



**Group Dynamics and their Influence on Decision Making: An Assessment of Selected
Community-Based Youth Association in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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Community-Based Youth Association in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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Declaration

The researcher certifies that this Thesis entitled, " Group dynamics and their influence on decision making: An Evaluation of selected community-based youth association in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia" is the researcher original work. This thesis work has not been submitted elsewhere in fulfilment of the requirements for any other academic degree, and all material sources have been properly credited.

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Abstract

Groupthink theory suggests that high group cohesiveness pressures individuals to conform, sacrificing critical thinking to maintain harmony. However, existing literature heavily relies on Western contexts, creating a geographic and structural gap regarding urban African civic environments. This study evaluated the impact of group dynamics specifically communication, group cohesion, leadership, and conformity pressure on collective decision-making among community-based youth associations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A multivariate linear regression analysis was conducted using a sample of 141 youth participants. The model explained a significant proportion of variance in decision-making effectiveness, $R^2 = .663$, $p < .001$. Communication clarity emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .398$, $p < .001$), indicating that clear understanding and open idea-sharing enhance decision effectiveness. Group cohesion also significantly predicted effective outcomes ($\beta = .339$, $p < .001$), suggesting that strong unity benefits group choices. Additionally, participative leadership positively contributed to the process ($\beta = .191$, $p = .013$), fostering shared responsibility. Conversely, conformity pressure lacked a significant relationship with decision-making quality ($r = .019$, $p = .823$). These findings challenge classic groupthink paradigms by demonstrating that social identification can foster collective unity in civic youth organizations without sacrificing individual psychological safety.

Keywords: group dynamics, decision Making, groupthink, social identity theory

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Group dynamics refers to the pattern of interactions, behaviours, and psychological processes that occur within a group and that shape how members relate to one another, form norms, and arrive at collective outcomes ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). The concept traces its theoretical roots to ([Lewin, 1951](#)), who proposed that a group is not merely a collection of individuals but an interdependent social system in which a change in one member's role or status can alter the functioning of the entire group. Within this system, internal forces such as communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity operate as the "environmental forces" that determine whether a group functions effectively or dysfunctional ([Lewin, 1951](#)). Understanding group dynamics is therefore essential because these internal processes directly influence how groups manage conflict, build consensus, and ultimately make decisions ([Ellis & Fisher, 1994](#)).

It is important to clarify that this study is not concerned with individual everyday decision making such as personal lifestyle choices or routine daily decisions but specifically with collective organizational decision making the deliberative processes through which members of formally structured community based youth associations jointly discuss, evaluate alternatives, and reach group level agreements on matters relating to the planning, leadership, and community activities of their associations ([Forsyth, 2019; Checkoway, 2011](#)).

Communication is widely regarded as the most fundamental of these internal processes because it is the medium through which information, ideas, and feedback are exchanged among members ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). Open and transparent communication allows group members to clarify

misunderstandings, share diverse perspectives, and coordinate common action, while poor communication is characterized by dominance of a few voices it can hinder participation and lead to flawed decisions. Empirical evidence supports this link directly for instance, [\(Shehad and Bashkim, 2025\)](#) found that communication clarity and the perception of communication significantly predicted the quality of managerial decisions, while [\(Lu et al.,2025\)](#) demonstrated that expanding communication channels increased participation in shared decision making by more than 30%. These findings collectively suggest that communication is not simply a channel for exchanging information but a process that actively shapes how, and how well groups decide. Leadership constitutes a second critical dimension of group dynamics, as it determines how authority, direction, and encouragement are distributed within a group [\(Forsyth, 2019\)](#). Leadership can either enable or constrain participatory decision making leaders who encourage discussion and value member input tend to foster more inclusive group environments, whereas leaders who dominate increase the likelihood of conformity and reduced critical evaluation, particularly within highly cohesive groups [\(Priyanto and Wening, 2024\)](#). [\(Özsarı and Tek, 2024\)](#) who studied youth camp leaders, found a statistically significant positive relationship between leadership behaviour and rational decision making ($r = .421$), while [\(Bhavneet ,2024\)](#) similarly found that participatory leadership were the most prevalent and effective approaches within organizational decision making contexts. [\(Sahar and Mona ,2017\)](#) further established that leadership style significantly predicted decision making among healthcare teams, indicating those leaders who provide support and maintain fairness strengthen both trust and cooperative behaviour among members. Conformity by contrast represents the tendency of individuals to align their opinions, attitudes, or behaviours with those of the broader group, often in pursuit of social acceptance or to avoid

disapproval ([Kim and Hommel, 2015](#)). While moderate conformity can support cohesion and shared norms, excessive conformity is theoretically linked to the suppression of differing views and ultimately, to poorer decision quality ([Janis, 1972; McCauley, 1998](#)). A systematic review by ([Somdatta et al. ,2025](#)) of 38 studies concluded that conformity is best understood as an adaptive process shaped by emotional regulation, influencing both individual and group level decision making. Similarly, ([Putri et al. ,2020](#)) found that higher levels of conformity among adolescents were associated with a lower sense of independent career decision making, suggesting that conformity pressures can compromise individual judgment within group settings. ([Andrzej et al. ,2000](#)) further demonstrated that a proportion of individuals will conform to group judgments even when those judgments are incorrect, illustrating the powerful but not absolute influence of group pressure on individual expression.

Group cohesion refers to the degree of unity, trust, and emotional connectedness that binds members to one another and to the group as a whole ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). Cohesion is widely associated with positive outcomes such as increased cooperation, commitment to shared goals, and willingness to remain active within the group ([Jeruto, 2015](#)). However, the relationship between cohesion and decision making is not uniformly positive; ([Mathieu et al. ,2015](#)), in a study of 62 work teams, found that while cohesion was positively related to decision making effectiveness, cohesion without a sense of psychological safety could also produce conformity and reduce decision quality. ([Mullen and Copper's ,1994](#)) meta-analytic findings similarly indicated only a moderate correlation ($r = .250$) between cohesion and performance outcomes, suggesting that the benefits of cohesion are conditional rather than automatic. Taken together, these findings indicate that cohesion can either strengthen or undermine decision making depending on the broader communicative and leadership context within which it operates.

Within the Ethiopian context, collective and consensus-based decision making has long been embedded in community life through indigenous associations such as the Iddir, a community based social and financial institution found extensively in both urban and rural areas of the country. Studies of Iddir associations in Addis Ababa demonstrate that members rely heavily on group consensus, mutual trust, and shared norms to make decisions affecting the welfare of the group, reflecting deeply rooted cultural patterns of collective deliberation (Teshome et al., 2014). These traditional associational forms provide an important cultural backdrop for understanding how contemporary, formally structured youth associations in Addis Ababa may similarly rely on group based processes such as communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity to reach decisions, even as they operate within more modern organizational structures.

The Ethiopian government has formally recognized the importance of organized youth participation through the National Youth Policy, issued by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. The policy was developed in response to the significant socio-economic challenges facing Ethiopian youth at the time, including high unemployment, limited access to recreational and civic infrastructure, and restricted participation in decision making processes affecting their communities. A central pillar of the policy is the promotion of youth associations and federations at the local, woreda, and regional levels as platforms through which young people can engage in social, economic, cultural, and political life, with the explicit goal of cultivating youth who are competent citizens with a democratic outlook capable of participating meaningfully in governance and development processes ([MoYSC, 2004](#)). The policy further mandates the establishment of youth centre across sub cities and woredas such as those operating within Bole Sub City as the institutional spaces through which youth associations are expected to organize activities, elect leaders, and make collective decisions ([MoYSC, 2004](#)).

