance. In Hong Kong, this practice goes beyond simply inviting teachers to identify unserviceable equipment and waste materials. Instead, school property custodians are mandated to actively encourage teacher participation in tasks such as preparing the Inventory and Inspection of Unserviceable Property (IIRUP) and Waste Materials Report (WMR). These reports are subsequently submitted to the disposal committee as Smylie et al. (2020) outlined. In South Africa, numerous school sustainability initiatives have prioritized teacher engagement in sustainability goals (Barr et al., 2019). The entire faculty plays a role in establishing normative

behavior regarding school properties, leading to developing a school culture that continues over the years. Consequently, a school's sustainability objectives can be further advanced if it recognizes the significance of property management at the staff level. Moreover, collaborative decision-making becomes even more crucial as schools grapple with reinventing and optimizing their properties to meet the growing demands for flexibility, quality, and commitment. Allowing teachers to be involved in the distribution and utilization of school facilities offers numerous potential advantages that can foster the social and physical capacity needed for excellent schools, especially since the challenges schools face are too immense for any individual to tackle alone. Addressing the challenges, Filipino scholars have identified problems in implementing the K to 12 curriculums in the country, including classroom shortages, lack of tables and chairs, book shortages, and more. The Department of Education (DepEd) has recommended intensifying the role of school property custodians in reforming and managing school properties. Over the past 30 years, school supply and property shortages have already been well-documented. However, recent literature emphasizes the crucial role of property custodians in guiding teachers towards school transformations. The saying 'two heads are better than one' highlights the importance of property custodians listening to other teachers when making decisions regarding the distribution, allocation, management and usage of school property and equipment. Involving teachers in these decision-making processes makes them feel valued and boosts their morale. Additionally, such participation can help minimize conflicts within the school, as decisions are reached through agreement among the involved parties. However, according to Ruiz et al. (2018), a professor at the University of the Philippines, school property custodians face challenges in decision-making due to the demanding and delicate nature of

their roles and responsibilities. Mismanagement of school properties can lead to administrative or legal issues, as even a minor mistake could result in accusations of corruption or falsification. Consequently, many school property custodians are considering leaving their positions due to these difficulties. In Davao City, school property custodians face several challenges in engaging teachers in decision-making processes. These challenges include dealing with diverse teacher groups, varying beliefs, different levels of motivation, and varying stress tolerance. Moreover, the changing social dynamics in schools, influenced by emerging educational trends that put additional pressure on teachers, further affect their commitment and decision-making regarding teacher participation in school property management. The aforementioned context highlights the crucial role of property custodians in encouraging teacher involvement in decision-making processes concerning school property management at the school level, aligning with their responsibilities as members of the School-Based Management system (SBM). However, it is evident that school property custodians encounter obstacles related to teacher participation in decision-making processes, significantly impacting their roles and functions within the school. Therefore, this study primarily investigates the collaborative decision-making practices of school property custodians. By understanding the challenges they face, the study aims to uncover coping strategies and best practices that may serve as a foundation for policymakers and administrators to address the issues concerning teacher participation in school property management decision-making.

*1.1. Purpose of the Study*—This research aimed to examine the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management. This study acknowledges the multiplicity of roles played by the school property custodian; this focused on one area: the decision-making process. Moreover, the study aims to draw significant information from the participants' personal experiences as school property custodians. Coping mechanisms for the challenges are also included in the study to holistically identify educational management insights drawn from the study's findings.

*1.2. Research Questions*—Specifically, this study sought to answer on the following questions:

- (1) What are the experiences of property custodians in managing school property through collaborative decision-making?
- (2) How do property custodians survive the challenges in managing school property through collaborative decision-making?
- (3) What educational cognizance are drawn from the experiences of the participants?

*1.3. Definition of Terms*—The following terms were operationally defined to make this study more comprehensive. Collaborative decision-making. It was a creative process to give ownership of decisions to the whole group, finding effective options that everyone could live with. One form of this is consensus. Consensus is a process that works to find common ground and solutions that are acceptable to all and best for the group. Property custodian: A designated individual who has the authority and responsibility for the immediate physical custody of all personal property under their control and within their custodial area. Their job includes accepting, inspecting, distributing, and inventory of supplies, facilities, and equipment.

*1.4. Significant of the Study*—

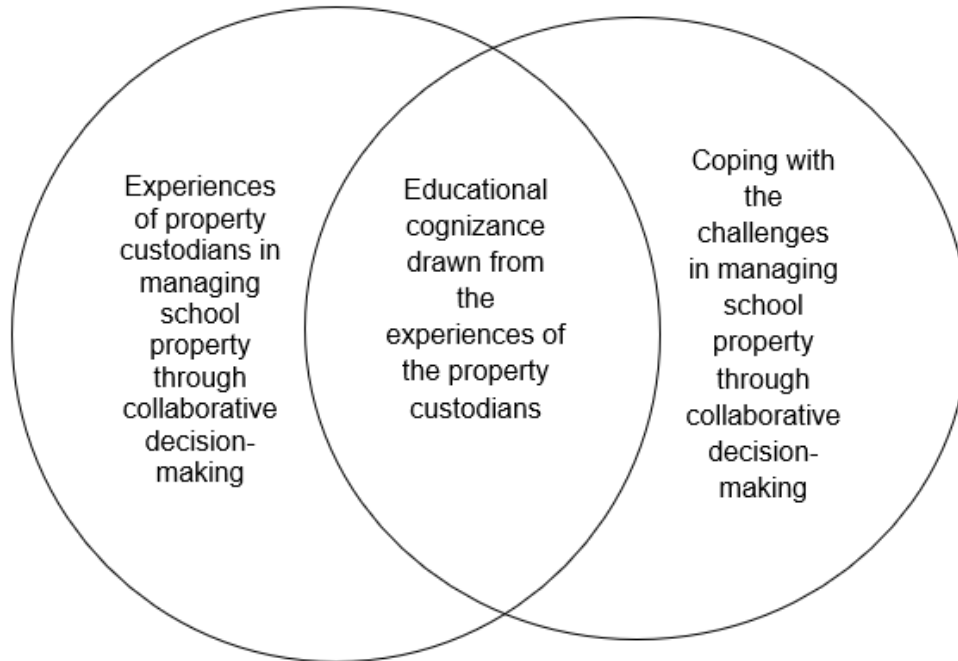
To clearly determine the outcomes of this study and to whom the findings addressed, the following persons or agencies were the beneficiaries. Department of Education. The study's findings may inform the Department of Education in developing guidelines and policies that promote and support teacher involvement in decision-making processes related to school property management. This may enhance the effectiveness of educational institutions and strengthen the overall education system. The study can align with the SBM framework, emphasizing decentralization and collaborative decision-making. It may provide insights into fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility in school management, including property management. Teachers. It may empower educators to take more active roles in shaping school property management decisions. This involvement may enhance their sense of ownership and job satisfaction. Engag-

ing in decision-making may provide teachers with opportunities for professional growth and leadership development. School property custodians. The study may help property custodians understand the importance of involving teachers in decision-making. It may highlight strategies to engage teachers effectively, leading to better collaboration and teamwork in managing school properties. Understanding the challenges property custodians face in involving teachers may facilitate the identification of potential conflicts and enable the development of conflict resolution mechanisms. The Stakeholders. The study may foster transparency and accountability in school management by involving all stakeholders in decision-making. This inclusive approach may build trust and support among parents, students, and the wider community; hence, they may be able to assist schools in planning and implementing projects and programs, specifically in improving school facilities and equipment.

*1.5. Theoretical Lens*—This study was based on human relations and the human resources models of management. These models form the Dual-Model Theory advanced by Miles (1975). According to Miles (1975), managers subscribe to two of the three management models. The three management models are the traditional model, the human relations model, and the human resources model. The traditional model emphasizes controlling and directing. The underlying assumption was that members of the enterprise comply if tasks and procedures are specified, and members are properly trained and paid. The human relations model was modified and gives attention to social and egoistic needs. It recognizes the fact that fair treatment and pay were not enough. Managers here emphasize controlling although preventive steps are also taken to obtain the desired contribution of organizational members. The human resources model sees the manager as a devel-

oper and facilitator to help subordinates achieve performance aims. There was a great deal of participation in goal setting. Further, if problems occur, several factors rather than a single cause are advanced as potential reasons for the difficulties. Although self-direction and self-control are important to this model, the need for other control is also recognized. Likewise, this study was guided by Motivation is one of the most studied psychological constructs in educational psychology (Koenka, 2020). The term is derived from the Latin word “movere,” which means “to move,” as motivation provides the necessary energy to people's actions (Jansen et al., 2022). In the scientific literature, motivation is often defined as “a process in which goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained” . Research on academic motivation focuses on explaining why students behave the way they do and how this affects learning and performance (Schunk diBenedetto, 2021). Moreover, Social cognitive

