

Obstacles to Effective Management Decision Making in the Economic Community of West African States

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Abstract

Poor management decisions can have a negative impact on organizations, particularly when organization leaders make decisions based on personal interests that do not reflect stakeholders' interests. The poor quality of some decisions made historically by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders has adversely affected stakeholders. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. The conceptual framework was a combination of stakeholder theory, the theory of organizational framing for decision-making, and ethical leadership theory. Interviews of 10 former and current senior managers of ECOWAS provided the primary study data. Constant comparative analysis and Yin's qualitative case study data analysis approach were used to analyze the data. Seven key themes emerged regarding obstacles that hinder the organization's ability to fulfill its mission. The recommendations of the study participants to address these challenges, if implemented, could lead to improvements that help ECOWAS achieve its primary goal of regional economic integration, development, and stability for more than 400 million African citizens.

Keywords

Leadership, Management Decision Making, Economic Community of West African States, Regional Economic Integration, Regional Development, Regional Stability

1. Introduction

Poor management decisions can have a negative impact on organizations. Various problems can arise from ineffective decision-making (Bon et al., 2017; Liu et al.,

2019). Since its founding in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, n.d.) has struggled to fulfill its mandate (Santos et al., 2018). Research indicates that ECOWAS's failure to achieve its organizational goals is primarily due to management issues, poor decision-making, and a lack of capabilities, including an inefficient organizational structure (Nwankwo, 2017; Santos et al., 2018). These problems adversely affect the organization's culture, politics, and stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to understand how the management of ECOWAS makes decisions to identify the obstacles to effective management.

2. Background

ECOWAS is the largest sub-regional community in Africa, comprising 15 Member States and over 400 million people. Its main goals include economic integration and development, stability, and the establishment of a single currency (Birikorang, 2016). Recognized as the leading peace and security organization in Africa (Agbo et al., 2018; De Coning, 2017), ECOWAS was originally proposed by President William Tubman of Liberia in 1964, leading to an initial agreement in 1965. On May 28, 1975, the 15 West African countries officially formed ECOWAS in Lagos, Nigeria (Pitts, 1999).

However, the ECOWAS agreement has not so far produced lasting results (Agbo et al., 2018; Birikorang, 2016). The organization's shortcomings have contributed to instability among its Member States (Porto & Engel, 2016). The inability of ECOWAS to fulfill its mandate is a result of poor leadership, corruption (Agbo et al., 2018; Birikorang, 2016), as well as management issues, ineffective decision-making, and a lack of capabilities stemming from an inefficient organizational structure (Nwankwo, 2017; Santos et al., 2018).

According to Bolman and Deal (2017), failing to deliver on its mandate adversely affects the organization's culture, politics, and stakeholders. To resolve these issues, ECOWAS leaders must understand the obstacles that hinder effective management decision-making. Existing literature provides limited insight into these obstacles, prompting this qualitative case study to identify the barriers to effective management decision-making.

3. Conceptual Framework

The key concepts of this research included stakeholder theory, which relates to the organization, stakeholders, and the relations between groups; organizational contexts (political, structural, human resource, and symbolic) from the theory of organizational framing; and leaders' traits, principles, and values that guide their behavior and actions in decision making from ethical decision-making theory. First, under stakeholder theory, organizations create value through collaboration with their stakeholders (Freudenreich et al., 2020). Friedman and Miles (2002) argued that through stakeholder theory, investigators can examine the scope of organization-stakeholder relations, how such relations occur over time, and how

and why changes in relations occur over time. Second, [Bolman and Deal \(2017\)](#) posited that to make effective decisions, leaders need to view and analyze organizational problems from four perspectives or frames: political, structural, human resources (key stakeholders in ECOWAS), and symbolic (culture). The four-frame model by [Bolman and Deal \(2017\)](#) is a set of frames that comprise “a set of ideas and assumptions” to guide organizations (p. 12). This underscores the significance of organizational contexts (political, structural, human resources, and symbolic) as key concepts of the theory of organizational framing. Lastly, the key concept of [Brown et al.’s \(2005\)](#) ethical leadership theory highlights how leaders exhibit moral characteristics via explicit actions, especially through decision making. That is, the traits, principles, and values of leaders guide their behavior and actions in decision making, which ultimately influence followers ([Brown et al., 2005](#)).