Despite these policy ambitions, an assessment of the implementation of the National Youth Policy noted persistent gaps between the policy's participatory aspirations and the lived experiences of youth at the grassroots level, including limited awareness of avenues for involvement and inconsistent functioning of youth associations across different administrative areas ([Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, 2022](#)). This implementation gap reinforces the relevance of examining what actually occurs within youth associations once they are formed specifically, how internal group processes such as communication, leadership, conformity, and cohesion shape the quality and inclusiveness of the decisions these associations ultimately make ([Barry & Lorrain, 2006; Checkoway, 2011; Wong et al., 2010](#)).

Therefore, this study examines the influence of communication, leadership, conformity and group cohesion on the decision making processes of selected community based youth associations operating within Bole Sub City, Addis Ababa.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Community based youth associations occupy a central position in enabling young people to participate in activities such as project planning, leadership selection, and conflict management within their communities ([Checkoway, 2011; Wong et al., 2010](#)). However, existence of such associations does not guarantee that their decision making processes are inclusive in practice. Youth participation in many contexts continues to encounter challenges such as low attendance, limited involvement in collective deliberation, and decisions that may be disproportionately shaped by a small number of vocal or dominant members, thereby reducing the breadth of participation across the wider membership ([Checkoway, 2011; Wong et al., 2010](#)).

The internal functioning of such groups is shaped by factors including leadership, group cohesion, communication, and social pressure among members ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). While strong cohesion may strengthen cooperation and commitment within a group, excessive pressure for agreement can simultaneously discourage independent thinking and critical evaluation. ([Janis, 1972](#)) explains that highly cohesive groups are particularly susceptible to groupthink, a condition in which members avoid expressing disagreement in order to preserve group harmony, often because they fear judgment or criticism from peers. In addition, leadership behaviour and communication quality may either support or hinder effective teamwork and participation ([Zhang et al., 2022; Ahmad, 2024](#)). Although these dynamics have been extensively studied in schools, workplaces, and controlled laboratory settings, comparatively little research has examined how they operate within community-based youth associations in urban African contexts such as Addis Ababa.

Within Addis Ababa, youth associations operate under the institutional oversight of the Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, the city level body mandated to coordinate youth affairs across all sub-cities and woredas ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)). The Bureau's stated mission is to strengthen the capacity of youth centre by expanding facilities, strengthening associations, and expanding participation and movement programs, while its broader vision emphasizes ensuring the comprehensive socio-economic and political participation and benefit of the city's youth ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)). To operationalize this mandate, the Bureau established Youth Personality Development Centre across the city's sub-cities and woredas including the centre in Bole Sub-City's Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 from which this study's participants were drawn

where youth associations and clubs are formed, leaders are elected, and members engage in collective planning, recreational, and civic activities ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)). The Bureau further identifies transparency, fairness, community, and accountability as core institutional values guiding this centre, framing youth associations as vehicles for organized and active participation in local governance and development processes ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)).

While the Bureau's policy framework explicitly envisions youth associations as participatory, transparent, and community oriented structures, there is little empirical evidence examining whether the internal group processes occurring within these associations namely communication, leadership, cohesion and conformity actually support or undermine this vision in practice. Existing studies on group dynamics conducted in East Africa have tended to focus on economic outcomes, general participation rates, or leadership and cohesion in isolation ([Jeruto, 2015](#)), without examining how these processes interact to shape the quality, fairness, and inclusiveness of decisions reached within youth associations specifically. Moreover, no known study has examined these dynamics within the youth centre operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's Bole Sub City administration, leaving a clear contextual gap.

Based on this gap, the need to examine how group dynamics specifically communication, leadership, conformity and group cohesion influence the collective organizational decision making processes within community based youth associations operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau in Bole Sub-City was identified and forms the basis of this study.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the influence of group dynamics specifically communication, leadership, conformity, and group cohesion on the collective organizational decision-making processes operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the year 2026.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between conformity and collective organizational decision-making processes in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, by administering a structured five point Likert scale questionnaire to 141 members and analysing the results using correlation and regression analysis within the study period.
2. To determine the influence of leadership on collective organizational decision-making processes of selected community-based youth associations in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, by measuring participatory, supportive, and fairness dimensions of leadership through a validated questionnaire administered to 141 members within the study period.
3. To examine the level of group cohesion and its contribution to collective organizational decision-making processes of selected community based youth associations in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, by measuring task cohesion and social cohesion using a validated questionnaire administered to 141 members within the study period.
4. To assess the influence of communication on collective organizational decision-making processes of selected community based youth associations in Bole Sub-City, Addis

Ababa, by measuring openness, clarity, feedback, and inclusiveness using a structured questionnaire administered to 141 members within the study period.

1.4 Significance of the Study

A better understanding of how communication, conformity, leadership, cohesion, and groupthink influence collective decision making within youth associations can be found from this. By focusing on community based youth groups, the study provides insight into how social psychological processes operate in everyday community settings.

It may also benefit youth leaders, organizers, and stakeholders working directly with youth associations. Understanding how members communicate, resolve disagreements, and participate in decision making may help organizations strengthen participatory leadership practices and encourage healthier group interactions.

In addition, it provides context specific evidence regarding decision making processes within youth associations. The findings may serve as a reference for future studies in social psychology, youth participation, and organizational behaviour.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

This study examines how communication, leadership, conformity, and group cohesion collectively influence collective organizational decision-making processes within community-based youth associations under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau, using groupthink theory to interpret conformity dynamics. Scope wise, the research focuses specifically on Bole Sub-City, which was purposively selected from Addis Ababa's ten sub-cities due to its high population density, rapid urbanization, socioeconomically diverse demographic, and well-established network of active youth centres. Recognizing that Bole Sub-City is non-

homogeneous and varies significantly across its constituent woredas in terms of population, land use, and association activity, the study employs a non-probabilistic, maximum variation purposive sampling technique at the woreda level. This methodology deliberately selects diverse units to capture a wide range of population characteristics, thereby ensuring that the heterogeneous socioeconomic and administrative contexts of the youth associations are accurately represented without risking a single, concentrated sample ([Etikan et al., 2016](#)).

1.6 Operational Definition

Youth

In this study, youth was operationally defined as any individual aged between 18 and 35 years who met the inclusion criteria specified in Section 3.10.1 namely, active membership in a community-based youth association for at least six months and prior participation in collective organizational decision-making activities. This operational age range was applied consistently during participant recruitment and is consistent with the age bracket used by the Ethiopian National Youth Policy in defining the youth demographic targeted by youth-focused institutional structures ([MoYSC, 2004](#)).

Youth Policy

([National Youth Policy, 2004](#)) issued by Ethiopia's Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, which establishes the institutional framework including the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau defines youth policy as its network of youth centre under which the youth associations sampled in this study are organized and administered ([MoYSC, 2004; Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)).

Youth Association

Defined as any organized group of young people registered and operating under a youth centre administered by the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau, through which members engage in social, recreational, or developmental activities and participate in collective organizational decision-making processes ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)).

Community-Based Youth Association

In this study, community-based youth association was operationally defined as the specific youth associations operating within the youth centre of Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 of Bole Sub-City, from which the study's sample of 141 members each meeting the inclusion criteria of being aged 18–35 and an active member for at least six months was drawn.