theory was much broader than self-efficacy and outcome expectations and assumes a system of interacting personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Schunk diBenedetto, 2021). The idea that human agency is neither completely autonomous nor completely mechanical but is subject to reciprocal determinism plays a decisive role (Linnenbrink-Garcia Patall, 2016). Thus, personal factors such as perceived self-efficacy enable individuals to initiate and sustain behaviors that translate to effects on the environment. Thoughtful reflection on those actions and their impact feeds back to the person and can, in turn, influence their sense of self-efficacy. Extensive research by Miles (1975) led to the conclusion that managers actually subscribe to two models: one for subordinates and the other for themselves. Hence, they adopt the human relations and human resources models. The following is a summarized comparison of the human relations and human resources models on attitudes towards people, amount of participation, and expectations. When examining the need for increased teacher involvement in education, it was valuable to explore the theory of Distributed Leadership (often used synonymously or in conjunction with Shared Leadership) as a conceptual framework to see how this concept relates to teachers as part of decision managers. Distributed leadership occurs when more than one person assumes a leadership role and shares administrative responsibility (Ross et al., 2019). Bush (2018) contended that leadership may arise anywhere in the organization and is not confined to formal leaders. Models of distributive leadership involve interactions between people of different levels and roles in the workplace. When leaders in formal roles decide to operate with the distributive leadership model in place they demonstrate that the organization values the contributions of its members and affirm their belief that all individuals should have a voice. Further, this study is also anchored in the Collaborative Development Theory of Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau, and Thomas-Slayter (1995). Collaborative development is broadly understood as the active involvement of people in making decisions about the implementation of processes, programs, and projects that affect them. Under this theory, the basic element of collaborative development is people's power in thinking and acting, and controlling their action in a collaborative framework. Accordingly, the key concept of collaborative development includes the collaborative effort of people, taking initiatives by themselves in terms of their own thinking and deliberations. Eade (1997) enriched the theory by introducing the term capacity building. He explained that capacity building enables institutions to be more effective and efficient in the process of identifying, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating development projects. He also notes that capacity building raises people's knowledge, awareness, and skills to use their own capacity and use available support systems to resolve issues and problems. This study is further supported by Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory (1934). This theory emphasizes the characteristic ways of engaging in or belonging to a defined community of practice. It is a complex notion involving individuals in relations of power and gaining access to a wide range of resources and opportunities for participation. If learning, in general, takes place in a social community, then learning to lead could be considered in relation to a community of practice. Spillane (2019) argues that decision-making practice involves more than one person and is constructed in the interactions among leaders, followers, and situations. People are central to any analysis of leadership practice. A challenge in the analysis is to capture how leaders work as a group. Members of a group co-perform in the creation of leadership practice Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. Based on the figure, there are two interconnected variables. These variables are the following: the experiences of



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual framework of the study*

property custodians in managing school property through collaborative decision-making, educational cognizance drawn from the experiences of the participants, and coping with the challenges in managing school property through collaborative decision-making.

## 2. Methodology

This chapter of the study presented the method, research participants, data collection, role of the researcher, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations. Exploring facts and knowledge in this study necessitated the consequent design and implementation, as elaborated in this chapter.

*2.1. Philosophical Assumptions*—The philosophical assumption was a framework used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in a specific field of study. It established the background for the following conclusions and decisions. Typical philosophical assumptions had different types and were elaborated below. **Ontology.** This part of the research pertained to how the issue relates to the nature of reality. According to Creswell (2019), reality was subjective and multiple as seen by participants in the study. The ontological issue addressed the nature of reality for the qualitative researcher. The reality was constructed by individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist, such as the reali-

ties of the researcher, those of individuals being investigated, and those of the reader or audiences interpreting the study. In this study, the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management were investigated. In this study, the researcher relied on the voices and interpretations of the participants through extensive quotes and themes that reflected their words and provided evidence of different perspectives. The answers of the participants to the study were coded and analyzed to build and construct the commonality and discreteness of responses. It was made sure that the responses of the participants were carefully coded to ensure the reliability of the result. The researcher upheld the authenticity of the responses and precluded from making personal bias as the study progressed. Epistemology. This referred to the awareness of how knowledge claims were justified by staying as close to the participants as possible during the study to obtain firsthand information. Guba and Lincoln, as cited by Creswell (2019), stated that on the epistemological assumption, the researcher attempted to lessen the distance between himself or herself from the participants. He suggested that being a researcher he or she collaborates, spends time in the field with participants, and becomes

an 'insider'. The intention of this study was to gather information from the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management. It was assumed that close interaction with the participants was established to gain direct information that would shed light on the knowledge behind the inquiry. Axiology refers to the role of values in research. Creswell (2019) averred that the role of values in a study was significant. Axiology suggests that the researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes their interpretation in conjunction with the interpretation of participants. The researcher ensured the dignity and value of every piece of information obtained from the participants. As a researcher, I understood the personal and value-laden nature of the information gathered from the study. Therefore, the researcher preserved the merit of the participants' answers and carefully interpreted them in light of the participants' interpretations. Rhetoric. This philosophical assumption stressed that the researcher wrote in a literary, informal style using the personal voice and used qualitative terms and limited definitions. In the context of the study, the researcher used the first person in the elucidation of school property custodian.

2.2. *Qualitative Assumptions*—The methodology was different from the method. The methodology was a creative and responsible approach to understanding questions and subject matter, while the method refers to the exact knowledge and procedure (Gerodias, 2018). In this study, the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management, particularly the teachers from Cluster 1, Division of Davao City, were investigated. The researcher's drive to know the deeper meaning of their experiences became the basis for do-

ing qualitative research, a means which was considered helpful in looking for "meanings and motivations that underline cultural symbols, personal experiences, and phenomena." By using phenomenology, this need was hoped to be addressed by bringing the stories of the School Property Custodians in a manner that, as David (2020) wrote, the themes, symbols, and meaning of the experiences were presented. Phenomenological research was based on two premises. The first was that experience was a valid, rich, and rewarding source of knowledge; this experience is a source of knowledge and

shapes one's behavior. From the definition, human experience was viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena and not as an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research is that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and we could learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our daily lives (Morrissey Higgs, 2019). By

using phenomenology, which was concerned with the "what" and the "how" (Moustakas, 2019), the researcher projected that the subjective experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management were investigated, and insights were drawn as a basis for possible future research and policy analysis in relation to this research.

*2.3. Design and Procedure*—This study employed a qualitative approach to research, specifically a phenomenological research design since it focused on the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management. According to Creswell, (2019), phenomenology was an approach to qualitative research that focused on the commonality of lived experiences within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. Typically, interviews were conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience. Other forms of data, such as documents, observations, and art, were also used. The data were read and reread and were culled for phrases and themes that were grouped into clusters of meanings. Through this process, the researcher was able to construct the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, Maxwell (2018) also added that phenomenology, with its roots in philosophy, psychology, and education, attempted to extract the purest, untainted data. In some interpretations of the approach, the researcher used bracketing to document personal experiences with the subject to help remove him or her from the process. One method of bracketing is taking notes. According to Cor-

betta (2018), the phenomenological research design was a qualitative type of research for which interviews provided an in-depth method that granted access to deep knowledge and explanations and helped grasp the subjects' perspectives. Creswell (2019) also claimed that interviews were primarily used in qualitative research. They occurred when researchers asked one or more participants general, open-ended questions and recorded their answers. Often, audio tapes were utilized to allow more consistent transcription. Interviews were also useful for following up with individual respondents after questionnaires, such as to further investigate their responses. In qualitative research, interviews were used to pursue the meanings of central themes in the world of their subjects. The main task in doing interviews was to understand the meaning of what the interviewees said (McNamara, 2020). Based on Quad's (2020) statements, the researcher transcribed and typed the data into a computer file to analyze it after the interview. Interviews were particularly useful for uncovering the story behind a participant's experiences and pursuing in-depth information about a topic. The researcher collected data, typically via long interviews, from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Next, the data analysis involved triangulation that extracted significant statements from the transcribed interviews. The significant statements were transformed into clusters of mean-



ings according to how each statement fell under specific psychological and phenomenological concepts. Moreover, these transformations were tied up together to make a general description of the experience both the textural description of what was experienced and the structural description of how it was experienced. The researcher incorporated his or her personal meaning of the experiences here. Finally, the report was written such that readers understand better the essential, invariant structure of the essence of the experience. Conversely, several challenges have been pointed out. The researcher required a solid grounding in the philosophical guidelines of phenomenology. The subjects that were selected for the study were individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher needed to bracket his or her own experiences and observations, which were diffi-

cult to do. The researcher also needed to decide how and when his or her personal observations were incorporated into the study. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches were based on the paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasized the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such they were powerful tools for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the cluster of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom. Since the focus of this study was to explore and assess the school property custodians' experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management, the researcher intended to employ phenomenological methods of qualitative research.

