

Spirituality, Social Conformity and Decision Making among Educators

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate dynamics of spirituality, social conformity, and decision-making styles among educators in Delhi, India, aiming to understand their influence on educators' decision processes across diverse academic fields. Surveying 132 educators, the research employed established questionnaires: the General Decision Making Styles Inventory by Scott and Bruce, the Spirituality Scale by C. Delaney, and the Self-Report Scale of Conformity by Mehrabian and Stelf. These tools provided insights into decision-making styles, spiritual beliefs, and social conformity tendencies. The findings reveal significant positive correlations between spirituality and rational, as well as intuitive decision-making styles, while social conformity shows positive associations with dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous decision-making styles, but negatively correlates with rational decision-making styles. This research contributes to understanding the complexities within educators' decision processes, particularly in the Indian context. By highlighting the intersection between spirituality, societal influences, and decision-making approaches, it underscores the importance of recognizing and comprehending these influences. The implications are significant for educational practices and policies, emphasizing the need to address these influences to enhance educators' effectiveness and well-being in both professional and personal realms.

Keywords: *Decision Making Styles, Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant, Spontaneous, Educators, Spirituality, Social Conformity*

As an educator the ability to make decisions effectively is an important aspect of their profession. When an educator makes decision, it is influenced by varied factors be they internal or external. An educator's ability and insight in situations effects not only the outcomes of how they conduct educational sessions but also influences the overall quality of service they offer as a professional. In a classroom/lecture hall an educator is the leader and model who holds the primary influence on the young minds. The comprehension of decision-making empowers individuals and organizations to make informed choices and is fundamental to the decision-making process. (Anita et al., 2017; Aung and Ye, 2016)

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Decision making styles

Decision-making styles, as outlined by Scott and Bruce (1995), encompass ingrained patterns individuals consistently employ and their distinctive manner of perceiving and reacting to decision-making tasks. These styles are defined as "the learned, habitual response pattern displayed by an individual in a decision-making situation" (Scott and Bruce, 1995, p.820), emphasizing habitual inclinations rather than personality traits (Leykin & DeRubeis, 2010, p.506). While there are various measures of decision styles available, they often share similarities, yet distinct styles have been identified in the literature (Leykin & DeRubeis, 2010; Mann, Burnett, Radford, & Ford, 1997; Scott & Bruce, 1995). This study utilizes the ones by (Scott&Bruce,1995). They are five types of decision-making styles acknowledged, being Rational, Intuitive, Avoidant, Dependent and Spontaneous, which this study would be adapting.

Scott and Bruce operationally define the inventory as Rational decision-making involves meticulous evaluation of alternatives, while Intuitive decision-making relies on instinct. Dependent decision-making seeks guidance from others, Avoidant decision-making attempts to evade decisions altogether and Spontaneous decision-making as witnessed by sense of immediacy and urgency to make decisions. These styles represent learned response patterns individuals employ when faced with decision situations. The process of decision-making involves selecting a logical choice from available options. These styles shape how individuals navigate the myriad choices encountered in daily life, influencing both personal and broader societal outcomes (Uzonwanne, 2016; Geisler & Allwood, 2018).

Midst the changing landscape of society, educational institutions face heightened demands, necessitating continuous advancement in school educators' capabilities. As a result, these educators must adapt and maintain relevance, competently handling challenging tasks, particularly proficient decision-making. Within fluctuating environments, their leadership and guidance frequently entail prompt choices, presenting formidable obstacles. Individual decision-making styles can differ substantially due to emotions, spanning from analytical and interrogatory to impulsive or postponed (Scott & Bruce, 1995).

Conformity

Social influence encompasses responses to societal norms, rules, authority, and conformity. It consists of two types: Explicit Expectations, which are clearly stated, and Implicit Expectations, unspoken norms enforced by group rules, further categorized into social roles and conformity (Heinzen, 2021).

Conformity involves aligning one's beliefs or actions with others and is viewed differently in Western and Eastern cultures. Western societies value individuality and creativity, perceiving group pressure as limiting to one's personal autonomy. In contrast, Eastern cultures, particularly socialist ones, see conformity as vital for societal approval. Factors like group size, unanimity, and societal obligations influence conformity (Afreen & Zinna, 2018).

For this study, Conformity as per Mehrabain and Stelf (1995) has been taken, which shows attributes such as emulating dominant individuals, depending on other's advice, following group trends and being easily influenced. Altogether the characteristics suggests a willingness to be controlled by others.

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Conformity stems from the need for acceptance, peer pressure, and uncertainty, as observed in Asch's (1956) and his counterparts experiments. Uncertainty fosters conformity, as the opinions of the majority can influence decision-making.