Group Dynamics

The composite construct measured through four sub-scales namely communication, leadership, conformity, and group cohesion each assessed using a structured questionnaire with items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Each sub-scale score was computed as the mean of its respective items, with higher mean scores indicating a more positive or pronounced presence of that dimension within the association.

Communication

In this study, communication was operationally defined as the mean score obtained from five items (C1–C5) measuring openness, clarity, feedback, and inclusiveness of information exchange within the association, rated on a five-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicated members' perception of more open, clear, and inclusive communication within their association.

Leadership

In this study, leadership was operationally defined as the mean score obtained from five items (L1–L5) measuring leadership behaviour, support and encouragement, and fairness and transparency in decision making, rated on a five-point Likert scale.

Conformity

In this study, conformity was operationally defined as the mean score obtained from five items (CON1–CON5) measuring normative influence, pressure to align with majority opinion, and reluctance to express dissenting views, rated on a five-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicated a greater self-reported tendency among members to conform to group opinion.

Group Cohesion

In this study, group cohesion was operationally defined as the mean score obtained from five items (CO1–CO5) measuring task cohesion commitment to shared group goals and social cohesion which is interpersonal attraction and sense of belonging, rated on a five-point Likert scale.

Groupthink

In this study, groupthink was not measured through a standalone scale but was operationally interpreted through the statistical relationship between members' conformity scores and decision-making scores within highly cohesive groups. Specifically, a statistically significant positive relationship between conformity and decision making, occurring alongside high group cohesion, was interpreted as evidence consistent with groupthink (Janis, 1972), whereas a non-significant

relationship between conformity and decision-making despite high cohesion was interpreted as evidence of its absence.

Collective Organizational Decision Making: in this study, decision making refers specifically to the formal and semi-formal deliberative processes through which members of a community-based youth association jointly identify issues, exchange information, evaluate available options, and reach binding group-level agreements on matters concerning their association's organizational activities, leadership selection, project planning, and community engagement initiatives. This definition explicitly excludes individual, personal, or everyday decision making unrelated to the group's organizational functioning. Decision making in this study is operationalized across seven dimensions effectiveness, quality of outcomes, participation opportunity, timeliness, fairness of process, successful implementation, and member satisfaction measured through a seven-item Likert scale (DM1–DM7) rated by individual members based on their direct experience of these processes within their association (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.868$). This conceptualization is consistent with the group decision making literature in social psychology, which distinguishes organizational collective decision making from individual choice behaviour and emphasizes the procedural, participatory, and outcome dimensions of how groups reach shared agreements ([Forsyth, 2019](#); [Amir Khushk, 2021](#)).

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction of the study. It includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research question, objective, significance, scope and delimitation and definition of terms. Chapter two provides the review of related literature. It discusses the theoretical foundations, conceptual perspectives and empirical studies. Chapter three outlines the research methodology. It describes the

research design, study area, population, sampling technique, data collection instruments and procedures, methods of data analysis and ethical consideration. Chapter four outlining the result and discussion obtained from the analysed data and finally Chapter five summaries, conclusion and recommendation of the final research.

1.8 Limitation of the study

Limitations such as data collection was confined to community based youth association only found within the Bole sub city administration, relying on self-reported questionnaires filled out by youth association members and finally because the quantitative methodology was adopted this study prioritized statistical generalizability over deep qualitative exploration were some of the limitations encountered by this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study composes social psychological theories of group behaviour and decision making, which explain how interactions within groups shape individual and collective outcomes. The theoretical framework integrates theories such as group dynamics theory, social identity theory, group think theory and group development theory to explain how internal group processes influence decision making within community based youth associations. The chapter is divided into three sections first, a theoretical framework including four major social psychological models, second an empirical framework that shows the interactional effects of communication, leadership, group cohesion and conformity on the quality of decision making and thirdly conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Group dynamics is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct, encompassing communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity as distinct but interrelated sub processes ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). A single theory cannot adequately account for all dimensions of the construct. ([Jabareen, 2009](#)) argues that when a phenomenon is linked to multiple bodies of theoretical knowledge, a robust conceptual framework should be built by integrating several theories, each contributing a distinct conceptual lens to a specific component of the phenomenon, rather than relying on one theory to explain the whole.

Accordingly, this study integrates four theories, each serving a distinct and non-overlapping function. Group Dynamics Theory ([Lewin, 1951](#)) serves as the overarching, foundational

framework that justifies treating communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity as an interdependent system of forces that collectively rather than individually shape collective organizational decision-making outcomes. Social Identity Theory ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979](#)) provides the psychological mechanism explaining specifically how and why group cohesion translates into cooperative decision-making behaviour. Groupthink Theory ([Janis, 1972](#)) provides the theoretical basis for understanding the conformity variable relationship with cohesion and leadership in shaping decision quality. Group Development Theory ([Tuckman, 1965](#)) provides a developmental lens for interpreting communication and leadership as variables that may function differently depending on a group's maturity and membership tenure. Together, these four theories map onto the four independent variables of this study without redundancy.

2.2.1 Group Dynamics Theory

This theory was originally stated by ([Kurt Lewin, 1951](#)), which shows that behavior is a function of the interaction between individuals and their social environment. In group settings, members do not act in isolation; instead their attitudes, behaviors and decisions are shaped by group structures, norms, leadership patterns, communication processes and cohesion.

When applied to small groups, Lewin argued that a group is not merely a collection of individuals, but an evolving social unit. Within this a change in status or role of one single component can alter the group status. Within this, group variables such as transparent information flow, clear communication and leadership act as environmental forces.

Positive group dynamics characterized by open communication enhance collective problem solving capabilities.

According to this theory, positive group dynamics such as open communication and mutual trust can enhance effective decision making by encouraging diverse viewpoints and collaborative problem solving.

[\(Forsyth, 2019; Levi and Askay, 2020\)](#) argue that modern group dynamics dictate whether a team's collective intelligence is fully leveraged. Positive group dynamics directly optimize decision making by encouraging diverse viewpoints.

This theory helps to emphasise the research questions of this study by providing theoretical justification to assess their effectiveness of decision-making outcomes.

Group Dynamics Theory provides justification for this study's central premise that decision-making outcomes in youth associations cannot be explained by any single internal factor in isolation, but must be examined as the product of an interdependent system of communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity operating simultaneously [\(Lewin, 1951; Forsyth, 2019\)](#).

This theory directly underlies the decision to model all four independent variables together in a single multiple regression equation rather than testing each variable's effect separately, since Lewin's framework predicts that these forces interact and jointly determine the group's field at any given moment. It also provides the theoretical basis for the conceptual framework presented in Section 2.4, in which the four variables are depicted as mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than independent, parallel predictors.

2.2.2 Social Identity Theory

Which is proposed by [\(Tajfel and Turner, 1979\)](#), explains how individuals find part of their identity from group membership. When members strongly identify they are more likely to conform to group norms and prioritize collective goals over personal preferences. This sense of

belonging between members shows they are likely to conform to group norms which can influence decision making by enhancing commitment, cooperation and shared responsibility.

This theory tries to emphasise that when young adults actively engage within community based structures, their cognitive process undergoes shift from personal self-interested view to an inclusive collective orientation through which group cohesion and norms affect decision outcomes.