*2.4. Research Participants*—The researcher utilized the purposive sampling design since the participants were chosen based on the criteria or purpose of the study (Creswell, 2019). It was also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The selection of the participants was purposefully done to ensure that the findings were authentic (Marshall, 2021).

The participants of this study were the eight (8) teachers of Cluster 1, Division of Davao City. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: they must have been in their present position for at least 5 years—regardless of their age, sex, and marital status; they must be handling property custodian duties as school ancillaries; and they must have at least a very satisfactory rating in IPCRF.

*2.5. Ethical Considerations*—Ethical considerations were significant in the design of this research study. The researcher needed to consider several ethical issues regarding the research participant in this fieldwork. Ethical considerations were specified as one of the most important parts of the research. The researcher needed to adhere to the aims of the research, imparting authentic knowledge, truth, and prevention of error. Social Value. Research is essential to society. This study focused on teachers' experiences, specifically among school property

custodians. It also served as a basis for higher authorities to create more programs and resolutions from which classroom teachers could benefit. Informed Consent. In the conduct and practice of this study, the Treaty Principle of Participation, as cited by McLeod (2019), was adhered to. The invitation to the participants was ensured that their participation in the research was completely voluntary in nature, and was based on the understanding of adequate information. The participant recruitment and selection were lodged in the appendices of this

study. Gaining the trust and support of research participants was critical to the informed and ethical academic inquiry and phenomenological research (Walker, 2018 as cited by Pillerin, 2020). All participants were given an informed consent form before scheduling the interviews and participating in the phenomenological research process. Each participant was required to provide a signed personal acknowledgment, consent, and an indication of a willingness to participate in the study release. The purpose of the informed consent letter was to introduce the research effort, provide contact information, articulate the intent of the study, request voluntary participation by the recipients, and anticipate the information that the informants were expected to provide. All participants were required to sign and return the letter of consent to the researcher before participating in the research. Vulnerability of Research Participants. The participants of this study were capable of answering the research instrument for they were all professional teachers in public elementary schools. Thus, the researcher assured them that as the researcher, he or she can easily be reached through the contact number and be addressed in case there were some clarifications or questions with regard to the study. Risks, Benefits and Safety. The recruitment of the respondents was free of coercion, undue influence or inducement. Moreover, respondents were provided with the contact numbers of the chair of the panel or panel members in case they had queries related to the study. Furthermore, in the event that respondents experienced potential discomfort and inconvenience while answering the questions, they were not compelled to participate in any manner. Further, the researcher had ensured that the respondents were safe during the conduct of the survey and interview. Thus, the distribution of the questionnaire was conducted in a safe venue and administered at their convenient time. The dominant concern of this study is the Treaty Principle of Protection, as reflected in

the respect for the rights of privacy and confidentiality and the minimization of risk. This was done by assigning pseudonyms for each informant so as not to disclose their identity. The possibility of a degree of risk inherent to this was minimized by taking all reasonable steps to guarantee participant confidentiality. Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. This study observed the Data Privacy Act of 2002 to ensure that the data cannot be traced back to their real sources to protect participants' identities. Thus, utmost care was taken to ensure the anonymity of the data sources. Hence, any printed output that was carried out from this study was kept in anonymity. Furthermore, all the issues were given consideration so that there was no conflict of interest among the researcher and the respondents. Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way, were avoided. Justice. The respondents were informed of the researcher's role and their corresponding role during data gathering. They were briefed that they had to give their full honesty in answering the survey questions, and additionally, any type of communication in relation to the research was done with honesty. Similarly, they were informed that they were the ones to benefit first from the results of the study. Transparency. The results of the study were accessed by the respondents and heads of the participating schools because the information was available and was placed on CD or other storage devices which they could request the researcher to provide. In addition, by learning from the results of the study, participants were aware of the significance of the study and its contribution to their well-being. Further, each of the participants was advised that they have the right to withdraw their information at any time up to the completion of the data collection process and that they can be requested and allowed to verify their individual transcript after the interviewed was carried out. This provided the participants with the op-

portunity to amend or remove any information which they felt might identify them. The researcher reserved the right to employ the use of pseudonyms, and changing names and or non-significant dates in the interest of the protection of the identity of the participant in all subsequent data analysis and reporting. Qualification of the Researcher. The researcher ensured that he or she possessed the needed qualifications to conduct the study. I completed the academic requirements and passed the comprehensive examination prior to thesis writing, which was the last requirement to obtain the master's degree, and the researcher was qualified to conduct the study physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. In addition, the advisee-adviser tandem ensured that the study reached its completion. Adequacy of Facilities. The researcher strived that the study can be completed successfully in the specified time and that he or she is equipped with the necessary resources. Likewise, the technical committee helped in the enhancement of the paper by giving the needed suggestions and recommendations for the im-

provement of the study. Also, the researcher ensured that he or she had enough funds to continue and finish the research. Thus, this study was hoped to be completed in the target time. Community Involvement. I showed respect to the local tradition, culture, and views of the respondents in this study. Moreover, this study did not involve any use of deceit in any stage of its implementation, specifically in the recruitment of the participants or methods of data collection. Furthermore, the researcher necessarily expressed great pleasure in the wholehearted participation of the interviewees in the conduct of the study. Plagiarism and Fabrication as the researcher. The researcher respected other works by properly citing the author and rewriting what someone else has said his or her own way. The researcher also used quotes to indicate that the text had been taken from another paper. Similarly, the researcher assured that honesty was present in working on the manuscript and no intentional misrepresentation and making up of data or results was included, or purposefully put forward conclusions that are not accurate.

*2.6. Role of the Researcher*—The researcher had a responsibility to uncover, transfer, and exploit knowledge for the benefit of educational institutions. To do so, the researcher took up the following roles in the course of the study: Facilitator and Promoter of Unbiased Research. I conducted interviews with the participants and guided them in the process. The researcher interpreted ideas and responded based on existing literature and related studies and not on the researcher's own knowledge, thoughts, and feelings to avoid the intrusion of bias. Expert in qualitative methods. I implemented the qualitative method correctly. To do so, the researcher assessed himself and sought help from the research adviser and other research professionals. These helped him exhibit competence in explaining the study without biasing the par-

ticipants, conducting interviews properly according to the design, making appropriate field observations, selecting appropriate artifacts, images, and journal portions, and employing Environmental Triangulation and Thematic Content Analysis precisely. Collector and Keeper of data. I ensured different ways of making a record of what was said and done during the interview and Focus Group Discussion, such as taking handwritten notes or audio and/or video recording. The recordings were transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin. Records done by the researcher were properly secured as they contained sensitive information and were relevant to the research. However, the data were being collected, and the primary responsibility of the researcher was to safeguard participants and their data. Mechanisms for such safeguard-

ing were clearly articulated to participants and were approved by a relevant research ethics review board before the research began. Analyst of data. I saw the phenomenon or problem from the participants' perspective by interpreting data, transcribing and checking, reading between the lines, coding, and theming. The researcher made sure that the findings were true to the participants and that their voices were heard.

*2.7. Data Collection*—The following was the step-by-step process of gathering the data needed. Asking permission from the Schools Division Superintendent. In September 2023, the researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study in the identified school. The researcher sent a letter addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent with the attached Chapters 1 and 2 together with the research instrument, which explained the objectives of the study and the identification of the participants. The researcher waited for the response of the SDS before conducting it. Asking permission from the school heads. In the same month, after securing the approval of the SDS, the researcher sent letters to the principals of the schools explaining the study to be conducted in their schools. Obtaining consent from the participants. Still, in September 2023, the researcher asked permission from the participants. They were formally oriented about the study and the process they shall go through as participants. Conducting the interview. In September 2023, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview us-

*2.8. Data Analysis*—In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the gathered data. The researcher analyzed the answers of the participants from the conducted interviews using Creswell's Model, specifically the identifying of themes approach. According to

I organized and presented data. I presented the problem and the related literature and studies that supported it. The study's findings were presented through research questions, stating the results for each one by using themes to show how the research questions were answered in the study. Moreover, the researcher gave future directions and implications of the study for improving educational policy and practices.

ing the interview questionnaire. The profile of the participants was taken, notes were jotted down, and conversations were recorded using a sound recorder for ease of transcription. The researcher carefully listened and responded actively during the interviews. Transcribing the responses of the interviewees. In December 2023, the researcher transcribed the responses of the interviewees precisely by recalling their answers from the sound recorder. Since the participants used their vernacular language, the researcher translated it into English language. Data Coding and thematizing. In January 2024, after the transcription, the data were categorized and coded. Then, themes were extracted, and individual data within the participants were compared and contrasted. The researcher then conducted a second round of interviews (FGD) to corroborate any data that needed further explanation and input from the participants. Additional information gathered was examined thoroughly and integrated into the existing body of data. After which, data were compared and contrasted between the participants in order to come up with patterns and trends.