Indian society fosters collectivism, emphasizing social unity and mutual dependence. (Yazici, 2023). This is due to the collectivist culture highly valuing conformity as “social sensitivity”. To collectivist-inclined cultures, conforming isn't caving in; it is a virtuous social courtesy that puts the group's needs before your own (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Heinzen, 2021). Chandra (1973) conducted a study replicating Asch's line judgment experiment in Fiji, a place that holds social conformity in high regards, where approximately 58% of primary school teachers and teachers-in-training exhibited high levels of conformity (Bond & Smith, 1996). Showing that Teachers as professionals are also prone to conformity as any other individual.

Spirituality

Spirituality involves seeking meaning, purpose, and connection to oneself, others, nature, and the sacred. Victor Frankl linked spirituality to the quest for life's meaningfulness and purpose, which is now recognized as a core element in spirituality (Frankl, 1959/2000; Delaney, 2005; Davidson, 2012). It is recognized as an abstract concept with multifaceted dimensions, encompasses connection of an individual to a divine entity or higher power (Mauk & Schmidt, 2004, p. 15; Boni, 2010). Historically, spirituality's metaphysical aspect aligns with religion as evident in various faiths (Taylor, 2002; Delaney, 2005). Religion is the manifestation of spirituality, yet individuals may prioritize social interactions and rituals over spiritual aspects (Rego et al., 2020). While religion serves as an avenue for spiritual expression, some feel their spiritual needs are unmet within religious frameworks (Burkhardt & Nagai-Jacobson, 2002).

As such this study adopts Colleen Delaney's framework, which identifies three key factors of spirituality: Self-discovery, Relationships, and Eco-Awareness. Delaney views spirituality as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by social influences and individually cultivated over a person's lifetime.

For educators, proficiency in education is vital, but equally important is recognizing the spiritual dimension among both educators and learners, focusing on moral and educational self-efficacy. Spiritual competence in teaching involves employing managerial, technical, and communication skills, integrating knowledge, reasoning, emotions, and values. This capability fosters holistic student development, including physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. University professors with well-developed spiritual understanding offer a comprehensive perspective on humanity in teaching, aiding learners' argumentative and analytical thinking skills and overall spiritual growth (Nasrollahi et al., 2020). Enhanced spiritual wellbeing correlates with higher physical, emotional, and functional wellbeing, leading to an improved quality of life. Greater spiritual wellbeing reduces decision-making conflict and uncertainty, providing individuals with a sense of being well-informed and supported, and increasing satisfaction with their decisions (Rego et al., 2020).

Recognizing the various factors affecting educators' decision-making in education, it's crucial to explore how spirituality, social conformity, and decision-making styles intersect among Indian educators. This investigation promises a deeper understanding of the qualities that contribute to effective teaching.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the study conducted by Kumar (2024) focusing on studying the function of spirituality in educational institutions workplace in order to comprehend the influence of spirituality on organizational performance, endurance and growth. The importance of spirituality in workplace is recognized but research related to it is incomplete as such the researcher focused on spirituality and workplace devotion. Studying workplace spirituality's impact on organizational devotion offers insights for creating fulfilling work environments, addressing work-life balance, stress, and motivation. The Spirituality Concerned Association aids individuals facing work-life conflicts, bolstering their abilities and motivation. Research with 86 professors in Uttar Pradesh shows a positive effect on organizational commitment.

Nawaz (2024) research study focused on the changes introduced by the NEP 2020 in India by the Union Government in the field of education. The resulting findings were that for the teachers the emotional intelligence and workplace spirituality were predictors and influences of workplace stress. The interaction of workplace spirituality as a mediator between emotional intelligence and workplace stress is in name only. But the teachers with high levels of spirituality and moderate levels of emotional intelligence envisage low stress levels.

The study by Yazici (2023), investigates the relationship between school principals' learning agility, decision-making styles, and the moderating effect of gender. Conducted through a relational survey model with 383 participants from Istanbul. Findings showed the strongest correlation between learning agility and rational decision-making. Additionally, learning agility positively correlates with intuitive and dependent decision-making but negatively with avoidant styles. Gender moderates the relationship between learning agility and avoidant decision-making. Overall, leaders with adaptable learning abilities tend to perform better, making prompt and informed decisions, especially in uncertain situations, with their decision-making styles influenced by their agility and gender.

Nasrollahi et al. (2020) investigated factors affecting spirituality amongst the faculty and students of medical universities using a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews. They found two main factors influencing spiritual transfer in teaching: teacher-related (insight, worldview, adherence to religious principles, positive interactions, teaching mastery) and peripheral factors (quality classrooms, talented learners). Concluding that institutionalizing spirituality in teaching would aid in transferring spiritual concepts.

