

Administrative Oversight and Faculty Autonomy: Implications for Governance in Higher Education

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Abstract. This quantitative study addresses a gap in governance literature by examining the underexplored relationship between administrative control and faculty autonomy in higher education. Drawing on Bolman and Deal's Structural Frame, this investigation examines how governance structures impact faculty perceptions of independence in academic decision-making. Data were collected from 29 full-time faculty members using a validated survey instrument measuring administrative control and faculty autonomy. Descriptive statistics profiled respondents, and inferential methods—Spearman's rank-order correlation and simple linear regression—tested the relationship between the two variables. Results show a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation between administrative monitoring and faculty autonomy ($r = .42$, $p < .05$), indicating that structured oversight may coexist with or even enhance perceived autonomy. However, regression analysis reveals that administrative control alone weakly predicts faculty autonomy ($\beta = .21$, $p = .08$), suggesting the influence of additional institutional or interpersonal factors. These findings provide evidence-based guidance for governance reform, underscoring the need for policies that balance structural oversight with supportive organizational cultures and relational dynamics to sustain faculty autonomy.

Keywords: Administrative oversight; Faculty autonomy; Higher education governance; Organizational leadership; Structural frame

1.0 Introduction

In contemporary higher education, the tension between administrative control and faculty autonomy has become increasingly pronounced. Administrators prioritize efficiency and compliance, while faculty emphasize academic freedom, shared governance, and innovation. These competing interests can create institutional friction, shaping organizational climate, scholarly output, and decision-making effectiveness (Kezar & Holcombe, 2020). In the Philippine context, governance structures in state universities are shaped by state mandates, accreditation requirements, and institutional hierarchies—factors that may either enable or constrain faculty autonomy. Despite extensive international discourse on academic freedom and shared governance, a notable gap remains in Philippine scholarship. Empirical research on how faculty members perceive administrative control and how these perceptions influence their sense of academic agency is scarce (Kallio et al., 2022; Pham & Le, 2021).

Existing quantitative studies highlight the implications of administrative demands and the restricted autonomy of faculty. Teeroovengadam et al. (2023) reported that increased administrative control correlates with faculty dissatisfaction and reduced productivity. Likewise, Kallio et al. (2022) highlight that public steering and regulatory mechanisms can limit institutional creativity and morale. By contrast, Kezar and Holcombe (2020) underscored the benefits of shared governance, noting that collaborative decision-making strengthens

institutional cohesion and faculty engagement. While these studies illuminate the challenges of administrative control, they largely reflect Western contexts, leaving unanswered how such dynamics unfold in developing countries like the Philippines.

To address this gap, the present study employs a quantitative approach grounded in Bolman and Deal's (2017) Structural Frame, which conceptualizes organizations as formal systems defined by rules, roles, responsibilities, and authority. Few studies have applied this framework empirically to governance dynamics in state universities. This research, therefore, examines faculty perceptions of administrative control and autonomy in a Philippine state university, investigates how governance systems relate to faculty agency through the lens of the Structural Frame, and explores variation by academic department and job classification. The study aims to generate evidence that can inform governance reforms toward a more balanced, participatory, and effective model for Philippine higher education institutions.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between faculty autonomy and administrative oversight in a higher education institution. Correlational designs measure the strength and direction of associations between naturally occurring variables without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The relationship between administrative oversight and faculty autonomy was analyzed using Spearman's rank-order correlation, a non-parametric test suited for ordinal data and small samples (Field, 2018). Simple linear regression was also used to explore whether administrative oversight predicted faculty autonomy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

Twenty-nine full-time faculty members with at least one year of teaching experience participated voluntarily. A non-probability convenience (voluntary response) sampling approach was employed (Etikan et al., 2016). While efforts were made to recruit all eligible faculty members, participation was limited, so findings should be interpreted cautiously and not generalized beyond the institution studied.