Creswell (2019), themes in qualitative research were similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database. Familiarization with the data was common to all forms of qualitative analysis. The researcher immersed herself in and became intimately familiar with their

data, reading and re-reading it and noting any initial analytic observations. Coding was also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis. It involved generating pithy labels for important features of the data relevant to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis. Coding was not simply a method of data reduction; it was also an analytic process, so codes captured both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher coded every data item and ended this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts. Searching for themes was a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. The researcher ended this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme. Reviewing themes. The researcher reflected on whether the

themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data and began to define the nature of each individual theme and the relationship between the themes. Defining and naming themes: The researcher prepared a detailed analysis of each theme identifying the ‘essence’ of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme. Writing up involved weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualizing it in relation to existing literature. The researcher made sure that the school property custodians’ experiences with collaborative decision-making in the context of school property management were presented comprehensively.

*2.9. Framework of Analysis*—The framework analysis of this research was flexible to allow the researcher to either collect all the data and then analyze it or do data analysis during the collection process. In the analysis stage, the gathered data was sifted, charted, and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes. This involved a five-step process: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie Spencer, 2021). Familiarization refers to the process during which the researcher became familiarized with the transcripts of the data collected, that was, interview or focus group transcripts, observation, or field notes, and gained an overview of the collected data (Ritchie Spencer, 2021). In other words, the researcher became immersed in the data by listening to audiotapes, studying the field, or reading the transcripts. Throughout this process, the researcher became aware of key ideas and recurrent themes and made a note of them. Due to the sheer volume of data that was collected in qualitative research, the researcher was not able to review all of the material. Thus, a selection

of the data set was utilized. The selection depended on several aspects of the data collection process. For example, the mix of methods used, such as interviews, documents, and observations. Identifying a thematic framework, the second stage, occurred after familiarization when the researcher recognized emerging themes or issues in the data set. These emerging themes or issues had arisen from a priori themes. Were issues. However, it was at this stage that the researcher allowed the data to dictate the themes and issues. To achieve this end, the researcher used the notes taken during the familiarization stage. The key issues, concepts, and themes that had been expressed by the participants now formed the basis of a thematic framework that was used to filter and classify the data (Ritchie Spencer, 2021). Indexing meant identifying portions or sections of the data that corresponded to a particular theme. This process was applied to all the textual data that had been gathered from transcripts of interviews. For the sake of convenience, Ritchie and Spencer (2021) recommend that a numerical system be used for the indexing references and annotated in the margin

beside the text. The final stage, mapping, and interpretation, involved the analysis of the key characteristics as laid out in the charts. This analysis was able to provide a schematic diagram of the event/phenomenon, thus guiding the researcher in his/her interpretation of the data set. It was at this point that the researcher was cognizant of the objectives of qualitative

analysis, which were: “defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies” (Ritchie Spencer, 2021). Once again, these concepts, technologies, and associations were reflective of the participant.

*2.10. Trustworthiness of the Study*—The concepts of validity and reliability were to be relatively foreign to the field of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substituted data trustworthiness, which consisted of components such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Harts, 2022). Credibility involved establishing that the findings of the research were credible or believable from the perspectives of the participants. Observing the attributes of prolonged engagement was where credibility contributed to a belief in the trustworthiness of data. To address the issue of credibility, the researcher interviewed as many research participants as possible or up to the

point of saturation. Meanwhile, transferability was the degree to which the findings were generalized or transferred to other contexts. In this, the researcher did a thorough job in describing the research context and assumptions that were relevant. On the other hand, dependability was the consistency and repeatability of the research. The researcher made sure that the findings of the study were evaluated by the participants and scrutinized by an external reviewer. Lastly, conformability was the degree to which findings could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. The researcher documented the procedures and did a rechecking of the data during the entire research process. The researcher also made sure that the findings were true and correct.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the study’s results with reference to its aim. It also discusses the themes that emerged from the data gathered. The results present the description and background of the participants who were assigned pseudonyms to conceal their identities.

*3.1. Experiences of Property Custodians in Managing School Property Through Collaborative Decision-Making*—Given the increasing recognition of the importance of credible and informed contributions in inclusive decision-making across organizational levels, it is crucial to underscore the significance of incorporating teachers into the decision-making process. Teachers inherently serve as leaders within the educational framework, entrusted with the responsibilities of guiding instruction, enforcing

school policies, and collaborating on various school initiatives. Since decisions made within educational institutions directly impact them, their role as professionals and experts in specific subject areas uniquely positions them to make well-informed choices aligned with their responsibilities as teacher leaders (Mualuko, 2019). This section presents the experiences of school property custodians in managing school properties through collaborative decision-making. Their responses were narrowed down into one

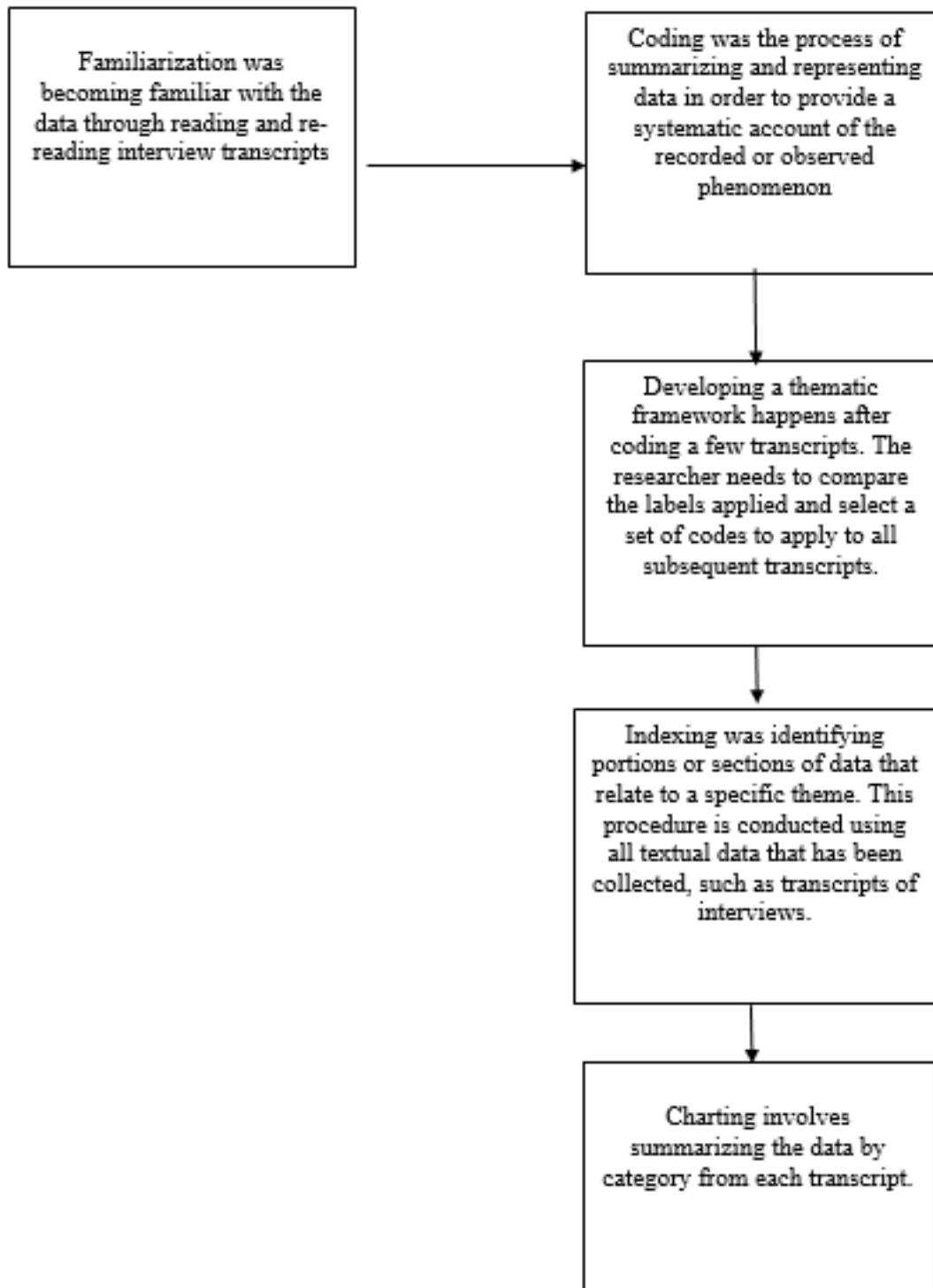


Figure 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

to generate themes and subthemes. These were carefully analyzed and formulated based on

what came from informants' accounts and reflections.