Modern or current expansion of this theory indicates that high social identification creates an environment of shared responsibility ([Abrams & Rutland, 2018](#)), which directly shapes collective thought to secure mutual group consensus.

For community based civic groups, this shared identity bridges the gap between individual motivation and collective coordination. For this study it bridges the gap between individual motivation allowing to examine how sense of belonging transforms into collaborative decision making.

Social Identity Theory provides the specific psychological mechanism through which group cohesion is expected to influence decision-making. While Group Dynamics Theory establishes that cohesion matters as one force among several, Social Identity Theory explains why it matters when members psychologically identify with their association, their cognitive orientation shifts from an individual, self-interested perspective toward a collective, group oriented one, increasing their willingness to cooperate and work toward consensus ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Abrams & Rutland, 2018](#)). This theory therefore directly informs the specific objective examining group cohesion's contribution to consensus building, and provides the interpretive framework for

understanding the high cohesion scores as an indicator of strong social identification with their associations.

2.2.3 Group Think Theory

Developed by [\(Irving Janis,1972\)](#), provides understanding of dysfunctional group decision making. Groupthink occurs when the desire for consensus overrides realistic appraisal of alternatives. Highly cohesive groups, especially those with strong leaders may ignore risks and make suboptimal decisions.

Janis argued that when a group becomes excessively unified, the drive for consensus can completely override member's motivation to realistically evaluate alternative action. This theory is relevant in explaining how certain aspects of group dynamics can affect decision quality.

Recent empirical studies by [\(Baron ,2005\)](#) and [\(Priyanto and Wening,2024\)](#) demonstrate that high cohesion only incorporates into group think when highly dominant, which leads to groupthink when paired with highly aggressive structures that actively discourage open debate.

For the current study this theory serves as main input to assess the potential negative impact of conformity and leadership styles. Also, it allows to assess whether high cohesion results in healthy consensus or triggers pressured conformity.

Groupthink Theory provides the specific theoretical basis for the conformity variable and for the operational definition of groupthink as an interpretive lens. Unlike Social Identity Theory, which predicts a generally positive pathway from cohesion to cooperation, Groupthink Theory predicts a potential negative pathway: that high cohesion, when combined with dominant leadership, can suppress dissent and produce conformity driven decision-making [\(Janis, 1972; Priyanto and Wening, 2024\)](#). This theory is therefore essential precisely because without it, the study would

have no theoretical basis for examining whether the high cohesion expected in these associations represents a healthy collective orientation as the Social Identity Theory predicts or a risk factor for suppressed disagreement as the Groupthink Theory predicts. This theory directly underlies the specific objective examining conformity's role in shaping members' willingness to express opinions, and provides the framework against which the relationship between cohesion, leadership, and conformity is interpreted.

2.2.4 Group Development Theory

Explains group behaviour as a dynamic process that evolves through distinct stages such as forming, storming, norming and performing later to include adjourning. Each stage is characterized by specific interaction patterns that have implications for decision making. It provides a highlight that decision making outcomes depend not only on group characteristics but also on the group's development stage ([Tuckman, 1965](#))

As ([Bonebright,2010; Kozlowski ,2018](#)) mentioned, groups at the storming stage are known to experience poor communication and it is only when the group advances into norming and performing stage communication channels become transparent.

For this study it helps to answer when communication patterns and leadership styles only become dominant determinants of organizational success.

This theory is particularly relevant given that the majority of respondents in this study had been members of their associations for less than three years, suggesting these groups may be transitioning through or have recently passed the storming stage into norming or performing. This theory therefore directly informs the specific objective examining the effectiveness of communication patterns in guiding group discussions, and provides a framework for interpreting communication's emergence as the strongest predictor of decision-making as potentially

indicative of groups that have already established the transparent communication characteristic of the norming/performing stages ([Bonebright, 2010; Kozlowski, 2018](#)).

2.3 Empirical Framework

The decision-making literature spans multiple distinct types; for this study it is exclusively concerned with collective organizational decision making which is defined as the deliberative, group-based process through which members of a formally structured organization jointly deliberate and reach binding agreements on organizational matters ([Forsyth, 2019; Amir Khushk, 2021](#)).

While Section 2.2 established the theoretical foundations explaining why group dynamics should influence decision making, this section reviews the empirical framework that is, prior studies that have actually measured these relationships using real data, rather than theoretical reasoning alone ([Creswell and Creswell, 2018](#)). For each variable, this section reviews what prior empirical studies have found regarding its relationship with decision making, identifies where findings are consistent and notes the contextual gap this study addresses.

2.3.1 Group Dynamics and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Group dynamics refers to the influences that operate within groups in which the functional implementation of group interaction lies in the use of information about these forces to accomplish a goal.

Power structure within a group, social relationship and interactional processes are high influencers when it comes to group decision making more than an individual can prefer. Also, the patterns of interaction and psychological processes including cohesion, leadership, communication, conformity and groupthink that influence how groups evaluate alternatives and arrive at collective decisions are referred in group dynamics. Scholars argue that group dynamics

determine whether decisions are informed and participatory or rushed and biased ([Forsyth, 2019; Amir Khushk, 2021](#)).

A particularly relevant experimental study by ([Nemeth and Goncalo, 2011](#)) placed participants into four-person groups and assigned them complex problem-solving tasks. The study found that groups containing a dissenting minority member who expressed views diverging from the majority achieved 24.5% higher final decision accuracy than groups characterized by unanimous agreement, because the presence of dissent stimulated deeper exploration of alternatives and more critical evaluation of options ([Nemeth & Goncalo, 2011](#)). This finding is directly significant because it provides an empirical standard for interpreting a non-significant relationship between conformity and decision-making and directly informs this study's specific objective examining how conformity shapes members' willingness to express opinions.

Another study conducted among 62 work teams in tech firm, it was found that higher cohesion was positively related to decision making effectiveness, but indicating that cohesion without safety may lead to conformity and poorer decision ([Mathieu et al., 2015](#)).

([Amir Khushk, 2021](#)) evaluated workgroup process and the multiple regression model accounted for a high significance with $R^2 = 0.581$ demonstrating that over half of a team's decision-making effectiveness is driven by internal social system.

In a study by ([Nemeth and Goncalo, 2011](#)) where participants were formed into a group of four, results indicated that groups reached 24.5% in final decision accuracy.

2.3.2 Group Think and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Groupthink is a key theoretical concept explaining how group dynamics can negatively influence decision making quality. Groupthink is described as a condition where pressure for agreement discourages views ([Janis,1972](#)).

A study suggests that groupthink often emerges in highly cohesive groups particularly when leadership is dominant and open debate is discouraged ([Priyanto& Wening, 2024](#)). These dynamics directly affect the quality and outcomes of decisions by limiting alternatives.

Cohesiveness among group members develops from a heightened sense of belonging, as well as from collaboration and interdependence. Data from Kikuyu sub-county in Kiambu County with a sample size of 80, results indicated that there was a positive correlation between leadership styles and cohesion which was 0.621 that was statistically significant.

These groups work together so as to achieve goals and objectives hence it leads to satisfaction of individuals and the group as a whole ([Jeruto, 2015](#)).

Making choices from a variety of options or alternatives is a cognitive process known as decision making. Making decisions is a crucial part of running a business, guaranteeing its success, and solving major issues. According to the study conducted, two factors mainly dominant leaders and cohesive groups, may negatively impact the effectiveness of decision-making process demonstrating significant negative impact coefficient on decision making $p=0.008$. ([Priyanto & Wening, 2024](#)).