2.3 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was developed from a review of relevant literature on higher education governance and guided by the Structural Frame concept. It consisted of five-point Likert-scale items measuring faculty perceptions of administrative control and autonomy in academic decision-making. Most items were adapted from previously published instruments (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Macfarlane, 2011) to align with the study objectives. No formal pilot testing or reliability analysis (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) was conducted for this study. However, item wording and sequencing were internally reviewed to enhance clarity and ensure content relevance. Because the instrument's psychometric properties were not independently verified, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary, and future research is encouraged to conduct full validation and reliability testing.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The survey link was distributed electronically over a two-week period. Before participation, respondents were informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary nature, and provided digital informed consent (APA, 2020). The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized demographics and item responses. Given the small, non-probability sample, inferential tests were used as exploratory tools. Spearman's rank-order correlation assessed associations between administrative oversight and faculty autonomy, and simple linear regression examined the predictive capacity of administrative oversight (Field, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Results are interpreted with caution.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to APA (2020) ethical guidelines. Participants were assured of anonymity and their right to withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were securely stored.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographics

Among the 29 respondents, a majority were female (62.1%), reflecting the institution's gender composition. Nearly half (48.3%) were aged 30–49, with 44.8% aged 50 and above, indicating a mature and experienced faculty. Most held mid-level positions (55.2% Associate Professors), while only 6.9% were full Professors. Likewise, 62.1% had more than 16 years of teaching experience. Taken together, these demographics portray a predominantly mid- to senior-level faculty body, with limited representation of early-career faculty. This profile suggests a stable but ageing workforce and highlights potential challenges for leadership succession and innovation.

Table 1. *Gender of the Respondents*

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	11	37.9	37.9	37.9
Female	18	62.1	62.1	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. *Age of the Respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 30	2	6.9	6.9	6.9
30–49	14	48.3	48.3	55.2
50 and above	13	44.8	44.8	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. *Academic Rank of the Respondents*

Academic Rank	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Instructor	7	24.1	24.1	24.1
Assistant Professor	4	13.8	13.8	37.9
Associate Professor	16	55.2	55.2	93.1
Professor	2	6.9	6.9	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. *Years in Teaching of the Respondents*

Years in Teaching	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	5	17.2	17.2	17.2
11–15	6	20.7	20.7	37.9
16 and above	18	62.1	62.1	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

3.2 Faculty Perceptions of Administrative Oversight

High mean scores for items such as “Administrative policies significantly influence my decision-making process” ($M = 4.48$) and “Research proposals require multiple levels of administrative approval” ($M = 4.38$) indicate a strong administrative framework guiding faculty responsibilities. However, lower means on transparency and consultation ($M \approx 3.45$ – 3.48) reveal perceived gaps in participatory governance. These patterns suggest that while oversight is structured and consistent, opportunities for shared decision-making remain limited—echoing Kallio et al.'s (2022) finding that clear policies can empower but also risk constraining faculty if engagement is weak.

Table 5. *Faculty Perception on Administrative Oversight*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Administrative policies significantly influence my decision-making process.	4.48	0.57
2. My institution has clear guidelines regarding faculty responsibilities.	4.24	0.63
3. There is a structured approval process for curriculum changes.	4.10	0.85
4. Research proposals require multiple levels of administrative approval.	4.37	0.67
5. Governance policies affect how faculty members conduct academic tasks.	4.34	0.66
6. The administration closely monitors faculty workload and performance.	4.10	0.77
7. There is limited flexibility in faculty decision-making due to administrative policies.	3.68	1.00
8. The institution provides transparency in governance decisions affecting faculty.	3.44	1.05
9. Faculty members are frequently consulted before administrative changes are made.	3.48	1.05
10. The level of administrative control has increased in recent years.	3.68	1.13

3.3 Faculty Perceptions of Autonomy

Overall, respondents reported moderate to high autonomy, particularly in research topic selection ($M = 4.17$) and innovative teaching strategies ($M = 4.17$). Autonomy was lower the use of for external collaborations ($M = 3.52$)

and academic assessments ($M = 3.31$), suggesting institutional constraints in these areas. These results indicate that while faculty enjoy latitude in core teaching and research functions, structural or procedural barriers may limit autonomy in cross-unit or external activities.