*3.1.1. Challenges Encountered: Opposing perspectives*—Opposing perspectives. In every decision-making process, there is the potential for the development of conflicting ideas. This may arise when individuals find it challenging to collaborate due to differences in values, interests, personalities, or attitudes. The participants believed that improperly handled conflicting ideas might negatively impact school performance, reducing productivity and affecting the morale and confidence of members. However, well-managed conflict can be beneficial, clarifying issues, creating opportunities for discussion, and strengthening relationships among members. These findings align with Soyalp (2021),

who argued that opposing perspectives are inseparable from human and social life. Conflicts, considered destructive by traditional views, are seen as positive and necessary for organizations to thrive. The focus should be on managing the conflict resolution process rather than defining it as a negative concept. Problem-solving approaches to conflict resolution are shown to generate more agreements, win-win outcomes, short and long-term satisfaction, and durable solutions. These approaches are more likely in fair, cohesive organizations that recognize success and are open to innovation. Problem-solving is also more likely when parties are concerned about each other's welfare (Barron, 2020).

*3.1.2. Availability of Time*—Schedule conflicts pose a significant challenge, as participants acknowledge that teachers accomplish a multitude of crucial tasks within limited time frames. Teachers are engaged in teaching multiple subjects or courses daily, reviewing student work, planning differentiated lessons for diverse learners, and collaborating with parents and specialists to support individual students. Teaching demands full immersion, with teachers assuming roles as instructors, counselors, coaches, and even nurses during their time at school. Balancing time between instructional and collaborative decision-making becomes challenging. Participants also face time constraints, struggling to schedule meetings for decision-making due to conflicts with teachers' schedules. Teachers and property custodians have busy calendars due to numerous trainings, urgent reports, technical assistance provision, school activities, monitoring, and unforeseen circumstances. Property custodians, facing tasks that demand considerable time, deal with attendance issues, curriculum alignment, curriculum development, pro-

fessional development, teacher selection, fiscal compliance, and disruptive student management (Rayfield and Diamantes, 2021). Studies, including Murphy's (2019), highlight the hectic nature of the property custodian's workday, filled with frequent interruptions and administrative duties. Finding time to lead amid job pressures emerges as a central leadership challenge for school improvement. Principals and other administrators are responsible for many resource allocation decisions that can affect the feasibility of collaborative practices among teachers. They are involved in setting schedules that can create time for teachers to collaborate. However, many public-school systems have faced budget cuts and shifting reform agendas that constrain principals' and other administrators' capacity to set aside time and resources for teachers to work collaboratively. Dedicated time for teachers to work together is crucial to collaboration.150 Time for collaboration can be carved out of teachers' schedules. But this way of thinking about collaboration as a discrete activity that teachers take time out of their



“real” work to do means thinking about collaboration as an add-on to individualized, egg crate

*3.1.3. Decision is a prerogative of a selected few*—The authority to make decisions is typically considered an administrative prerogative. Nevertheless, for the participants, the concept of participatory decision-making is not novel in the educational realm; rather, they advocate for decision-making to be a strategic planning endeavor that encompasses a cooperative process between administrators and teachers. Despite this perspective, there persists an entrenched culture and belief among teachers that decision-making is not their responsibility but lies with the school and the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Furthermore, participants indicated that teachers hold this belief primarily because they have not received training in decision-making; most of their training sessions focus on curriculum and teaching pedagogies. Consequently, they express a lack of confidence in deciding matters related to school property, fearing that their decisions could adversely affect the overall performance of the school. Participants also observed that teachers lack experience in participatory decision-making, a condition largely attributed to the prevailing school culture wherein decision-making was perceived as the prerogative of a select few, including property custodians, principals, master teach-

*3.1.4. Positive Effects: Improved decision quality*—The participants believed that collaborative decision making can result in better decisions. This is because a wider range of perspectives and expertise are taken into account, leading to more creative and informed solutions. School personnel may convene a meeting to present data on a project’s potential benefits and limitations and collect feedback to inform the implementation process. This inclu-

type schools rather than a fundamental way of working. (Schleifer, Rinehart Yanisch, 2017).

ers, and stakeholders. Consequently, teachers are hesitant to contribute and express their ideas during meetings. Supporting this observation, McEwan (2021) has noted that teachers often feel uneasy about sharing decisions, perceiving them as the exclusive domain of administrators. This aligns with the findings of Mbugua and Rarieya (2021), who identified several impediments to facilitating teachers’ involvement in planning, including a lack of knowledge and expertise in strategic planning, a dearth of vision and shared experiences, individualized approaches, and an emphasis on the formal aspects of planning. Moreover, other scholars have underscored the significance of dedicating time and creating opportunities for collaboration, emphasizing the necessity of reinforcing and engaging teachers in collaborative processes. Despite the acknowledged importance of participation and collaboration, their dynamics vary considerably among schools. Teachers tend to be more proactive and express a greater desire for involvement in instructional decisions rather than managerial ones. Sarafidou and Chatziioanidis (2020) reported in their study that teachers exhibit lower levels of actual participation in managerial decisions and demonstrate limited interest or desire to engage in such decision-making processes.

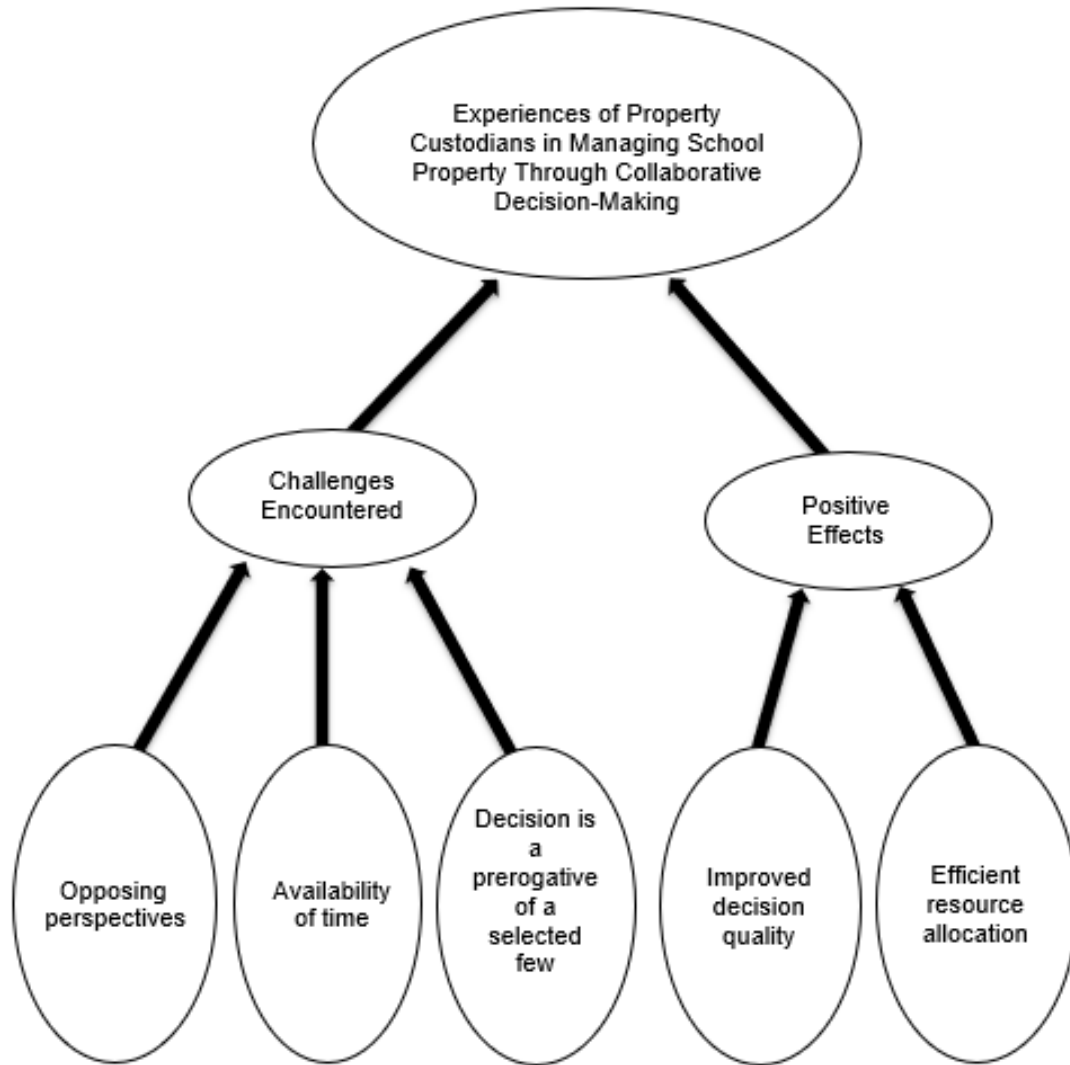
sion promotes a shared sense of ownership and strengthens the school community, as teachers reflect on and discuss instructional implications. Collaborative decision-making can increase the acceptance of decisions because everyone has had an opportunity to provide input and has been involved in the decision-making process. This can lead to greater buy-in and commitment to the decision. When there is collaboration in decision-making, all parties involved

will create a consensus to implement a project based on the decision agreed by the body. This consensus on a decision creates improved decisions since every member agrees to support the decision. Using techniques such as voting, ranking, or dot voting can facilitate consensus. The participants' responses validate Bensla's (2023) idea that collaborative decision-making can be more transparent than other forms of decision-making because all stakeholders have been involved in the process. This can reduce the likelihood of rumors, misunderstandings, or suspicion about the decision. A good school governance leads in improving the quality of decisions and effectiveness. The quality of decision refers to a decision taken consistently to

the school goals. This means that the implementation of the decision is influenced by the degree to which group members understand and support the decision (Vroom, 2023). School supervisor, principals, and other leaders engage in strategic decision-making when they set the broad goals should consider the impacts on the students' lives. The school improvement should be based on flexibility, persistent optimism, motivating attitudes and dispositions, and commitment through teacher empowerment (Leithwood et al., 2018). The shared decision-making of the schools improves the problem-solving capabilities of teachers, and decisions become conscious and well-reasoned choices (Wildy et al., 2019).