To enable the exploration of these key concepts, the conceptual framework for the study combined stakeholder theory, [Bolman and Deal’s \(2017\)](#) theory of organizational framing for decision making, and [Brown et al.’s \(2005\)](#) ethical leadership theory. The integrated model helped me to distinguish different stakeholders and enabled me to analyze organization–stakeholder relations from both the organizational perspective and the stakeholder perspective ([Friedman & Miles, 2002](#)).

One core part of the conceptual framework consists of [Bolman and Deal’s \(2017\)](#) theory of organizational framing for decision making. [Bolman and Deal \(2017\)](#) further noted that managers and organizational leaders commonly and frequently misread situations. This is important given that leaders’ ability to read situations accurately is crucial to development and learning within organizations. More specifically, managers and organizational leaders need to learn to utilize several lenses to gain a better understanding of organizational problems and determine effective leadership action steps to address problems ([Holmes & Scull, 2019](#)). As such, [Bolman and Deal’s \(2017\)](#) four frames for analyzing organizational contexts (political, structural, human resources, and symbolic) could be used to address this issue among leaders and organizations ([Holmes & Scull, 2019](#)).

Various researchers have noted that the use of [Bolman and Deal’s \(2017\)](#) theory of organizational framing for decision making is a robust framework for providing leaders with rich descriptions of organizational structures and mentalities, including necessary leadership actions that could result in improvements in organizational understanding ([Daft, 2015](#); [Holmes & Scull, 2019](#)). As such, many authors have widely applied the concept of [Bolman and Deal’s \(2017\)](#) four frames within scholarly articles and studies related to management and leadership and organizational performance and improvement ([Bryson, 2018](#); [Daft, 2015](#); [Holmes & Scull, 2019](#)).

The last part of the conceptual framework for this study is [Brown et al.’s \(2005\)](#) ethical leadership theory. [Brown et al.’s \(2005\)](#) approach underscores specific concepts, including altruism, honesty, moral awareness, trustworthiness, and selfless-

ness, which act as a foundation for building ethics and ethical leadership in organizations. These are important concepts given that leaders have the responsibility to cultivate and maintain an ethical climate (Georgeson-Agege, 2020). According to Georgeson-Agege (2020) and Pucic (2015), leaders can create an ethical climate in organizations specifically by communicating these concepts of altruism, honesty, moral awareness, trustworthiness, and selflessness to their followers and acting as role models for their followers.

Brown et al.'s (2005) ethical leadership theory provides a model for conceptualizing, implementing, and teaching ethical leadership. Further, Georgeson-Agege (2020) noted that Brown et al.'s ethical leadership theory embodies normatively suitable actions and behaviors that leaders use to relate with, communicate, and practice ethical leadership to their followers. As such, Brown et al.'s ethical leadership theory highlights the ethical conduct of organizational leaders. Research has shown that leaders can strengthen their ethical conduct by implementing ethical policies within an organization, establishing reward systems, and providing training and development programs to motivate followers to act in an ethical manner (Georgeson-Agege, 2020; Pucic, 2015). Ciulla et al. (2018) added to this, noting the importance of examining and identifying normatively suitable actions and behaviors for conceptualizing ethical leadership, as well as developing and establishing processes that cultivate ethical leadership for both leaders and followers.

Together, these three theories offer a broad and relevant framework to identify obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Stakeholder theory (Freudenreich et al., 2020), organizational framing theory (Bolman & Deal, 2017), and ethical leadership theory (Brown et al., 2005) together guided the identification and categorization of obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. For example, the obstacles could be human resources (stakeholders), political, structural, or cultural (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The three theories also provided bases for analyzing the identified obstacles—for example, in terms of the implications for stakeholders, organizational performance, and ethical leadership. The conceptual framework guided the design and execution of the study and supported the categorization and description of obstacles identified from the research.

4. Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. The case under study was decision-making by ECOWAS management, with a focus on identifying and describing the obstacles to making effective management decisions through the subjective knowledge and lived experiences of current and former senior managers of ECOWAS, also known as statutory appointees, that constituted the target population of the study. The participants were identified using purposive sampling, which ensured the selection of ideal participants to provide firsthand diverse information to enrich the research findings (van Manen, 1997).