A study by Aafreen and Zinna (2018) surveyed 200 participants aged 17-47 to understand Indian attitudes toward conformity and group influence. Results suggested a general trend where most participants valued conformity due to their collective society, despite also valuing individuality and being true to oneself.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To study the relationship between Spirituality and Decision Making Styles.
- To explore the relationship between social conformity and decision making styles.
- To find the relationship between Social Conformity and Spirituality.

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Hypotheses:

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between Spirituality and Rational Decision Making Style.
- H2: There will be a significant relationship between Spirituality and Intuitive Decision Making Style.
- H3: There will be a significant relationship between Spirituality and Avoidant Decision Making Style.
- H4: There will be a significant relationship between Spirituality and Dependent Decision Making Style.
- H5: There will be a significant relationship between Spirituality and Spontaneous Decision Making Style.
- H6: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Rational Decision Making Style.
- H7: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Intuitive Decision Making Style.
- H8: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Avoidant Decision Making Style.
- H9: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Dependent Decision Making Style.
- H10: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Spontaneous Decision Making Style.
- H11: There will be a significant relationship between Social Conformity and Spirituality.

Research design

A correlational research design was utilized to investigate the inter-relationship between variables. It aids in identifying the patterns and associations among the variables in real world contexts, indicating relations rather than causation between the variables.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to gather data from 132 educators in Delhi and the National Capital Region, India. The sample was evenly distributed across two age categories: 30-40 years and 40-50 years, comprising 78% female and 22% male participants. Education levels varied, with 18.9% holding graduate degrees, 68% possessing postgraduate degrees, and 13% having attained doctorates or equivalent qualifications. Marital status among the participants indicated that 73% were married, 22% were unmarried, 3% were widowed, and 0.8% were divorced. Income distribution among the educators showed that 35% earned above 9 lakhs annually, 26% fell within the income range of 6-9 lakhs, 12% earned between 3-6 lakhs, and 25% earned below 3 lakhs. Regarding spirituality, 67.4% of the participants considered themselves moderately spiritual, 26.5% identified as very spiritual, and 6.1% reported not being spiritual. Furthermore, 59% of the educators identified themselves as moderately religious, 30% as very religious, and 9% as not religious.

Tools Used:

- **General Decision Making Styles Inventory (GDMS):** A decision making styles inventory by Scott and Bruce, 1995. The construct definitions for this inventory were adopted from prior theories and 5 sub-scales were assessed being Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant and Spontaneous decision making styles. With a 5 point Likert

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scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The inventory has an internal consistency of 0.68 to 0.94. The five-factor structure of the decision-making styles model has been validated internationally, including in Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Italy (Scott & Bruce, 1995; LooLoo, 2000; Thunholm, 2004; Spicer & Sadler-Smith, 2005; Gambetti et al., 2008; Bavořár & Orosová, 2015).

- **Self-report Scale of Conformity:** The Conformity scale, developed by Mehrabian and Stelf in 1995, assesses an individual's propensity to conform to group beliefs or behaviors to avoid conflict. Consisting of 11 items with an alpha reliability of 0.77, the questionnaire measures self-reported conformity in various situations and social norms. Participants rate their agreement with each item on a 7-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater conformity. Items 2, 7, 9, and 11 are reverse scored. This scale provides valuable insight into individuals' conformity tendencies (Mehrabian & Stelf, 1995).
- **Spirituality Scale:** The Spirituality Scale, developed by C. Delaney in 2005, is a psychometric tool assessing individuals' spiritual dimension through their beliefs, lifestyle choices, practices, and rituals. With 23 items, content validity of 0.94, and test-retest reliability (Pearson's coefficient of 0.84), it employs a 6-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). The scale evaluates spirituality based on Self-Discovery, Relationships, and Eco-Awareness factors. Scores range from 23 to 138, with 23-60 indicating very low, 61-91 low, 92-117 moderate, and 118-138 high spirituality levels. Sub-scale reliability ranges from .81 to .94, with overall instrument reliability at .94. Test-retest reliability, with 30 participants, yielded a score of .85 (Delaney, 2003).

Statistical Technique

In this study, Pearson's Product Moment correlation and linear regression analysis had been employed to test the hypotheses.