*3.1.5. Efficient resource allocation.* — Resource management is not an isolated task but requires coordination and collaboration across different departments and teams. When all managers are involved, it fosters a culture of cooperation, reducing potential conflicts and fostering a sense of unity. Decision makers are more likely to collaborate with one another and share resources to ensure that work and resources are distributed fairly and efficiently across the organization. They can make necessary adjustments and ensure that resources are allocated optimally. Further, the participants claimed that allocating resources can be a contentious issue, as different departments and projects compete for limited resources. Involving all teachers in the process increases transparency, ensuring that resource allocation decisions are made fairly and openly based on prioritization. This transparency helps to build trust among teachers and reduces the likelihood of disputes, contributing to a more cohesive and harmonious work environment. This collaborative environment also encourages knowledge sharing and the development of innovative solutions, promoting continuous improvement and organizational growth.

The participants' responses verify Faster Capital's (2023) perspective that one key challenge in resource allocation is mitigating risks associated with the decisions made. Poor resource allocation can lead to wasted time, effort, and money, ultimately hindering the success of a project or organization. To ensure effective resource allocation, it is crucial to implement strategies that minimize risks and maximize the potential for success. According to Bryson et al. (2019), involving teachers in decision-making enhances decisions' legitimacy and effectiveness. In the context of resource allocation, teacher's participation ensures that the allocated resources align with organizational goals and values, fostering a sense of ownership among participants. This collaborative approach contributes to the successful implementation of resource allocation plans. Bingham and Nabatchi (2020) emphasized that the flexibility offered by collaborative decision-making enables organizations to respond promptly to changing circumstances and optimize resource allocation in real time. The figure above shows the emerging themes on the experiences of property custodians in managing school property through



**Figure 3.** *Emerging Themes on the Experiences of Property Custodians in Managing School Property Through Collaborative Decision-Making*

collaborative decision making. The themes under positive experiences were improved decision quality and efficient resource allocation. Meanwhile the themes under negative experiences were opposing perspectives, availability of time, and decision is a prerogative of a selected few. These themes implied that school property custodians should implement decision making strategies to give teachers the responsi-

bility and power to make decisions in creating a more effective school setting. Property custodians should consider that each member makes an effort to pay attention, take part, and listen to each other’s ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard. Each member should speak up on matters of controversy and everyone knows where everyone stands.

*3.2. Property Custodians Survive with the Challenges in Managing School Property*

*Through Collaborative Decision-Making*—The effective management of physical assets in educational institutions heavily relies on the piv-

otal role played by school property custodians. Their responsibilities encompass maintaining the cleanliness, safety, and overall upkeep of school facilities. One notable challenge they encounter pertains to involving teachers in the participatory decision-making process for school property management. Teachers, being the primary users of school facilities, play a crucial role in ensuring the proper management and maintenance of school property. Nevertheless, encouraging teacher collabora-

tive participation in decision-making poses challenges, particularly when they contend with competing demands on their time and resources. This section presents the coping strategies of the schools' property custodians in managing school property through collaborative decision-making. Their responses were narrowed down into one to generate themes and subthemes. These were carefully analyzed and formulated based on what came from informants' accounts and reflections.

*3.2.1. Ensuring evidence-based decisions*—Research serves a crucial role at every stage of the planning process, offering valuable insights to property custodians. The participants emphasized the importance of conducting research to effectively address the challenges of participatory decision-making in school planning. While acknowledging various decision-making approaches, they highlighted the need for research to identify the most effective strategies within their specific context. Hairon (2020) highlighted that while the objective of research is to produce new knowledge, leaders, particularly in education, undertake research to improve practice while remaining informed by theory. Educators are advised to follow research steps closely, such as setting the research problem, exploring literature, and establishing re-

search questions. The sustainability of teachers engaging in research depends on their willingness, and school property custodians play a vital role in facilitating this. Sangre (2021) suggested that property custodians can build teachers' capacity through professional development, including exposure to research workshops and guidance from experienced teachers or external consultants throughout the research process. Engaging in research advances teacher leaders' professional development, allowing them to discern between well-liked teaching techniques and their actual usefulness (Reeves, 2020). It is a commitment not only to individual practice but also to the broader professional community. Communicating research results enhances their practices by reflecting on the attributes of the learning activity and planning actions based on enriched data.

*3.2.2. Revitalizing collaborative culture*—Teachers in schools with robust collaborative cultures exhibit distinct behaviors compared to those relying solely on property custodians to shape their work conditions. In collaborative environments, property custodians engage in creative leadership and joint planning with teachers, assuming responsibility for their support. According to the participants, the success of any improvement hinges on teachers'

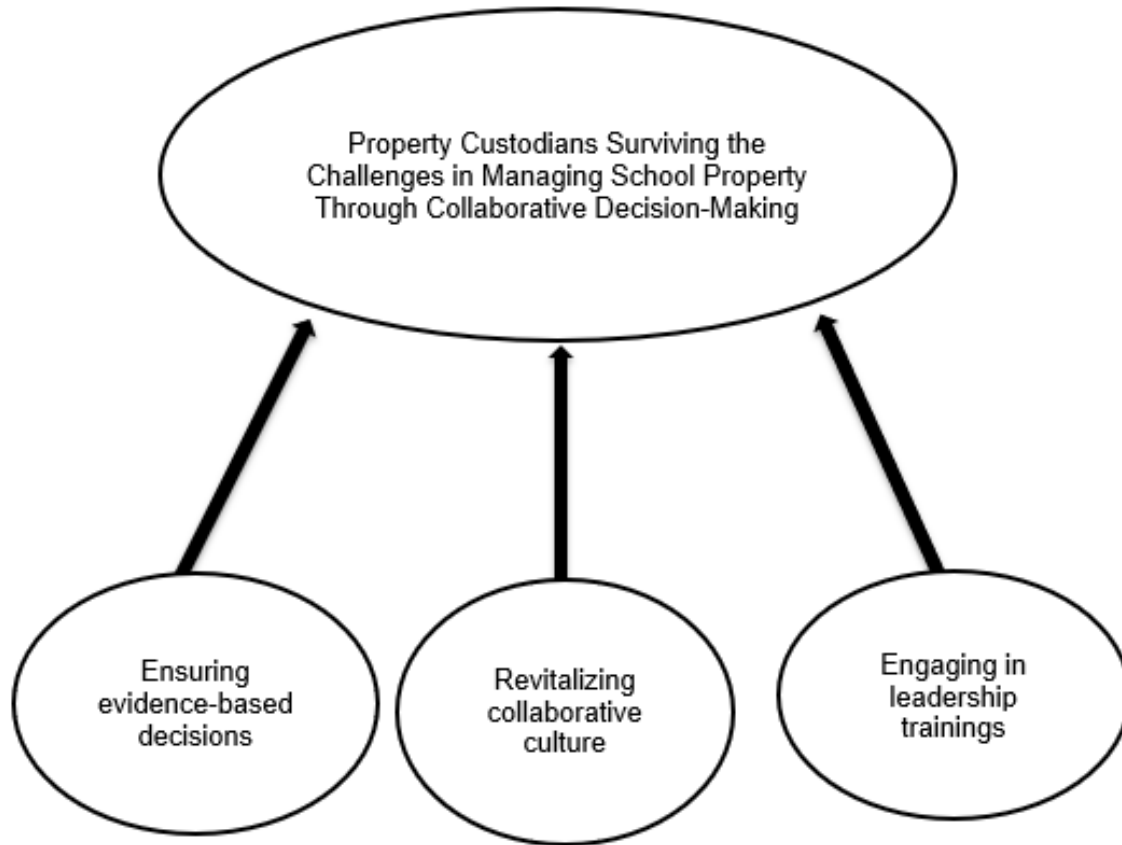
attitudes toward shared decision-making. They emphasized that when skilled teachers collaborate, they mutually support each other's journey toward enhanced instruction. The participants asserted the merits of collaboration in decision-making, highlighting that in practice, teachers can freely contribute ideas for improvement, leading to effective solutions to challenges. Teachers' personal stance about whether they "have to" or "want to" participate in an