Data collection consisted of a 30 to 60-minute, semistructured Zoom interview with each of the study participants using an interview protocol based on the central research question of the study: What are the major obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS? The interview questions were:

- 1) What are some of the factors that are often taken into consideration when the ECOWAS makes decisions?
- 2) Which stakeholders are consulted when the ECOWAS makes decisions?
- 3) How do cultural factors or considerations affect decision making in the ECOWAS?
- 4) What factors facilitate the decision-making process for the ECOWAS?
- 5) What factors hinder the decision-making process for the ECOWAS?
- 6) How do management styles affect the decision-making process for the ECOWAS?
- 7) How does the current organizational structure of the ECOWAS affect the decision-making process?
- 8) What changes would you make to improve the decision-making process of the ECOWAS?

After member checking the data with the study participants for validity, Yin's (2017) qualitative data analysis process of explanation building, as well as the constant comparative method, were used recursively to incorporate successive interview data until data saturation occurred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with the tenth interview.

5. Results

The seven themes that emerged from the data analysis are listed in Table 1 in order of the percentage of participants who mentioned each. In the discussion section, each of these themes is described based on participants' data and the literature.

Table 1. Study themes.

| Theme | Participant % |
|---|---------------|
| 1) Undue interference by Member States in the affairs of management | 100 |
| 2) Sub-regionalism or nationalism of senior managers | 100 |
| 3) Hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles | 100 |
| 4) Selection process of senior managers based on politics | 80 |
| 5) Lack of independent evaluation of senior managers' performance | 80 |
| 6) Lack of continuity in management | 70 |
| 7) Centralized decision making | 70 |

6. Discussion of Findings

The key findings from the research emerged as themes identified through a constant comparative analysis of the study data to address the research question. Par-

ticipants pinpointed several significant obstacles to effective management decision-making, including: 1) undue interference by Member States in management affairs, 2) sub-regionalism or nationalism among senior managers, 3) hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles, 4) the selection of senior managers based on political considerations, 5) the absence of independent evaluations of senior managers' performance, 6) a lack of continuity in management, and 7) centralized decision-making.

6.1. Theme 1: Undue Interference by Member States in the Affairs of Management

One of the most significant findings from this research is that undue interference by Member States in management affairs is a significant obstacle to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Participants asserted that these interferences come from Member States through their representatives, such as Heads of State, ministers, and ambassadors. All participants in this study reported that Member States interfere in management work and thus act as a deterrent to effective and efficient decision-making. Furthermore, according to the study participants, member-state interference is ubiquitous.

While there are no previous studies that reveal perceptions regarding obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS, previous researchers have noted prevailing issues with the existing management practices and decision-making structure within ECOWAS (Momodu, 2018; Omo-Ogbebor, 2017; Yaya, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have attributed this ineffectiveness to autocratic leaders who control all decisions with limited input from other staff members (Bolman & Deal, 2017). As such, this central theme is consistent with past literature while also extending the findings, as this theme indicates how undue interference by member states contributes to ineffective decision-making within ECOWAS.

6.2. Theme 2: Sub-Regionalism or Nationalism of Senior Managers

Closely related to interference by Member States was the finding that sub-regionalism and nationalism of senior managers was a major obstacle to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. All participants reported that these factors are significant organizational decision-making barriers. One form of sub-regionalism in ECOWAS was the mutual support among senior managers from the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), a sub-regional organization within the ECOWAS block. Additionally, participants noted that linguistic and cultural differences established during the colonial era, specifically through English, French, and Portuguese colonial powers, have influenced the ECOWAS region. These historical divisions continue to create rifts within ECOWAS today.

This finding is significant as it enhances understanding of the linguistic and cultural disparities among member states in ECOWAS. Participants observed that Francophone interests often align with Lusophone interests, which can over-

shadow Anglophone interests. For example, when a Francophone president held office, they tended to exploit the centralized decision-making authority of the presidency. This observation aligns with previous research by [Fineman \(2019\)](#), who argued that an imbalance in the power structure within ECOWAS can lead to decision-making that disproportionately favors one group. Furthermore, this finding elaborates on existing literature regarding leadership within ECOWAS. It highlights how linguistic and cultural differences contribute to divisions within the organization and emphasizes the lasting impact of colonial power dynamics.