([Mathieu et al.,2015](#)), in a study of 62 work teams within a technology firm, found a strong positive correlation ($r = .485$) between group cohesion and decision-making effectiveness.

However, the same study cautioned that this relationship was conditional cohesion that

developed without an accompanying sense of psychological safety was associated with increased conformity and, ultimately, lower decision accuracy despite the positive correlation. This is critical because it demonstrates that a positive correlation between cohesion and decision making does not, by itself, guarantee that the underlying process is healthy.

2.3.3 Conformity and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Conformity is the tendency of individuals to align their behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs with those of a group. This phenomenon has long caught the attention of psychologists due to its interplay with decision-making and emotional regulation processes. Researchers have explored conformity, dealing with both positive and negative effects on individual and group dynamics ([Kim and Hommel 2015](#)).

At the core, conformity often leads individuals to emerge with the opinions and choices of their peers in order to gain social approval and maintain a positive self-concept. The systematic review of the 38 studies revealed that conformity is an adaptive process shaped by emotional regulation, influencing both individual and group decision-making. ([Somdatta et al, 2025](#)).

([Putri et al, 2020](#)) explains that, the more likely students are to adjust to the group conformity behaviour done by adolescents based on peer preference is a dependency caused by agreement. A sample of 136 students taken from this shows that the higher of conformity, so the lower of career decision making sense are suspected to be more likely to follow group decisions in order to gain social acceptance

Group conformity and group-think are two of the potential hazards of high group cohesiveness. Majority of the youth 92.9% showed that they had group goals. There was a strong positive correlation between entry behavior and cohesion of 0.754 that was statistically significant. ([Jeruto, 2015](#))

(Mullen and Copper,1994), correlation between group cohesion and performance outcomes was found to be significantly moderate ($r=0.250$) indicating that high magnitude coefficients are localized community rather than as a corporate team.

In a group setting participants over 80% of participants confirmed to the incorrect and 7 % conformed on all the critical trials. This shows people go to a lot of trouble to influence one another. sometimes all it takes to influence a person is to convey one's own attitude or action preference of likeminded people and develop new ways of interpreting reality from those with different perspectives ([Andrezej et al, 2000](#)).

This suggests that strong group unity does not automatically lead to groupthink. Instead, the quality of leadership, openness of communication, and freedom of participation may determine whether cohesion contributes positively or negatively to decision-making.

2.3.4 Leadership and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Leadership is another important factor shaping how decisions are made within groups. ([Sahar and Mona,2017](#)), studying 73 nurse managers at Minia University Hospitals, found that a leadership was significantly and positively correlated with decision-making ($p = .004$), while also noting that leadership behaviour influences trust and motivation more broadly.

It can be said that today young people need strong leaders who understand their dynamics and can set an example for them during periods of development and change. For this reason, various studies on leadership from the perspective of young people can be conducted in the future. A total of 197 youth camp leaders from ministry of youth and sport, a positive and moderate level of relationship was found between rational decision-making and structural leadership. It was identified statistically significant and moderate relationship $r=0.421$ proving that clear leadership behaviour enhances choice strategy in youth. ([Özsarı and Tek, T, 2024](#))

The sample consisted 73 all managerial levels of nurses, at Minia University Hospitals There were significant correlation between team administration and decision-making styles as positive correlation with directive style and was concluded that leadership styles have significant correlation and impact on decision making style, confirming statistically significant predictive impact $p=0.004$. ([Sahar, A & Mona, T. 2017](#)) explain that leadership behaviour influences not only decision outcomes but also the level of trust and motivation within organizations. Leaders who provide support, encourage discussion, and maintain fairness are more likely to strengthen cooperation among members.

A leader should also be able to anticipate issues and negative outcomes before they arise. Two department coordinators from the RNB Global University, Bikaner, were chosen as the sample size, results were decision-making and leadership styles have a close relationship in reality. Additionally, participatory leadership and consultative decision-making are the most popular leadership and decision-making. ([Bhavneet, 2024](#))

These studies collectively suggest that leadership should not only focus on directing members but also on creating an environment where individuals feel comfortable contributing their opinions during group discussions.

2.3.5 Communication and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Effective communication is fundamental for high quality decision making. Several studies have emphasized the importance of communication in improving collective decision-making within groups and organizations. ([Shehad. Q & Bashkim. B, 2025](#)). The empirical results demonstrate that communication clarity ($B = .310$, $p = .006$), perception of communication ($B = .532$, $p = .000$), and organizational barriers ($B = .218$, $p = .026$) have a statistically significant impact on

the quality of managerial decisions. Explaining communication clarity and proper information sharing significantly influence administrative decision-making processes.

Similarly, ([Lu et al., 2025](#)) found that expanding communication channels increased participation in shared decision-making by more than 30 percent. These findings suggest that communication is not limited to the transfer of information alone; rather, it creates opportunities for participation, discussion, and collaboration among group members.

Four major themes emerged ([Yadessa et al, 2022](#)) identified different decision-making models depending on issue types pointing to the critical role of communication processes in facilitating or constraining student involvement in academic and administrative decisions. Taken together, these findings suggest that communication not only facilitates information exchange but also strengthens member involvement during group discussions.

Communication patterns within groups are commonly analysed across several distinct dimensions. Openness refers to the extent to which members feel free to share information and opinions without fear of negative consequences. Clarity concerns whether information shared among members is understandable and unambiguous. Feedback refers to the degree to which members receive responses to their contributions, allowing for clarification and adjustment. Inclusiveness refers to whether communication channels and opportunities to speak are accessible to all members rather than concentrated among a few ([Forsyth, 2019](#)). These four dimensions openness, clarity, feedback, and inclusiveness form the basis of how communication is operationalized and measured in this study.

2.3.6 Group Cohesion and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Group cohesion has also been widely discussed as an important factor affecting collective action and decision making. According to ([Jeruto, 2015](#)), members who feel a stronger sense of

belonging to their groups are more likely to cooperate and support collective goals.

[\(Forsyth,2019\)](#) further explains that cohesive groups generally experience higher trust and stronger interpersonal relationships among members.

When individuals are part of a cohesive group, the desire for acceptance and harmony can lead to conformity, where members align their opinions with the perceived consensus. As a result, group members may avoid expressing their true opinions, fearing social repercussions or the disruption of group cohesion (Daniela, 2024).

Group conformity and group-think are two of the potential hazards of high group cohesiveness. Majority of the youth 92.9% showed that they had group goals. There was a strong positive correlation between entry behaviour and cohesion of 0.754 that was statistically significant [\(Jeruto, 2015\)](#)

Although cohesion strengthens cooperation within groups, researchers also caution that excessive cohesion may reduce independent thinking if members become overly concerned with maintaining harmony.

However, many studies argue that healthy cohesion can improve participation and commitment when group members still feel comfortable expressing different opinions.

Cohesion may encourage members to remain committed to group objectives while also strengthening participation in decision making activities.

Although some have examined communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity in different organizational settings, limited research has focused specifically on community based youth associations in Addis Ababa. Most existing studies were conducted in schools, workplaces, or formal institutions outside the Addis Ababa youth association context.

In addition, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the combined influence of communication, leadership, conformity, and cohesion on decision making within selected firm.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study provides a coherent, visual, and explanatory model of the relationships this study investigates. As [\(Jabareen ,2009\)](#) argues, a conceptual framework does not merely list variables but explains the logic connecting them why they are expected to relate, in what direction, and under what boundary conditions.

