

School Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

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Abstract: The study pursued to examine the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The study specific objectives were; i) To examine the relationship between school leaders' self-awareness and effective decision-making, ii) To examine the relationship between school leaders' social skills and effective decision-making, and iii) To examine the relationship between school leaders' relation management and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The study revealed that school leaders' self-awareness positively and significantly relates with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The study also revealed that school leaders' social skills positively and significantly relate with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. Further, the study revealed that school leaders' relation management positively and significantly relates with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. Therefore, the study concludes that school leaders' emotional intelligence in terms of school leaders' self-awareness, school leaders' social skills, and school leaders' relation management has a positive and significant association with effective decision-making in that an enhancement in various aspects of school leaders' emotional intelligence leads to an enhancement in effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The study recommends that school authorities should encourage school leaders to engage in regular self-reflection and mindfulness practices to recognize how feelings influence their decisions and interactions so as to achieve effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

Keywords: School Leaders' Emotional Intelligence, School Leaders' Self-Awareness, School Leaders' Social Skills, School Leaders' Relation Management, and Effective Decision-Making.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

➤ Historical Perspective

Globally, the emergence of emotional intelligence stressing the role of self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation in leadership effectiveness. This was fundamental as it had a significant influence on school leaders' effective decision-making among educational institutions in different countries. In the 20th century, educational institutions in many countries began shifting from transactional to

transformational leadership, emphasizing emotional connection, inspiration, and vision as key emotional intelligence traits that influence effective decision-making (Sood & Kaushal, 2018). In Africa, emotional intelligence has become more visible in school leadership training in countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda. Ministries of Education emphasize emotional intelligence-related skills in programs on conflict resolution, inclusive education, and trauma-informed teaching. Studies have exposed that school leaders with higher emotional intelligence make better decisions regarding staff management and morale, crisis response, school climate improvement, and stakeholder trust and collaboration (Angwaomaodoko, 2024).

➤ *Theoretical Perspective*

This research was guided by the Emotional Intelligence Theory developed by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. This theory posits that emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, perceive, manage, and use emotions efficiently in one-self and others (Sasere & Matashu, 2024). In the context of leadership, the theory stresses that school leaders that have higher emotional intelligence can better handle their feelings under pressure and recognize emotional dynamics among staff and students. This emotional awareness enables them to make balanced, empathetic, and inclusive decisions that take into account the human impact of their actions (Sumathy, Madhavi & Felix, 2020). The authors assert that emotionally intelligent leaders are better at inspiring and motivating staff, building trust, and responding to individual needs, which enhances the quality and acceptance of their decisions (Sumathy et al., 2020). Therefore, this was applied as it provides a link on school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making.

➤ *Contextual Perspective*

This survey was carried out among private Secondary schools in Iganga Municipality examining the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making. This was considered because of the inadequate research conducted on school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. Additionally, Iganga Municipality, Iganga district was considered due to the ineffectiveness and inadequacy in school leaders' decision-making on matters related to resource allocation, curriculum implementation, teacher management, discipline, and student welfare among many secondary schools in Iganga district characterized by poor school management, inadequate allocation of resources, high rates of indiscipline, and failure to meet students' academic and developmental needs among others (Iganga District Local Government, 2023).

➤ *Conceptual Perspective*

School leaders' emotional intelligence denotes the ability of educational leaders such as head teachers, principals, or administrators to comprehend, recognize, handle, and efficiently utilize emotions in themselves and others to guide thinking, behavior, and decision-making in a school context (Farahbakhsh, 2022). Effective decision-

making is the procedure of taking the best path of action among different alternatives by using logical reasoning, relevant information, and sound judgement to achieve desired outcomes efficiently and ethically. It is focused on achieving specific, measurable objectives, based on accurate data and evidence, involves clear reasoning and evaluation of options, made within an appropriate time frame to maximize impact, as well as considers values, fairness, and consequences for all involved (Noyel, 2024). For the case of this study, school leaders' emotional intelligence was conceptualized in terms of school leaders' self-awareness, school leaders' social skills, and school leaders' relationship management, while effective decision-making was conceptualized in terms of clarity of objectives, information gathering, timeliness, as well as review and feedback mechanism among others.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The government of Uganda has introduced various educational reforms and policies through the Education Ministry aimed at enhancing effective decision-making among school leaders, with a focus on strengthening the school leaders' emotional intelligence as this fosters a fundamental role in decision-making and governance in schools. For instance, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) has been implemented with the objective of improving leadership and management of schools, as well as enhancing decision-making capacity at school and district levels. The ESSP supports training in soft skills, participatory decision-making, and building leadership capacity, all of which align with emotional intelligence principles like communication, empathy, and self-awareness (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018).