organizational model is critical to successful collaboration. Equally important is understanding how to engage effectively in collaborative work with colleagues. Shared leadership with teachers and collaborative decision-making constitutes a fundamental element of a school's collaborative culture. This approach allows all members of the school community to contribute to shaping the school's direction and understanding the rationale for change. Rather than a few individuals making decisions in isolation, teams make decisions through consensus, incorporating the input of all participants. This necessitates an operational structure that empowers more individuals to influence the school's thinking and participate in decision-making at all levels. These principles align with Rogar (2018), who asserted that property custodians and teachers working in teams benefit schools by creating shared expectations and high standards for all students, engaging in discourse leading to richer learning experiences, and fostering a collaborative culture for continuous reflection and improvement. A collaborative professional culture should extend beyond occasional staff seminars, providing a platform for teachers to learn and exchange information on current educational ideas, issues, and best practices. Keep-

ing teachers informed about the latest developments in education encourages them to take responsibility for curriculum development and professional growth. Sharing news in the education space, offering educational resources, promoting mentorship between newer and experienced teachers, and establishing learning communities contribute to fostering a collaborative culture (Hanover, 2018). Caskey and Carpenter (2020) acknowledge that collaboration can be uncomfortable or stressful at times. When people are transparent about the work and the beliefs, their colleagues can see their limitations as well as their strengths, placing them in a position of vulnerability. Sharing with and trusting colleagues requires courage and humility. A climate of trust can help establish the safe environment that's necessary for open communication. Identifying and establishing group norms can help develop that safe environment. Norms might include defining roles and responsibilities, using protocols for interpersonal communication, and outlining parameters for time management. Taking the time to get to know the learning styles, needs, interests, fears, and hopes of each team member helps shape the norms for how the group engages in the shared work.

*3.2.3. Engaging in leadership trainings—* The question of whether leadership is an innate trait or a skill that can be acquired has long been debated. While the debate continues, there is consensus that certain skills essential for effective leadership can be learned through training and seminars. In an educational context, property custodians can significantly enhance their capabilities, inspire their school communities, and achieve exceptional performance by participating in leadership skills training and seminars. According to participants, successful leaders can transform organizations, enhance value creation, optimize efficiency, and foster

collaborative decision-making. Sackney and Walker (2018) argue that school property custodians require skills in group process facilitation, communication, conflict negotiation, inquiry, and data management to effectively practice participatory decision-making. Professional development opportunities are crucial for acquiring these skills. In Taiwan, where outstanding school leaders are demanded, the need for support and professional development to facilitate the required role shift is evident. While some institutions have started imparting management training programs for property custodians, the trend is rapidly increasing, particularly



**Figure 4.** *Emerging Themes on Property Custodians Surviving the Challenges in Managing School Property Through Collaborative Decision-Making*

in schools managed by not-for-profit organizations. These programs aim to equip property custodians with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective school management. Hougue et al. (2020) emphasize that governments can design tailored training and orientation programs, collaborate with local governance structures, and offer incentives to ensure the active participation of school leaders in such training programs. The investment of time, energy, and financial resources is justified when property custodians are well-suited for their roles. The figure shows the emerging themes on

property custodians surviving the challenges in managing school property through collaborative decision-making which were ensuring evidence-based decisions, revitalizing collaborative culture, engaging in leadership trainings. The combination of these themes empowers property custodians to take charge of their roles with confidence and competence. Empowered property custodians are more likely to proactively address challenges, adapt to changing circumstances, and contribute to the overall improvement of school property management.

3.3. *Educational Cognizance Drawn from the Experiences of the Participants—*

This section presents the educational management insights of the participants. Their responses were narrowed down into one to gener-

*3.3.1. Ensuring a sense of secured work environment*—Property custodians, acting as collaborative managers, play a pivotal role in driving organizational change by establishing a safe working environment characterized by respect for teachers, appreciation of diversity, and a foundation of justice as a core value. Acknowledging their role as facilitators in building such an environment is crucial for property custodians. Participants emphasized that property custodians must demonstrate respect, value diverse opinions, treat all teachers equitably, and recognize the significance of teachers' contributions, regardless of their magnitude. In line with this, Yildirim and Kaya's (2019) study highlights the constructive role of property custodians in creating a safe school environment. According to their findings, teachers consider the establishment of trust crucial for shared decision-making in schools. Property custodians contribute to building a safe working environment by eliminating gossip and rumors, fostering trust among teachers, and promoting confidentiality. Prop-

*3.3.2. Embracing open-mindedness*—The participants recognize that open-mindedness entails a person's ability and willingness to reassess beliefs in the face of counter-evidence and argumentation. Establishing this trait in an individual is not solely dependent on what they believe; sincerity in rejecting beliefs in light of good counter-evidence is insufficient to determine open-mindedness. While certain beliefs do not guarantee open-mindedness, the absence of belief is not mandatory. For the participants, a person's open-mindedness is revealed through their actions in specific circum-

stances. These were carefully analyzed and formulated based on what came from informants' accounts and reflections.

erty custodians also exhibit tolerance for diverse beliefs, thoughts, and opinions, aiming to create an environment that facilitates easy expression for both teachers and students. The study by Damiao and Obaob (2020) emphasizes the importance of a safe workplace in the overall quality of teachers' work life, significantly impacting the effectiveness of the decision-making process. A safe environment contributes to teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction, as they can focus on their work without worries. Therefore, efforts to enhance teachers' quality of work life by providing a safe workplace are likely to yield positive outcomes in decision-making processes. Furthermore, Psychological safety was rated as the top predictor of a team's performance. According to Rolstone (2023), groups that have a high level of psychological safety are less fearful of the repercussions of taking calculated chances, making mistakes, and being open with one another about their views, beliefs and suggestions. As a result, there was more innovation, teamwork, and initiative-taking when it mattered the most.

stances. By acknowledging and respecting others' beliefs and practices, they can foster a more harmonious relationship during school planning. Open-mindedness enables them to set aside differences and collaborate for progress in the decision-making process, both as individuals and as an organization. The participants emphasize that open-mindedness is an asset for property custodians. Leaders who embrace diverse ideas are more willing to consider creative, innovative, or novel approaches. They also welcome feedback on their own performance and ways to improve. Open-minded leaders tend to be more

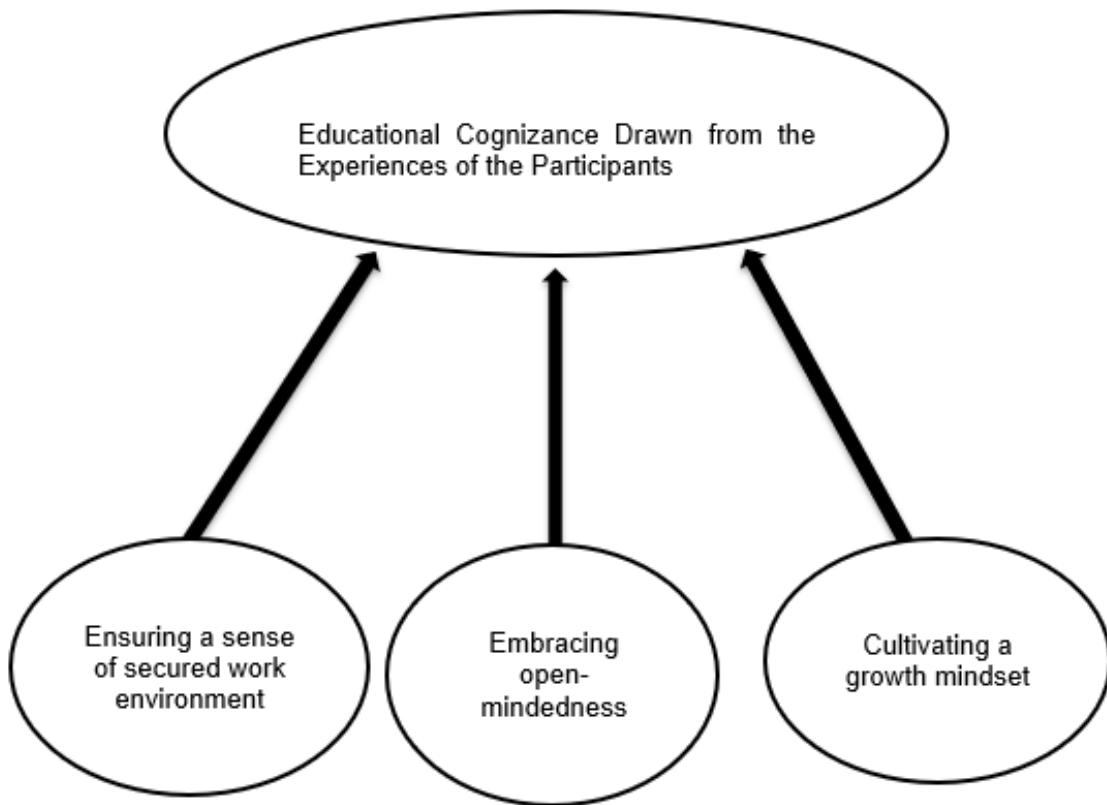
self-aware, trusted by their teachers, and interested in developing leadership skills. The ability to think critically, especially in unpredictable circumstances, is enhanced with an open mind. It allows leaders to consider the bigger picture and think laterally about effective problem-solving not only in the short term but also in the long term. Encouraging and training teachers to be open-minded is an integral part of a property custodian's role. Bruce (2020) suggests that property custodians can start by encouraging teachers to think critically about issues or projects during decision-making activities.