The framework rests on a single central argument derived from Group Dynamics Theory [\(Lewin, 1951\)](#) which imposes the quality of group decision making in community-based youth associations is not determined by any single factor but emerges from the combined and interacting influence of four group level processes which are communication, leadership, group cohesion, and conformity operating within the group's social environment.

The four independent variables communication, leadership, group cohesion, and conformity are positioned as the internal group dynamic forces that shape the dependent variable, the group decision making process. These variables do not operate independently rather they function as mutually reinforcing dimensions of the group's social environment [\(Lewin, 1951; Forsyth, 2019\)](#). By "mutually reinforcing," this study means that each variable both influences and is influenced by the others for example, open communication may strengthen cohesion, effective leadership may shape communication norms, and high cohesion may either support or suppress conformity depending on the leadership context such that their combined effect on decision making is interconnected rather than simply additive [\(Forsyth, 2019; Janis, 1972\)](#). This interconnected structure is depicted in Figure below.

Sex is incorporated as a control variable at the demographic level, statistically controlled in the analysis to account for any baseline gender differences in conformity tendencies ([Eagly, 1978](#)), without being treated as an independent variable of theoretical interest in this study.

The framework is bounded by the following eligibility criteria, which define the population to whom the conceptual relationships are expected to apply and within which this study's findings are interpretable:

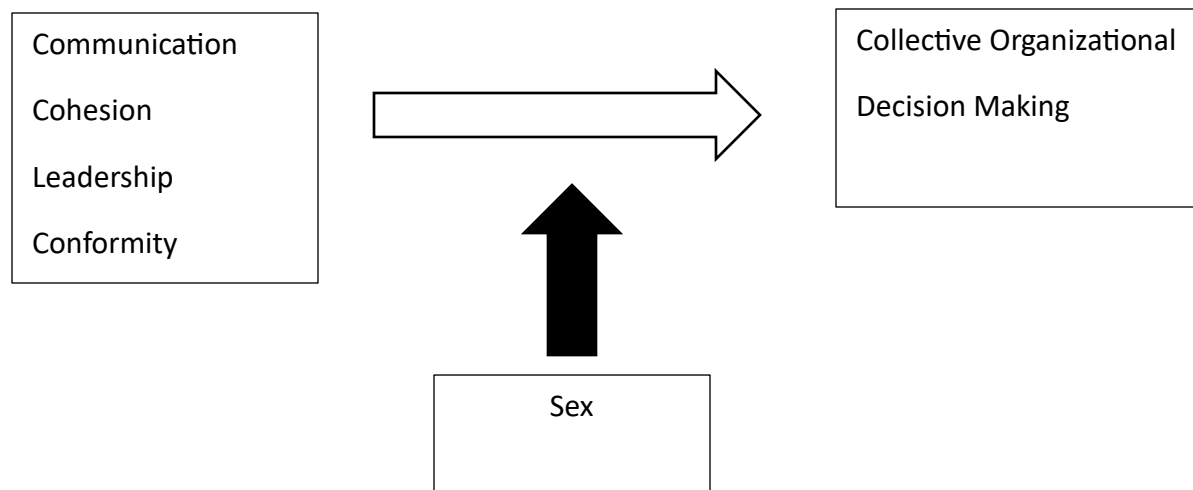
Inclusion criteria:

- Individuals aged 18 to 35 years, consistent with Ethiopia's National Youth Policy definition of the youth demographic ([MoYSC, 2004](#))
- Active membership in a community-based youth association operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau for a minimum of six months, ensuring sufficient exposure to the group's communication, leadership, and decision-making processes
- Prior participation in at least one group decision-making activity
- Both male and female members, with sex statistically controlled

Exclusion criteria:

- Individuals below 18 years of age, as they fall outside the youth policy framework and may have different psychological relationships to conformity and authority
- Members with less than six months of active membership, as insufficient exposure to the group's dynamics would render their responses unreliable indicators of established group processes

- Non-youth association members and individuals affiliated with organizations outside the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's registered structures



2.5 Summary and Implication of the Reviewed Literature

The literature reviewed in this chapter converges on several consistent findings while also revealing important areas of gaps that this study addresses. First, across diverse contexts technology teams ([Mathieu et al., 2015](#)), healthcare settings ([Sahar & Mona, 2017](#)), and youth organizations ([Özsari & Tek, 2024](#)) communication, leadership, and cohesion are consistently found to be positively associated with decision making effectiveness, showing strong support to Group Dynamics Theory ([Lewin, 1951](#)) and Social Identity Theory ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979](#)) as applied in this study.

Second, while ([Janis's,1972](#)) Groupthink Theory predicts that high cohesion produces conformity and impairs decision quality, empirical findings are mixed; ([Nemeth and Goncalo,2011](#)) found that differing ideas improves decision accuracy, while ([Mathieu et al.,2015](#)) found cohesion's benefits are conditional on psychological safety, and ([Priyanto and Wening,2024](#)) found

groupthink emerges only when cohesion combines with dominant leadership. This directly motivates this study's inclusion of conformity and groupthink as a central focus.

Third, the studies reviewed were conducted predominantly in schools, hospitals, technology firms, and youth organizations in non-Ethiopian contexts. No identified study examines the interaction of communication, leadership, conformity, and cohesion specifically within community-based youth associations operating under Ethiopia's youth policy framework in Addis Ababa.

Taken together, these findings imply that this study is well grounded in consistently supported relationships for three of the four variables (communication, leadership, cohesion). The conformity variable represents the area of greatest theoretical uncertainty and the Addis Ababa, Bole Sub-City context represents a genuine empirical gap that this study is positioned to fill, directly addressing the research problem articulated in Section 1.2.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

3.1 Research Methods

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study to examine the relationships between group dynamics variables communication, leadership, conformity, and group cohesion and collective organizational decision-making processes of community-based youth associations in Addis Ababa. Although a mixed methods design was initially considered as a means of obtaining deeper contextual understanding of participants lived experiences during group decision-making, this was not feasible within the time, resource, and logistical constraints (see Section 1.8 for a full discussion of this limitation). The quantitative design was chosen because it enables systematic, standardized measurement of the study variables across a sufficiently large sample, supports statistical generalizability of findings to the broader population of active youth association members in Bole Sub-City, and allows for the use of correlation and regression analysis to assess both the direction and magnitude of relationships between variables ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)).

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, specifically within the Bole Sub-City Administration. Bole Sub-City is located in the southeastern part of Addis Ababa, it is one of the most economically active, commercially dense, and rapidly urbanizing sub-cities in the city. The sub-city's rapid urban growth has been driven substantially by rural-to-urban migration, resulting in a high concentration of young people relative to other sub cities ([Gebrekidan & Pandya, 2025](#)). The Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau operate multiple Youth Personality

Development Centres across Bole Sub-City's woredas, from which this study's sample was drawn ([Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.](#)). Data collection was conducted specifically within the youth centres of Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 of Bole Sub-City.

3.3 Population

3.3.1 Source Population

The source population for this study encompasses all youth residing within Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city, and specifically those falling within the age bracket of 18 to 35 years as defined in this study's inclusion criteria which broadly aligns with the age range targeted by Ethiopia's National Youth Policy ([MoYSC, 2004](#)). The specific study population consists of active members of community-based youth associations operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's youth centres in Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 of Bole Sub-City. Three youth associations were selected one from each woreda providing a study population of active members.