RESULT ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spirituality	113.79	11.73	1	-.024	.200*	.333**	.033	.146	.161
Conformity	38.70	8.42	-.024	1	-.264**	-.071	.411**	.366**	.272**
Rational Decision Making style	20.45	2.48	.200*	-.264**	1	.197*	.059	-.218*	-.177*
Intuitive Decision Making style	19.27	2.87	.333**	-.071	.197*	1	.080	.260**	.430**
Dependent Decision Making style	17.17	3.22	.033	.411**	.059	.080	1	.444**	.258**
Avoidant Decision Making style	14.10	4.09	.146	.366**	-.218*	.260**	.444**	1	.676**
Spontaneous Decision Making style	15.37	3.46	.161	.272**	-.177*	.430**	.258**	.676**	1

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= 132, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

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The Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and the correlation coefficients for the variables spirituality, conformity, rational decision making style, intuitive decision making style, avoidant decision making style, dependent decision making style and spontaneous decision making style.

The findings indicate towards a weak but positive correlation between spirituality and rational decision making ($r = 0.20, p < .05$) and a moderately positive correlation between spirituality and intuitive decision making ($r = 0.33, p < .01$), suggesting that high spirituality is associated with high levels of rational and intuitive decision making style among educators. Whereas no significant correlation is observed between Spirituality and Dependent, avoidant and spontaneous decision making styles, indicating that there is no relationship between them.

Additionally, the findings indicate towards a negatively significant correlation between conformity and rational decision making style ($r = -0.264, p < .01$), suggesting that higher levels of social conformity are associated with lower levels of rational decision making style among educators. The result also indicates a moderate positive correlation between social conformity and avoidant decision making ($r = 0.411, p < .01$), dependent decision making ($r = 0.366, p < .01$) and spontaneous decision making ($r = 0.272, p < .01$) suggesting that higher levels of conformity are associated with higher levels of avoidant, dependent and spontaneous decision making style among educators. Whereas no significant correlation is observed between Conformity and intuitive decision making styles, indicating that there is no relationship between them.

The result also indicates there to be no significant/ meaningful relationship between Spirituality and Conformity.

Table 2: Regression analysis between Social conformity, Spirituality and Rational Decision Making Style

Variable	Beta	SE	β	t	p
Constant	18.76	2.24		8.37	.000
Spirituality	.04	.02	.19	2.32	.022
Conformity	-.08	.02	-.26	-3.16	.002

Note. $N=132, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.107$

Table 2 shows regression analysis exploring the association between social conformity, spirituality and rational decision making style. The result demonstrated a significant positive relationship between rational decision making style and spirituality ($\beta = 0.193, p < .001$) and a significant negative relationship between conformity and rational decision making style ($\beta = -.259, p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 7.727, p < .01$) and explained the combined effect of the predictors conformity and spirituality is associated at 10.7% of the variance in rational decision making ($R^2 = 0.107$). Assumptions of the regression analysis were met and indicates that spirituality and conformity explain 10.7 % of the variability in rational decision making style scores among educators.

Table 3: Regression analysis between Spirituality and Intuitive Decision Making Style

Variable	Beta	SE	β	t	p
Constant	10.01	2.3		4.33	.000
Spirituality	.08	.02	.33	4.03	.000

Note. $N=132, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.111$

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Table 3 shows regression analysis exploring the association between spirituality and intuitive decision making style. The result demonstrated a significant positive relationship between intuitive decision making style and spirituality ($\beta = 0.333$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 16.221$, $p < .01$) and explained the effect of the predictor spirituality is associated at 11.1% of the variance in intuitive decision making ($R^2 = 0.111$). Assumptions of the regression analysis were met and indicates that spirituality explains 11.1% of the variability in intuitive decision making style scores among educators.

Table 4: Regression analysis between Social conformity and Dependent Decision Making Style

Variable	Beta	SE	β	t	p
Constant	11.07	1.21		9.14	.000
Conformity	.16	.03	.41	5.14	.000

Note. $N=132$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.169$

Table 4 shows regression analysis exploring the association between conformity and dependent decision making style. The result demonstrated a significant positive relationship between dependent decision making style and spirituality ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 26.410$, $p < .01$) and explained the effect of the predictor conformity is associated at 16.9% of the variance in dependent decision making ($R^2 = 0.169$). Assumptions of the regression analysis were met and indicates that conformity explains 16.9% of the variability in dependent decision making style scores among educators.

Table 5: Regression analysis between Social conformity and Avoidant Decision Making Style

Variable	Beta	SE	β	t	p
Constant	7.19	1.57		4.58	.000
Conformity	.18	.04	.37	4.49	.000

Note. $N=132$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.134$

Table 5 shows regression analysis exploring the association between conformity and avoidant decision making style. The result demonstrated a significant positive relationship between avoidant decision making style and conformity ($\beta = 0.366$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 20.169$, $p < .01$) and explained the effect of the predictor conformity is associated at 13.4% of the variance in avoidant decision making ($R^2 = 0.134$). Assumptions of the regression analysis were met and indicates that conformity explains 13.4% of the variability in avoidant decision making style scores among educators.