Yet, despite the remarkable reforms and policies, school leaders' decision-making on matters related to resource allocation, curriculum implementation, teacher management, discipline, and student welfare is still ineffective and inadequate among many secondary schools in Iganga district characterized by poor school management, inadequate allocation of resources, high rates of indiscipline, and failure to meet students' academic and developmental needs among others (Iganga District Local Government, 2023). Evidence indicates that many secondary schools in Iganga district, including Iganga municipality are struggling with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching and learning materials, as well as poor educational and school facilities due to ineffective management and decision-making by school leaders (Iganga District Local Government, 2023). This consequently has resulted into a negative impact on student achievement, diminished school performance and reputation, financial mismanagement and resource allocation issues, reduced student engagement, inequitable and unfair practices, as well as erosion of school culture and climate. Therefore, it's due to this that the current research examined the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

➤ *Objectives of the Study*• *General Objective*

To examine the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

➤ *Specific Objectives*

- To examine the relationship between school leaders' self-awareness and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.
- To examine the relationship between school leaders' social skills and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.
- To examine the relationship between school leaders' relation management and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

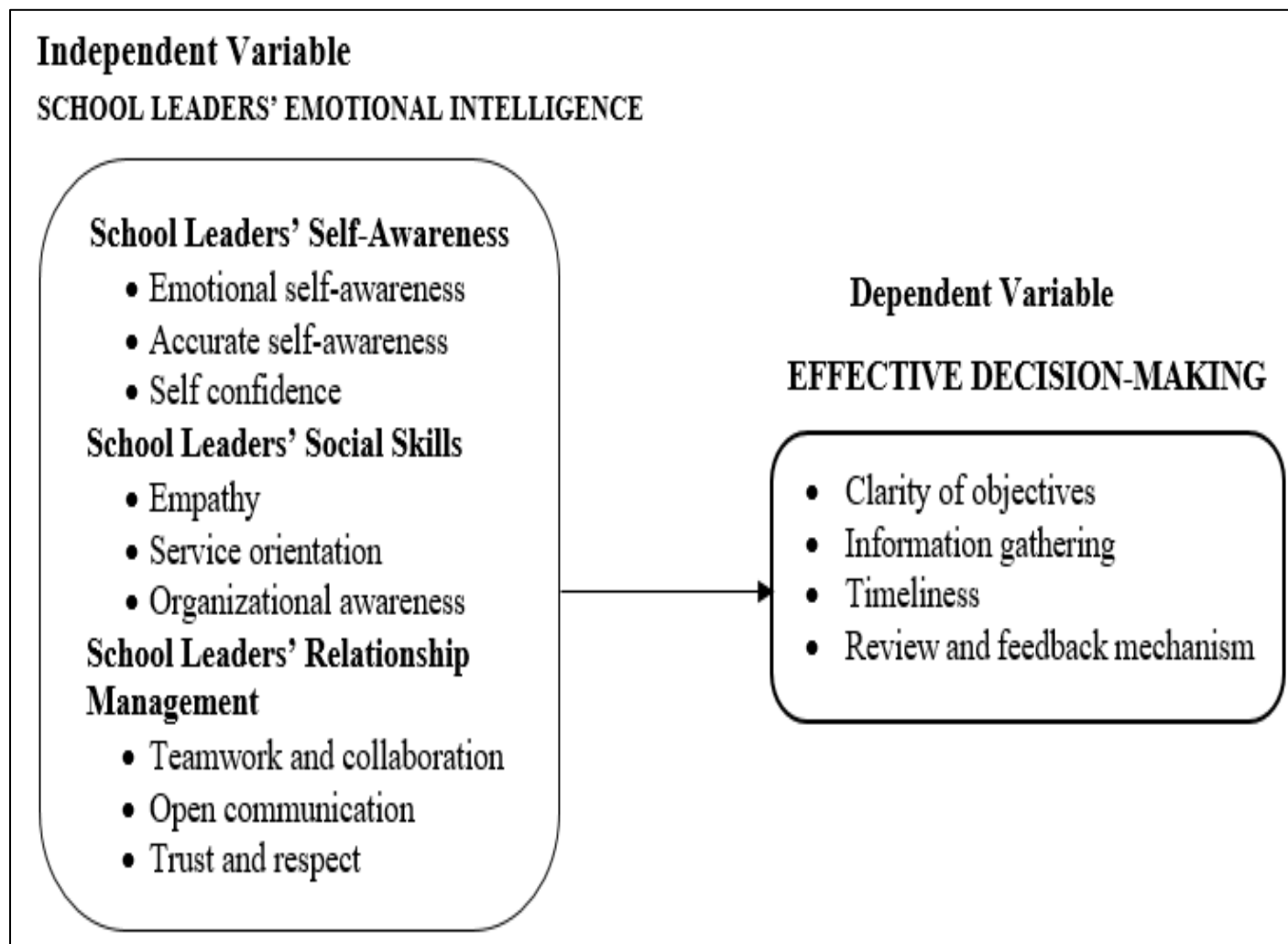
➤ *Study Hypotheses*

The study also was guided by these various alternative hypotheses;

- H_{a1} : There is a significant relationship between school leaders' self-awareness and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.
- H_{a2} : There is a significant relationship between school leaders' social skills and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.
- H_{a3} : There is a significant relationship between school leaders' relation management and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

➤ *Conceptual Framework*

The framework shows a graphic diagram on a link between School leaders' emotional intelligence and Effective decision-making.



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *School Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Effective Decision-Making*

School leaders' emotional intelligence is influential in shaping effective decision-making by influencing how they interact with others, manage their emotions, and respond to challenges in the school environment (Farahbakhsh, 2022). According to Chaudhary, Zaheer, Maqsood, Nasarullah and Calimlim (2024) school leaders who are self-aware recognize own sentiments and how they influence their decisions and relations with others. School leaders are able to recognize their weaknesses and strengths, which helps them make decisions that align with their values and leadership style. The authors assert that a school principal who is aware of their stress levels during a teacher strike may recognize that their stress is clouding their judgement. Instead of making rash decisions in the heat of the moment, they might step back to reflect, engage in self-regulation, and involve others in a more thoughtful, collective decision-making process (Chaudhary et al., 2024).