3.3.2 Unit of Study, Sampling Unit and Unit of Analysis

Although this study examines group-level phenomena (communication, leadership, cohesion, conformity, and decision-making within youth associations), data were collected at the level of individual members who reported their perceptions of these group processes through a self-administered questionnaire. The individual, rather than the group or the association as a whole, is therefore the unit from which data were obtained.

The sampling unit is also the individual active youth association member who met the inclusion criteria aged 18–35, active membership for at least six months, and prior participation in the association's decision-making activities.

While this study discusses and interprets its findings in terms of group-level constructs, the statistical analysis operates on individual-level Likert scale scores aggregated into mean composite scores per variable. This is consistent with standard social psychology research practice in which individual members self-reported perceptions serve as the empirical basis for inferences about group level processes ([Forsyth, 2019](#)).

3.4 Sample Size Determination

The sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula (1967) for finite populations. The formula is expressed as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Assuming an estimated population of 217 active members and a 5% margin of error:

$$n = 217 / (1 + 217(0.05)^2), n = 217 / 1.54 \quad n = 141$$

The total population figure of 217 represents the combined active membership of the three youth associations in Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 at the time of data collection, as confirmed through membership records provided by the youth centre administrators of each woreda. This figure reflects the registered, active members who met the study's eligibility criteria specifically, members who had been active for at least six months and had participated in at least one decision-making activity rather than the total registered membership of all youth associations in the sub-city or across Addis Ababa as a whole. The decision to limit the population to these three woredas rather than extending it city-wide or to additional sub-cities was driven by feasibility constraints such as time, resources, and single researcher capacity and is acknowledged as a limitation of the study (Section 1.8).

3.5 Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage purposive sampling procedure was employed to select study participants, grounded in the heterogeneous nature of the study population.

Bole Sub-City was purposively selected from among Addis Ababa's ten sub-cities because it hosts a high concentration of active, organized youth associations under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau, has a notably diverse and young population driven by rural-to-urban migration, and provided the researcher with logistical access within the available study period ([Gebrekidan & Pandya, 2025](#)).

Three woredas Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 were purposively selected from among Bole Sub-City's woredas using a maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy ([Etikan et al., 2016](#)). This approach deliberately selects units that represent meaningful variation across key characteristics of the population, rather than aiming for equal probabilities of selection ([Etikan et al., 2016](#)).

Within the three selected youth associations, all active members who met the inclusion criteria were eligible to participate. A census approach was applied at this stage to ensure that every eligible member had the opportunity to participate regardless of individual background characteristics.

3.6 Instruments

Five structured, self-administered questionnaire scales were used to measure the study variables. All instruments were adapted from previously validated scales in the social psychology and organizational behaviour literature and translated into Amharic for administration. Each instrument uses a five-point Likert response scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 =

Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: a demographic section and the five scale sections described below.

3.6.1 Group Cohesion Scale

Adapted from the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) originally developed by Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley (1985). Items were adapted to fit a community youth association context, retaining the two core dimensions most relevant to this study which are task cohesion commitment to shared group goals and social cohesion interpersonal attraction, sense of belonging, and mutual support. Five items (CO1–CO5) were retained in the adapted version.

3.6.2 Leadership Scale

Adapted from established Leadership Scales in the organizational behaviour literature dimensions ([Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 2013](#)) originally developed by the Ohio State Leadership Studies (Fleishman, 1953). Each item rated 1–5; scale score computed as the mean of all five items.

3.6.3 Communication Scale

Adapted from established group communication and organizational communication scales in the social psychology and organizational behaviour literature, consistent with dimensions identified by ([Forsyth,2019](#)) developed by (P. Sullivan and D.L. Feltz,2003). Each item rated 1–5; scale score computed as the mean of all five items. Higher scores indicate members' perception of more open, clear, and inclusive communication.

3.6.4 Conformity Scale

Adapted from established social influence and group pressure scales in the social psychology literature, drawing on the conformity measurement tradition established by ([Asch,1956](#)) and further developed in normative social influence research. Each item rated 1–5; scale score

computed as the mean of all five items. Higher scores indicate greater perceived conformity pressure within the association.

3.6.5 Decision Making Scale

Adapted from established group decision-making effectiveness scales, consistent with the multi-dimensional conceptualization of decision-making processes in the organizational behaviour and social psychology literature ([Forsyth, 2019](#); [Amir Khushk, 2021](#)). Group decision-making has been measured across multiple dimensions in the literature. The instrument developed by Suzanne Scott and Reginald Bruce (1995) for this study measures seven dimensions of perceived decision-making quality within the association each item rated 1–5; scale score computed as the mean of all seven items.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted across three youth centers operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's Bole Sub-City Administration, specifically the centers in Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7. The following procedure was followed:

First ethical clearance was obtained from Addis Ababa University's College of Education and Behavioural Science, Department of Social Psychology (see Section 3.10). Following clearance, formal letters of permission were submitted to and approved by the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau and the youth centre administrators of each targeted woreda.

Second in coordination with the youth centre coordinators of each woreda, data collection sessions were scheduled to coincide with regular association meetings or activity days to maximize member availability and minimize disruption to association activities.

Thirdly at the beginning of each session, briefing was given to participants on the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymity of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Fourth self-administered questionnaires were distributed to all eligible members present at each session. The questionnaire was made available in both English and Amharic to ensure accessibility for all participants regardless of their language proficiency level.

Fifth completed questionnaires were collected immediately upon completion within the same session to ensure a high response rate and prevent questionnaire loss. No questionnaires were left with participants to complete at a later time.

Lastly all returned questionnaires were checked for completeness before data entry. Responses were entered into SPSS Version 25 for analysis. Data cleaning involved checking for missing values, outliers, and inconsistent responses before proceeding to analysis.

3.8 Pilot Study

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire instruments before their administration to the main study sample. A total of 26 respondents drawn from youth association members within Bole Sub-City who were not part of the main study sample were selected for the pilot. These respondents were chosen purposively to ensure they shared the same characteristics as the intended main study population active youth association members aged 18–35 with at least six months of membership while being excluded from the main data collection to avoid duplication of the primary dataset (Polit & Beck, 2006).

Based on the pilot study findings, all five instruments demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.724 for communication to 0.926 for leadership, all exceeding the 0.70 threshold.

Full pilot study results including the complete demographic profile of pilot respondents, frequency and histogram analysis, descriptive statistics, normality assessment, correlation matrix, regression output, and item-level Cronbach's Alpha statistics are presented in Appendix B.

3.9 Justification of Variable Dimensionality and Measurement Approach

The measurement approach adopted in this study reflects the established consensus in the group dynamics literature that both group dynamics and decision-making are multidimensional constructs that cannot be adequately captured by a single item or a single dimension ([Forsyth, 2019; Tuckman, 1965](#)). This multi-dimensional approach is theoretically justified by Group Dynamics Theory ([Lewin, 1951](#)), which views group outcomes as the product of an interdependent system of forces rather than any single factor, and is methodologically consistent with prior empirical studies on group dynamics and decision making ([Forsyth, 2019; Amir Khushk, 2021](#)). Sex was included as a control variable, recorded as a binary demographic characteristic and statistically controlled in the regression analysis to account for any baseline gender differences in conformity tendencies ([Eagly, 1978](#)).