6.3. Theme 3: Hierarchical and Bureaucratic Leadership Styles

The third theme identified by all participants is that hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles are major obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Participants described a constrained, bureaucratic decision-making style in a rigid, hierarchical structure, staffed with individuals who were often demotivated, complacent, and nonproductive. This leadership style was especially perceived in the Francophone region, where it is ubiquitous.

While hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles in the ECOWAS organizational system were found to be significant and common obstacles to making effective management decisions, this is not consistent with past research by [Al Khajeh \(2018\)](#), who noted that a bureaucratic leadership style has a positive impact on organizations. This finding is also not in line with the findings of [Okafor and Afolabi \(2021\)](#), who discovered that most of the leaders from the ECOWAS Commission exhibit a transformational leadership style.

6.4. Theme 4: Selection Process of Senior Managers Based on Politics

An important theme from the interview questions is that a selection process for senior managers based on political affiliations is a critical obstacle to effective management decision-making in ECOWAS. Most participants (80%) reported that representatives from member states often use their authority to influence staffing decisions in favor of preferred candidates from their own countries. This tendency further hinders effective decision-making.

This research-based finding supports the previously described theoretical framework outlined by [Bolman and Deal \(2017\)](#), which identified political factors as key obstacles to effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Additionally, this finding aligns with previous research by [Fineman \(2019\)](#), also based on a theoretical framework (the institutionalist-structural functionalist theories), which found that regional powers often influence political matters and decisions. This influence affects the equitable representation of interests from other countries, a conclusion also drawn based on the findings in this study.

6.5. Theme 5: Lack of Independent Evaluation of Senior Managers' Performance

Another important theme from this research is that the lack of independent eval-

uation of senior managers' performance poses a significant obstacle to effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Most participants (80%) reported this concern, highlighting that the absence of independent evaluations stems from insufficient training, which enables incompetence. According to participants, the President and Vice President of the Commission are supposed to supervise Commissioners but there was no process or practice of assessing the performance of Commissioners.

This finding aligns with previous studies. [Odobó et al. \(2017\)](#) found that inadequate training of government officials and other stakeholders within ECOWAS has contributed to poor management and integration among Member States. Furthermore, this theme reinforces existing knowledge that training and development programs can enhance productivity for leaders and their teams within organizations ([Georgeson-Agege, 2020](#); [Pucic, 2015](#)). Therefore, it is crucial to improve senior managers' performance by ensuring independent evaluations and providing comprehensive training within ECOWAS.

6.6. Theme 6: Lack of Continuity in Management

The sixth key theme identified in this research is that the lack of continuity in management poses a significant obstacle to making effective management decisions within ECOWAS. Many participants (70%) expressed this concern. Participants asserted that whenever there is a change in leadership, all statutory appointees leave and are replaced by new executives. They noted that besides lacking experience these incoming leaders often lack the necessary knowledge of ECOWAS, thus exacerbating the negative impact of this discontinuous change in leadership. This theme highlights the current situation within ECOWAS, which is characterized by insufficient succession planning that complicates transitions between management cohorts.

This finding is notable as the first finding in the literature emphasizing the lack of management continuity as a major barrier to effective decision-making in ECOWAS. Therefore, it is crucial to implement robust succession planning and to identify competent leaders to ensure smooth transitions and effective management decisions within the organization.

6.7. Theme 7: Centralized Decision Making

This research's seventh and final key theme highlights that centralized decision-making has been a significant obstacle to effective management decisions in ECOWAS. Many participants (70%) indicated that this centralized decision-making stemmed from both the hierarchical culture of ECOWAS and the personality of heads of ECOWAS institutions. Participants maintained that the management is highly centralized and concentrated around the President or head of institution. Additionally, micromanagement was frequently observed within the centralized leadership structure of ECOWAS. This theme aligns with the previously discussed third theme, which identified hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles as

significant hindrances to effective organizational management decisions. In other words, the prevalence of hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles within ECOWAS impeded the ability to make effective management decisions.

These findings are also consistent with existing literature, which suggests that individual characteristics of leaders can significantly influence decision making practices and, consequently, their effectiveness (Bon et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019). In their study, Liu et al. (2019) observed that a leader's hierarchical position often contributed to unethical or ineffective decision-making processes. This seventh theme aligns with past research and elucidates one of the major obstacles to effective management decision making in ECOWAS.