Table 6: Regression analysis between Social conformity and Spontaneous Decision Making Style

Variable	Beta	SE	β	t	p
Constant	11.04	1.37		8.04	.000
Conformity	.11	.04	.27	3.23	.002

Note. $N=132$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.074$

Table 6 shows regression analysis exploring the association between conformity and spontaneous decision making style. The result demonstrated a significant positive

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relationship between spontaneous decision making style and conformity ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 10.406$, $p < .01$) and explained the effect of the predictor conformity is associated at 7.4 % of the variance in spontaneous decision making ($R^2 = 0.074$). Assumptions of the regression analysis were met and indicates that conformity explains 7.4 % of the variability in spontaneous decision making style scores among educators.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between spirituality, social conformity, and decision-making styles among educators in Delhi, India. Decision-making involves assessing situations and making choices based on knowledge and perspective. Decision-making styles represent habitual ways individuals respond to events, categorized as Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant, and Spontaneous. Spirituality encompasses an individual's beliefs, values, and search for meaning and identity. Social conformity refers to adjusting views, actions, and beliefs to align with societal norms to seek approval and blend in.

The first objective aimed to examine the relationship between spirituality and decision-making styles among educators in Delhi, India. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed, showing a significant positive correlation between spirituality and Rational Decision Making ($r = 0.20$) as well as Intuitive decision-making ($r = 0.33$) styles. However, Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were rejected due to no significant correlation. Regression analysis indicated that spirituality predicted approximately 10.7% of variance in Rational and 11.1% in Intuitive decision-making styles among educators, suggesting spirituality's role in decision-making behavior. Rational and Intuitive decision-making styles have been associated with favorable outcomes (Allwood & Salo, 2012; Bruine de Bruin et al., 2007). Rational decision-making involves analytical evaluation based on facts, while Intuitive decision-making relies on feelings and hunches (Russ et al., 1996). Spirituality, an intrinsic aspect of human existence, integrates intuition, emotions, and reasoning into decision-making processes (Tanyi, 2002; Kessler, 2019). Research by Kelly and Shelton (2020) highlighted a correlation between spirituality and decision-making among executives, showing spirituality's incorporation into organizational decision-making through executive discernment. Similarly, Koenig (2008) found that spirituality guided female caregivers when faced with ethical dilemmas, aiding decision-making processes.

These findings illuminate the complex relationship between spirituality and decision-making, emphasizing its relevance in educational contexts and suggesting potential avenues for enhancing decision-making effectiveness among educators.

The second objective aimed to explore the relationship between social conformity and decision-making styles among educators. Hypotheses 6, 8, 9, and 10 were confirmed, indicating significant correlations between Conformity and Rational (-0.26), Avoidant (0.41), Dependent (0.36), and Spontaneous (0.27) decision-making styles. The strong negative correlation with Rational decision-making suggests that educators who conform to societal norms may prioritize fitting in over logical decision-making. The positive correlations between social conformity and avoidant, dependent, and spontaneous decision-making styles suggest that educators who conform more tend to exhibit avoidance behaviors, rely on others for decisions, and make impulsive choices. The Regression analysis supports this, showing that conformity predicts variance in rational (-10.7%),

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dependent (16.9%), avoidant (13.4%), and spontaneous (7.4%) decision-making styles among educators.

The above results are supported by Strough, Parker, and Bruine de Bruin (2015) research, asserting that decision-making is influenced by surrounding circumstances, including specific situations and sociocultural factors. Nook et al. (2016) found that observing others' behavior influences decision-making, with participants adjusting their actions based on observed generosity. Highlighting the interplay between decision-making and conformity, demonstrating how rational and dependent decision-making styles manifest in prosocial contexts.

The third objective aimed to explore the relationship between social conformity and spirituality. While a weak relationship was observed, it was not statistically significant, indicating no meaningful relationship between them.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study on Indian educators reveals spirituality's correlation with rational and intuitive decision-making styles but no link with dependent, avoidant, or spontaneous styles. Distinct from religion, spirituality doesn't affect social conformity. Yet, high social conformity relates to avoidant, dependent, and spontaneous decision-making styles, compromising rationality due to the negative relation observed. Intuitive decision making style and in- turn the intuition remains unaffected by conformity. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complex interactions among spirituality, social conformity, and decision-making styles among educators. It underscores the importance of considering these elements in educational decision-making processes and proposes interventions to enhance educators' decision-making skills and overall growth, effectiveness and well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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