Table 6. *Faculty Perception on Autonomy Dimensions*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have the freedom to design my course syllabi.	3.75	1.15
2. Faculty members can select instructional materials without administrative interference.	3.93	1.30
3. Research topics are determined independently by faculty.	4.17	0.80
4. I can implement innovative teaching strategies without excessive oversight.	4.17	0.80
5. Faculty members have a role in shaping institutional policies.	3.79	0.86
6. I can collaborate with external researchers without administrative restrictions.	3.51	0.87
7. Decisions regarding academic assessments are made autonomously.	3.31	1.19
8. Faculty members actively participate in decision-making bodies.	3.62	0.90
9. The institution encourages independent research funding applications.	3.82	1.00
10. My professional development is self-directed rather than administratively imposed.	4.06	0.96

3.4 Relationship Between Oversight and Autonomy

Spearman's rank-order correlation revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant association between perceived administrative oversight and faculty autonomy ($r = 0.492$, $p = 0.007$, $n = 29$), accounting for approximately 24% of the variance. This suggests that clear and consistent administrative structures can coexist with—and even support—faculty autonomy when implemented transparently. Interpreted through Bolman and Deal's (2017) Structural Frame, defined roles and policies may reduce uncertainty and foster trust, enabling faculty to exercise professional judgment more confidently.

Table 7. *Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Between (Average Perception of Administrative Oversight) and (Average Perception of Faculty Autonomy)*

		Ave. Admin	Ave. Faculty
Spearman's Rho	Ave. Admin	Correlation	--
		Coefficient	
		Sig. (2-Tailed)	
		N	29
	Ave. Faculty	Correlation	.492**
		Coefficient	--
		Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.007
		N	29

3.5 Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression showed that administrative oversight did not significantly predict faculty autonomy ($F(10,18) = 0.401$, $p = .929$, $R^2 \approx 0.18$). This indicates that a broader constellation of factors beyond structural oversight alone shapes autonomy. In Bolman and Deal's model, this finding underscores the need to integrate the Political, Human Resource, and Symbolic Frames—power dynamics, relationships, and institutional culture—in any strategy to enhance autonomy.

Table 8. *Simple Linear Regression*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.134	10	0.213	0.401	.929 ^b
	Residual	9.587	18	0.533		

4.0 Conclusion

This study indicates that while structured administrative oversight can coexist with faculty perceptions of autonomy, it does not constitute a significant standalone predictor of such autonomy within the sampled population. These findings challenge the prevailing assumption that administrative oversight inherently constrains academic freedom, instead pointing to a more complex interplay in which clarity, consistency, and inclusive governance mechanisms may reinforce faculty agency and facilitate effective engagement within the institutional framework. From a theoretical perspective, the results extend Bolman and Deal's (2017) Structural Frame by showing that formal policies and procedures, though essential, cannot by themselves explain variations in faculty autonomy. This highlights the need to integrate other frames—Political, Human Resource, and Symbolic—to capture the full range of factors shaping academic self-governance.

In terms of practice, the study underscores that administrators and faculty leaders should treat oversight not as a control mechanism but as an enabling structure. Strategies such as transparent policy communication, shared decision-making bodies, and precise but flexible approval processes can enhance trust, accountability, and faculty empowerment.

On the policy level, higher education governance reforms should be designed to balance accountability with autonomy. Institutional policies could explicitly mandate faculty consultation, participation in governance committees, and mechanisms for feedback on administrative decisions to build a culture of shared governance. Beyond recommending a larger sample, future research should examine how the Political, Human Resource, and Symbolic Frames interact with the Structural Frame to influence autonomy. Qualitative or mixed-method designs could also provide richer insight into faculty experiences and institutional cultures that quantitative metrics alone may not capture. Looking ahead, these findings offer a pathway for rethinking higher education governance—not as a zero-sum trade-off between oversight and autonomy, but as an evolving partnership in which clear structures, inclusive leadership, and shared values strengthen academic freedom, institutional effectiveness, and faculty well-being.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis.
Author 2: Data analysis, data gathering, review & editing.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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