7. Implications

The study findings may impact positive social change. At the individual level, leaders in ECOWAS can use the findings of this study as empirical guidance or reference on how to improve themselves, specifically focusing on their leadership style and capabilities. As the findings of this study have shown, hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles act as significant obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. As leaders in ECOWAS aim to be more effective in their roles, it is worth highlighting that hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles and practices are not ideal for ECOWAS. While this research did not involve analyzing which leadership styles can promote effective management decisions in ECOWAS, leaders in the organization would do well to veer away from practicing these hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles, which may help mitigate the obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS.

Furthermore, the findings of this study shed light on the factors that would be conducive to effective decision making. As reported by several participants, the identified factors that would have facilitated effective decision making are the following: competent senior managers, distributed decision making, delegation to allow other senior managers to make decisions as per extant treaties and protocols, and openness and frankness in decision making. Other factors that would have facilitated effective decision making include having regular senior management team meetings, decentralized decision making, and removing undue political influences from Member States. Focusing on these factors may help leaders become more effective in managing the organization and facilitating more effective decision making within the ECOWAS organization. As such, the findings of this study may have positive effects on both the individual and organizational levels, especially among ECOWAS leaders who aim to become more effective in their decision making roles. This effect may increase effectiveness and conduciveness in decision making within the ECOWAS organization.

The study findings also have potential impacts for improvement at the organizational level. By targeting obstacles that impede effective management decisions within the organization, leaders may develop effective strategies to mitigate the barriers identified in this study. These strategies include having standardized pro-

cesses that aim to improve the decision-making processes and leadership at ECOWAS (Nwankwo, 2017; Santos et al., 2018). Furthermore, the findings of this study may help improve the organization's current decision-making events, activities, and processes.

Another key implication is that a constrained, bureaucratic decision-making style resulted in demotivated, complacent, and nonproductive staff in ECOWAS. If it influences the development of a less bureaucratic leadership style and culture across the organization, the study findings may positively impact the organization and staff. Improving the leadership styles of ECOWAS leaders may result in a more motivated, productive, and engaged workforce, as the study findings indicate that employees experience various struggles and bottlenecks resulting from the organization's hierarchical structure.

The study findings, if implemented, may also have positive impacts at the policy level. One of the key themes of this study is that micromanagement is typical of centralized leadership in ECOWAS. For instance, approval from the highest level of leadership was still required to act on budgets that had already been approved. Better or improved policies may, therefore, be developed in terms of curtailing the micromanagement inherent in centralized leadership. The improvement of policies includes focusing on how centralized leadership overlaps with the sub-regional interests of the Francophone countries. Overall, more effective policies for budget approvals and evaluations can be developed in light of the findings of this research such that they are impartial to the individual leaders' nationalism, personal interests, and personality.

The study participants generally perceived that the selection process of senior managers was based on politics, as well as personal preferences and interests. This finding calls out to the practitioners and leaders of human resources in ECOWAS to review the selection process and evaluate its rigor for appointing new leaders. The review and standardization of the selection process for senior managers includes having a set of minimum requirements for incoming leaders as they take on new roles. This is an important implication given that the participants indicated that Member States often swayed the appointment of senior managers in favor of preferred candidates from their own countries, independent of their qualifications, to perpetuate or increase their influence on management decisions.

Finally, this study also has significant implications for human resources practice within the ECOWAS, especially for senior managers who seek employment and are most qualified for the available leadership roles. With qualified leaders and senior managers objectively appointed to new roles, the ECOWAS organization may experience better decision-making processes and outcomes, as well as a boost in morale and motivation among ECOWAS employees.

8. Recommendations

Regarding practice, based on the seven themes that emerged as the study findings, the researchers suggest that ECOWAS investigate ways to mitigate the adverse

effects and eradicate the significant obstacles to making effective management decisions within ECOWAS. Given the serious consequences of lacking career planning and management continuity, it is crucial to examine further how to assess managerial competencies in ECOWAS. It should also be determined whether human resources consider these competencies when appointing new leaders and managers. This exploration is essential, especially since political considerations in hiring senior managers can obstruct the promotion of the overall interests of ECOWAS as an organization.