School leaders' emotional intelligence includes emotional regulation and clear, calm decision-making which is influential on effective decision-making. Emotional regulation is the capability to control or adjust one's emotional state in response to situations. For school leaders, this means staying calm, focused, and composed, even in high-pressure circumstances. This ability to manage emotions permits them to make clearer, more balanced decisions rather than reacting impulsively. (Sebastian & Allenworth, 2019). The authors argue that during a crisis such as a school safety issue or a natural disaster, emotionally intelligent leaders remain calm and think through the necessary actions systematically. For instance, in a school evacuation scenario, a leader with high emotional intelligence will remain calm, reassure staff and students, and make decisions that prioritize safety, all while maintaining a sense of control and clarity (Sebastian & Allenworth, 2019).

School leaders' emotional intelligence fosters a sense of empathy and consideration of stakeholders needs which leads to effective decision-making aligned to stakeholders' needs. Empathy is the capability to identify and understand the feelings and perspectives of others. This is mainly important for school leaders, as they must make decisions that affect a diverse group of participants like tutors, parents, learners, and broader community. By considering others' emotional states and needs, emotionally intelligent leaders can make decisions that are more inclusive and considerate (Gomez-Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Fernandez-Berrocal & Patti, 2021). Additionally, Sood and Kaushal (2018) postulated that when making decisions about a new policy that affects student behavior, a school leader with high emotional intelligence might empathize with teachers' frustrations about managing classroom discipline while also recognizing students' emotional challenges. They could facilitate discussions with both groups to find a balanced solution that addresses both concerns, such as implementing new support systems for students alongside professional development for teachers on classroom management.

According to Madondo (2019) school leaders' emotional intelligence includes social skills and collaborative decision-making. Social skills refer to the capacity to build relationships, manage teams, and direct social dynamics effectively. Leaders that poses strong social skills ably engage and collaborate with others, which is vital in making well-rounded, inclusive decisions. By involving others in the decision-making process, they are more likely to build consensus and ensure that decisions are supported and understood by everyone involved. The author asserts that a school principal faced with deciding on a new curriculum or teaching method may involve teachers, parents, and even students in the decision-making process. By gathering input through surveys or focus groups, the principal demonstrates strong social skills and creates a collaborative environment, leading to a decision that reflects the needs and opinions of all stakeholders (Madondo, 2019).