*3.3.3. Cultivating a growth mindset*—As per Dweck (2022), a growth mindset empowers individuals to believe in their capacity to enhance their abilities, with brains and talent serving as mere starting points. This outlook not only nurtures a passion for learning but also instills the perseverance necessary for success in various fields. For the participants, school principals should emphasize the importance of teachers developing this mindset to reshape a positive school culture that is collaborative. They encouraged teachers to perceive challenges as opportunities for improvement and learning, emphasizing personal fulfillment for both teachers and the school. Other participants emphasized the impact of providing leadership opportunities to teachers. This approach significantly contributes to the growth and development of their careers, fostering increased knowledge and expertise on various leadership tasks. Personal and professional development should mirror the principles of a growth mindset: it requires effort, a focus on improvement, and an acceptance of failure as a chance to learn. Teachers approaching leadership tasks in this manner are more likely to progress than those viewing professional learning as a hindrance to be avoided (Smith, 2019). Dweck (2022) outlined key characteristics of a

Modeling open-mindedness involves respecting other viewpoints, avoiding intellectual overconfidence, separating ego from intellect, and being willing to revise one's viewpoint. Additionally, Paige (2018) recommends that property custodians foster open-mindedness through a democratic management style. This style provides individuals with opportunities to voice and hear perspectives. Property custodians may schedule meetings where teachers can contribute, allowing the entire faculty to select the best solutions for issues or projects.

teacher with a growth mindset, including taking responsibility for improving their practice, perceiving setbacks as learning opportunities, actively seeking new challenges, maintaining positive expectations, and using growth mindset language in leadership and self-reflection. Individuals with a growth mindset consider achievement as attainable despite practical obstacles. They exhibit persistent and motivated mental approaches, actively seeking solutions when faced with challenges. Participants acknowledged the importance of leadership opportunities for teachers in expanding knowledge, ensuring current practices, and building confidence. They highlighted those fixed perspectives, resistant to change and fixated on the status quo, pose challenges to adopting new approaches. While an individual's mindset can only shift through personal choice, collegial influence plays a vital role in fostering a growth mindset within leadership roles (Moore, 2019). The figure shows the emerging themes on the educational cognizance drawn from the experiences of the participants, which were ensuring a sense of a secure work environment, embracing open-mindedness, and cultivating a growth mindset. These themes implied that rather than dwelling on the negative impacts of the current problem, decision-makers should focus on finding a solution and





**Figure 5.** *Emerging Themes on the Educational Cognizance Drawn from the Experiences of the Participants*

empowering members to unleash their potential to decide. Property custodians should create an atmosphere that allows each member of the organization to provide their unique perspectives. And reveal more ideas for alternative solutions in the next phase of the process.

#### **4. Implications and Future Directions**

This chapter presents a brief overview of the study followed by implications based on its findings. Future directions in the participants’ experiences are also discussed here.

*4.1. Findings*—The findings highlighted the challenges encountered by school property custodians and their positive effects on school administration. Opposing perspectives, availability of time, and decision being a prerogative of a selected few emerged key challenge themes, while improved decision quality and efficient resource allocation were identified as the positive effect themes. Addressing these challenges requires adopting inclusive decision-making strategies. Empowering teachers with decision-making responsibilities,

fostering an environment where every member feels heard, and engaging them in leadership training. Moreover, insights from the study highlight the need for a secure work environment, open-mindedness, and a growth mindset. A secure environment enhances overall well-being and productivity, open-mindedness leads to richer discussions and innovative solutions, and a growth mindset encourages continuous

learning and adaptability. Moreover, the study's educational cognizance highlights the need for a secure work environment, open-mindedness, and a growth mindset. A secure environment enhances overall well-being and productivity, open-mindedness leads to richer discussions and innovative solutions, and a growth mindset encourages continuous learning and adaptability.

*4.2. Implications*—The study investigated the experiences of property custodians in managing school property through collaborative decision-making. The experiences of property custodians revealed two primary themes: challenges faced and positive impacts. Among the challenges were opposing perspectives, availability of time, and decision is a prerogative of a selected few. Conversely, positive impacts included improved decision quality and effective resource allocation. These themes implied that school property custodians should implement decision making strategies to give teachers the responsibility and power to make decisions in creating a more effective school setting. Property custodians should consider that each member makes an effort to pay attention, take part, and listen to each other's ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard. Each member should speak up on matters of controversy and everyone knows where everyone stands. Meanwhile, concerning property custodians surviving the challenges of managing school property through collaborative decision-making, the themes included ensuring evidence-based decisions, revitalizing collaborative culture, and engaging in leadership training. Combining these themes empowers property custodians to assume their roles confidently and com-

petently. Empowered property custodians are more likely to proactively address challenges, adapt to changing circumstances, and contribute to the overall improvement of school property management. Ensuring evidence-based decisions enhances the quality and effectiveness of property custodians' decision-making processes. Revitalizing a collaborative culture is crucial for fostering teamwork, shared responsibility, and open communication among property custodians and other stakeholders. Additionally, engaging in leadership training allows property custodians to acquire essential skills, stay updated on best practices, and enhance their leadership capabilities. Lastly, in educational cognizance drawn from participants' experiences, themes included ensuring a secure work environment, embracing open-mindedness, and cultivating a growth mindset. These themes suggest focusing on solutions rather than dwelling on problems, empowering members to contribute their unique perspectives, and fostering a culture of continuous learning. A secure work environment enhances educators' well-being, positively impacting decision-making and performance. Open-mindedness promotes diverse viewpoints, enriching discussions and decision-making. Additionally, a growth mindset fosters a dynamic learning environment, seeing challenges as opportunities for growth.

*4.3. Future Directions*—

Data obtained had future directions for various stakeholders in education including policymakers, administrators, and teachers. For instance, policy makers may develop policies that explicitly promote and incorporate collaborative decision-making in school governance and property management. They may allocate resources for training programs and professional development that enhance the collaborative decision-making skills of school personnel. And regularly evaluate the effectiveness of policies related to collaborative decision-making and be open to revising them based on feedback and evolving educational needs. Additionally, school Principals may foster a collaborative culture within the school, emphasizing shared decision-making among all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, and property custodians. They may as well emphasize empowerment to teachers and property custodians by involving them in decision-making processes related to school properties and planning. Also, teachers may engage in continuous professional development opportunities that enhance collaborative decision-making skills, ensuring active participation in school planning. They may also share successful collaborative decision-making practices within the teaching community, encouraging a culture of openness and idea exchange. Furthermore, school property custodians may advocate for the inclusion of sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in school property management decisions. Educational institutions may recognize the importance of effective time management for school property custodians. Implementing time management techniques and tools can help property custodians better allocate their time and resources, thereby minimizing the impact of time constraints on their ability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Providing training and professional development opportunities tailored to the specific needs of property custodians is also highly recommended. By investing in their professional growth and skill development, institutions can empower custodians to enhance their decision-making abilities and navigate complex administrative tasks with confidence and competence. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can effectively address the challenges faced by property custodians and leverage their positive impact on school administration. This, in turn, will contribute to creating a more efficient, collaborative, and thriving working environment within the institution, ultimately benefiting the entire school community. Moreover, future researchers may conduct research to explore the long-term impact of collaborative decision-making on school properties, academic outcomes, and overall school culture. They may evaluate and propose innovative models of collaborative decision-making in school property management that can be replicated in different educational contexts. This will yield advantageous findings and implications tailored to the organization and hierarchical context of the education sectors. Addressing the challenges encountered by school property custodians while harnessing their positive influence on school administration is crucial for enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of educational institutions. To achieve this, educational institutions should prioritize the implementation of inclusive decision-making practices. This entails fostering an environment of open dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders. By encouraging input from various perspectives and involving all members in decision-making processes, institutions can ensure that decisions are well-informed and reflective of the collective needs and goals of the school community. Additionally, distributing decision-making responsibilities more evenly across staff members can help alleviate the burden on a select few individuals and foster a greater sense of ownership and accountability among all team members.

## 5. References

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