Gaining a better understanding of how senior managers are evaluated is also necessary. Future researchers would do well to explore the current training opportunities for executive management and senior leaders. Gaining a better understanding of the prevailing capacity-building opportunities for senior managers in ECOWAS is especially important given that the findings of this study have shown how promising senior managers who were initially eager to perform deteriorated due to the lack of independent evaluation and a lack of training within ECOWAS. This point is in line with the findings that currently there is no process or practice of assessing Statutory Appointees' performance within ECOWAS. This situation leads to poor decision-making habits in formerly strong leaders. Thus, there is a need to review the opportunities for training and independent evaluation processes within ECOWAS, which may help ensure that senior managers are well-equipped and empowered to make effective management decisions in ECOWAS.

Regarding academic research, one recommendation would be investigate the most effective leadership style for making effective management decisions in ECOWAS. While the current findings showed that hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles were significant obstacles to making effective management decisions in ECOWAS, this study did not address which leadership style would yield the best management decisions. This topic could be further explored by considering different cultures and regions within the organization, including Francophone, Lusophone, and Anglophone interests.

While many researchers have underscored the strengths and weaknesses of the ECOWAS organization, other than this study, there is a prevailing lack of qualitative research on the existing issues within ECOWAS' current structures and decision-making practices (Fineman, 2019; Odoibo et al., 2017; Omo-Ogbebor & Sanusi, 2017). More research like this study is needed to examine the detailed accounts of ECOWAS employees who may not be in a decision-making role, including past and present managers. This is important because ECOWAS employees who may not be in a decision-making role could provide additional insights regarding the effectiveness of their organizational leadership and the obstacles to effective management decision making in ECOWAS. This recommendation includes exploring how ECOWAS employees at all levels perceive the effects of ineffective management decision making, from routine, everyday matters to far more substantive initiatives and processes. Examining this topic further could lead to better routine management processes, such as the efficient scheduling of annual statutory meetings, which may supplement the study findings.

Another recommendation is for researchers to do quantitative research to determine how Member-State interference with management decision making and the other six obstacles to effective management decision at ECOWAS identified in this study impact ECOWAS employees motivation, productivity, engagement, and organizational outcomes.

Additionally, future researchers should focus on a broader target population, based on the awareness from the study findings of how cultural factors, language, nationality, subregion, and other demographic differences affect each participant's perspective of the obstacles to effective management decision making at ECOWAS.

9. Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has struggled to fully achieve its mandate of economically integrating its 15 member countries. This challenge arises partly from management issues, including poor decision making (Nwankwo, 2017; Santos et al., 2018). An analysis of interview data obtained from current and former senior managers of ECOWAS using the constant comparative method and Yin's qualitative case study data analysis approach identified key obstacles to effective management decisions. Participants highlighted the following main challenges:

- 1) Undue interference by member states in management affairs;
- 2) Sub-regionalism or nationalism exhibited by senior managers;
- 3) Hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership styles;
- 4) Selection of senior managers based on political affiliations;
- 5) Lack of independent evaluation of senior managers' performance;
- 6) Insufficient continuity in management;
- 7) Centralized decision making.

These findings align with previous research, which indicates several issues within ECOWAS's management practices and decision-making structure (Momodu, 2018; Omo-Ogbebor, 2017; Yaya, 2014). Additionally, research has shown:

- 1) An imbalance in the power structure that can skew decision making in favor of specific interests (Fineman, 2019).
- 2) The presence of regional hegemons exerting influence over political matters and decisions, impacting equitable representation from other countries (Fineman, 2019).
- 3) A lack of training for government officials and other stakeholders within ECOWAS (Odobbo et al., 2017).
- 4) Individual factors, such as the hierarchical standings of leaders, can influence decision-making practices and contribute to unethical or ineffective outcomes (Bon et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019).

These obstacles hinder the organization's ability to fulfill its mission. In contrast, the participants in this study suggested implementing objective recruitment practices for competent senior managers, fostering distributed and decentralized

decision-making, encouraging openness and frankness in management, and mitigating undue political influence from member states could significantly enhance the effectiveness of management decisions. These improvements may help ECOWAS achieve its goal of economic integration for more than 400 million citizens and realize its vision of an “ECOWAS of the people: peace and economic prosperity for all” (ECOWAS, n.d.).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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