School leaders' emotional intelligence fosters and influences conflict resolution and constructive decision-making in conflict situations and crisis among students or staff members within the school environment. Conflict resolution is a critical aspect of leadership, especially in schools where differing opinions and interests often clash. Emotionally intelligent leaders can manage conflicts in a way that is constructive, promoting understanding and cooperation rather than division. This ability to navigate conflicts effectively leads to more harmonious decision-making (Tai & Abdull Kareem, 2019). The authors assert that if a conflict arises between a teacher and a student regarding classroom behavior, a school leader with high emotional intelligence can facilitate the discussion, empathize with both parties, and help them find a mutually acceptable solution. For instance, the leader might arrange a meeting where the teacher explains their perspective and the student's concerns are heard, leading to a decision that respects both the teacher's authority and the student's emotional needs (Tai & Abdull Kareem, 2019).

According to Wirawan, Tamar and Bellani (2019) school leaders' emotional intelligence also influences ethical decision-making and integrity. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more probable to consider the long-term costs of their decisions and act with integrity. They make decisions that not only benefit the immediate school community but also align with ethical standards and subsidize to a positive school culture. The authors assert that when faced with a decision about student discipline, an emotionally intelligent school leader might balance the need for accountability with a commitment to fairness and rehabilitation. For example, instead of immediately suspending a student for a minor infraction, the school leader might consider restorative justice practices, such as a meeting between the student and those affected by their actions, ensuring that the decision addresses the underlying issues rather than simply punishing the behavior (Wirawan et al., 2019).

III. METHODOLOGY

➤ Research Design

The survey assumed a correlational survey design combined with only a quantitative approach. A correlational survey design is situated on examining a relationship between variables in a certain study population (Kassu, 2019). This design assisted in examining the relationship between school leaders' emotional intelligence and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The quantitative approach was utilized to generate numerical data.

➤ Target Population and Sample Size

The study population comprised of teachers and head teachers from different selected private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality from which a sample was selected. The sample size constituted of 75 respondents (teachers and head teachers) obtained from five private secondary schools selected in Iganga Municipality to avail the required data.

➤ Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to a systematic process of selecting a representative sample of individuals from the target population (Singh & Masuku, 2017). Convenient sampling was employed by the researcher in selecting respondents which involved the researcher choosing members who were easily accessible and available used to select both teachers and head teachers from the different private secondary schools selected in Iganga Municipality to partake in the study so as to attain quantitative data.

➤ Data Collection Methods

• Questionnaire Survey Method

A questionnaire survey method is a form of obtaining information using a series of questions from respondents (Anokye, 2020). The questionnaire survey method was vibrant to obtaining information in form of numbers using questions that are organized and easy to understand. Thus, aided in attaining and gathering data from participants in a shortest possible time.

➤ Data Collection Instruments

• Structured Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire is utilized to gather information from respondents comprising of closed-ended answers to enquiries on which they are mandated to pick (Kuphanga, 2024). This study applied structured questionnaires to gather data from respondents comprised of closed-ended queries with encoded responses self-administered to participants in different private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality. Structured questionnaires were utilized as they entail diminutive time and collect much information on the study phenomenon.

• Data Analysis

The survey utilized descriptive and correlation methods of analysis in scrutinizing primary data gathered. Descriptive analysis is utilized when evaluating respondents' demographics. To evaluate the association between variables, Spearman's correlation analysis is hired to provide an empirical understanding at 0.01 significance level. Spearman's correlation assesses the relatedness among two categorical variables (Jerrold, 2016).

• Ethical Consideration

The researcher acquired an introductory letter from the Department of Post Graduate Studies at Islamic University in Uganda before undertaking the study as a prerequisite to obtain permission to gather the required data for research in the different schools.

The researcher sought for respondents' agreement to participate in the study and individuals were fully knowledgeable about the objective and significance of the study and participation was voluntary without any intimidation.

Additionally, the researcher secured the privacy of contributors by guaranteeing confidentiality through safeguarding personal information and ensuring that data is anonymized where possible.

• Study Findings

This section provides descriptive statistics on demographics of respondents and correlation analysis providing answers to objectives of study.

➤ Findings on the Demographic Compositions

The study measured demographic compositions of respondents and results are shown in Table 1;

Table 1 Demographic Composition of Respondents

Demographic Composition			
Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	52.0
	Female	36	48.0
	Total	75	100.0
Age Bracket	25-30 years	11	14.7
	31-35 years	16	22.7
	36-40 years	19	25.3

Highest Level of Education	Above 40 years	28	37.3
	Total	75	100.0
	Diploma	6	8.0
	Bachelors	60	80.0
	Masters	9	12.0
Marital Status	Total	75	100.0
	Married	53	70.7
	Single	22	29.3
Period Worked at the Secondary School	Total	75	100.0
	1-2 years	13	17.3
	3-5 years	21	28.0
	6-10 years	30	40.0
	Above 10 years	11	14.7

Source: Primary data, 2025

In Table 1, the study results revealed that majority 39 (52.0%) of individuals were male and 36 (48.0%) were female. The study results also revealed that 28 (37.3%) of individuals were above 40 years, 19 (25.3%) were 36-40 years, 16 (22.7%) were 31-35 years, and 11 (14.7%) were 25-30 years.

In addition, the study revealed that 60 (80.0%) of individuals had attained a bachelor, 9 (12.0%) had attained a masters, and 6 (8.0%) had attained a diploma. In regards to marital status, the results revealed that 53 (70.7%) of individuals were married and 22 (29.3%) were single.

Further, the results revealed that 30 (40.0%) of individuals had worked at the particular school for 6-10 years,

21 (28.0%) had worked at the particular school for 3-5 years, 13 (17.3%) had worked at the particular school for 1-2 years, and 11 (14.7%) had worked at the particular school for over 10 years.

➤ Findings on the Objectives of the Study

Relationship between School Leaders' Self-Awareness and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

The study required to examine the relationship between school leaders' self-awareness and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Correlation Findings on the Relationship Between School Leaders' Self-Awareness and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

		School Leaders' Self-Awareness	Effective Decision-Making
School Leaders' Self-Awareness	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	75	75
Effective Decision-Making	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	.567**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	75	75

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data, 2025

The results in Table 2 revealed that school leaders' self-awareness positively and significantly relates with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda ($r = 0.567$, $N = 75$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$). The findings imply that an upsurge in school leaders' self-awareness considerably and meaningfully leads to an enhancement in effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

Relationship between School Leaders' Social Skills and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

The study also required to examine the relationship between school leaders' social skills and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation Findings on the Relationship Between School Leaders' Social Skills and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

		School Leaders' Social Skills	Effective Decision-Making
School Leaders' Social Skills	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	75	75
Effective Decision-Making	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	.750**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	75	75

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data, 2025

The results in Table 3 revealed that school leaders' social skills positively and significantly relate with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda ($r = 0.750$, $N = 75$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$). The results imply that an increase in school leaders' social skills greatly leads to an enhancement in effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

Relationship between School Leaders' Relation Management and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

The study further required to examine the relationship between school leaders' relation management and effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Correlation Findings on the Relationship Between School Leaders' Relation Management and Effective Decision-Making in Private Secondary Schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda

		School Leaders' Relation Management	Effective Decision-Making
School Leaders' Relation Management	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.684**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	75	75
Effective Decision-Making	Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	.684**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	75	75

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data, 2025

The results in Table 4 revealed that school leaders' relation management positively and significantly relates with effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda ($r = 0.684$, $N = 75$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$). The outcomes imply that an increase in school leaders' relation management considerably leads to an advancement in effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

The survey also recommends school authorities to facilitate workshops on conflict resolution, communication, and team-work as strong relationships are the foundation of a collaborative and trusting school culture, which supports better decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

IV. CONCLUSION

The survey concludes that school leaders' emotional intelligence in terms of school leaders' self-awareness, school leaders' social skills, and school leaders' relation management has a positive and significant association with effective decision-making in that an enhancement in various aspects of school leaders' emotional intelligence leads to an enhancement in effective decision-making in private secondary schools in Iganga Municipality, Uganda.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey recommends school authorities to encourage school leaders to engage in regular self-reflection and mindfulness practices to recognize how feelings influence their decisions and interactions so as to achieve

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