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Prior to any data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from Addis Ababa University, College of Education and Behavioural Science, Department of Social Psychology. In operationalizing the principle of respect for persons, participation in the study was made entirely voluntary no participant was required, coerced, or incentivized to complete the questionnaire

,the estimated completion time of approximately 20 to 25 minutes, the right to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence to the participant's association membership, and the researcher's contact details for any subsequent queries; since all participants were adults aged 18 years and above consistent with the study's inclusion criteria, no parental or guardian consent was required. Providing a clear reminder that there were no right or wrong answers, and allowing participants to skip any item they were uncomfortable answering. Regarding confidentiality and anonymity, questionnaires did not request any personally identifying information respondents were identified only by sequential questionnaire numbers during data entry completed questionnaires were stored securely. Finally, this thesis was conducted and written with full commitment to academic integrity all sources are accurately attributed in APA 7th edition format, all data presented in Chapters Four and Five are genuine and unmanipulated outputs from SPSS analysis of the 141 returned questionnaires, no data were fabricated, selectively omitted, or altered in any way, and this thesis has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other institution for any other qualification.

Chapter Four

Result

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the result and discussion in which the study's findings are aligned with the research questions and structured into distinct sections. Firstly, an introduction is provided, detailing the response rate and providing background information on the respondents. Secondly, results obtained from the respondents analysed with the software SPSS (Statistical Software for Social Science) version 25 exploring influence of group dynamics Communication, Leadership, Cohesion, and Conformity on the decision-making processes.

4.2 Response Rate

This study focused on gathering data from 141 participants who were youth, participating in different activities in Addis Ababa's Bole sub-city. The study zone was confined to Woreda 1, Woreda 4 and Woreda 7 within the Bole sub-city. 141 questionnaires were distributed to targeted participants, representing a diverse demographic spectrum. All 141 respondents completed the questionnaires achieving a remarkable 100% response rate.

4.3 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the composition of the study participants, socio-demographic characteristics including sex, age, educational level, and membership duration were collected and analysed. The total sample consisted of 141 participants drawn from the youth centres of Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 within Bole Sub-City Administration, Addis Ababa. Table 4.1 presents a summary of these characteristics.

Table 1 Demographic Information

Variables	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	79	56.0
	Female	62	44.0
	Total	141	100.0
Age	18-22	120	85.1
	23-27	10	7.1
	28-32	11	7.8
	Total	141	100.0
Education	Secondary	94	66.7
	Diploma	39	27.7
	Degree	4	2.8
	Masters	4	2.8
	Total	141	100.0
Membership	Less than a year	61	43.3
	1-3 years	61	43.3
	4-6 years	17	12.1
	Greater than 6 years	2	1.4
	Total	141	100.0

In terms of sex distribution, the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 56.0% of the sample ($n = 79$), while female respondents constituted 44.0% ($n = 62$), yielding a combined total of 141 respondents. This distribution reflects the actual gender composition of the active membership within the participating youth associations rather than a researcher-imposed quota, and is broadly consistent with the male-dominated membership pattern documented in community-based youth organizations in urban Ethiopia (Gebrekidan & Pandya, 2025).

Regarding age, the sample was predominantly composed of younger youth, with 85.1% ($n = 120$) falling within the 18–22 age group, followed by 7.8% ($n = 11$) in the 28–32 age group and 7.1% ($n = 10$) in the 23–27 age group, yielding a sample mean age within the lower youth bracket ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.578$). In terms of educational background, the largest proportion of respondents held a secondary education level (66.7%, $n = 94$), followed by diploma holders (27.7%, $n = 39$), and degree and master holders (2.8% each, $n = 4$). Regarding membership duration, participants were approximately evenly distributed between those who had been members for less than one year (43.3%, $n = 61$) and those with one to three years of membership (43.3%, $n = 61$), with smaller proportions having four to six years (12.1%, $n = 17$) and greater than six years of membership (1.4%, $n = 2$).

4.4 Description

4.4.1 Level of communication

The first step in addressing the specific objectives of the present study was to examine the levels at which each group dynamics variable communication, leadership, group cohesion, and conformity was perceived by members of the selected community-based youth associations in Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7 of Bole Sub-City.

The descriptive statistics for communication yielded an overall mean of 4.41 (SD = 0.730).

According to the scale interpretation adopted in this study, a mean of 4.41 falls within the very high range (1.8-5), indicating that members of the selected youth associations perceived communication within their associations at a very high level. This suggests that the openness, clarity, feedback, and inclusiveness of information exchange among members are consistently and strongly present features of associational life in the studied woredas. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.730 further indicates that responses were closely clustered around the mean, reflecting a high degree of agreement among members regarding the quality of communication within their associations rather than divergent individual experiences.

4.4.2 Level of Leadership

The descriptive statistics for leadership yielded an overall mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.753). A mean of 4.35 falls within the very high range of the interpretation scale (4.21-5), indicating that members perceived leadership within their associations at a very high level. This reflects a broadly shared perception that leaders within the selected youth associations demonstrate participatory behaviour, provide support and encouragement, and maintain fairness and transparency in the collective organizational decision-making process. The standard deviation of 0.753 indicates relatively low variability in these perceptions, suggesting that the positive evaluation of leadership is a consistent and widely held view across the membership rather than the experience of only a subgroup of respondents.

4.4.3 Level of Cohesion

The descriptive statistics for group cohesion yielded the highest overall mean among all five study variables ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.654$). A mean of 4.46 falls within the very high range of the interpretation scale (4.21-5), indicating that members experienced group cohesion at a very high level within their associations. This finding suggests that the selected youth associations are characterized by a strong sense of unity, belonging, mutual support, and commitment to shared group goals reflecting both task cohesion and social cohesion dimensions at a very high level. The lowest standard deviation of all five variables (0.654) further confirms that cohesion is the most uniformly and consistently experienced group dynamic across the sample, with very little variation in how members perceive the degree of bonding and solidarity within their associations.

4.4.4 Level of Conformity

The descriptive statistics for conformity yielded the lowest overall mean among all five study variables ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.993$). A mean of 3.32 falls within the moderate range of the interpretation scale (2.61-3.40), indicating that members experienced conformity pressure at a moderate level within their associations. This suggests that while some degree of norm alignment and majority influence exists within the selected youth associations, it is not a dominant or consistently experienced feature of their group climate, distinguishing conformity substantially from the very high levels observed for communication, leadership, and cohesion. The highest standard deviation of all five variables (0.993) is particularly noteworthy, reflecting the greatest degree of individual variability in responses across the sample and indicating that the experience of conformity pressure is far from uniform some members perceive notable group pressure to align with majority opinions, while others report strong independence of judgment. This variability itself is a substantively important finding, suggesting that the social dynamics

surrounding opinion expression and dissent are experienced very differently by different members within the same associations.

4.4.5 Level of Decision Making

The descriptive statistics for the collective organizational decision-making process scale yielded an overall mean of 4.39 (SD = 0.649). A mean of 4.39 falls within the very high range of the interpretation scale (4.21-5), indicating that members perceived the collective organizational decision-making processes within their associations at a very high level. This reflects a broadly shared perception that the processes through which these associations reach binding group agreements are effective, fair, inclusive, timely, and satisfying covering both the procedural and substantive dimensions of collective organizational decision making. The low standard deviation of 0.649 among the lowest in the study indicates that these positive perceptions of decision-making quality are consistent and uniformly distributed across the sample, rather than being driven by a subset of highly satisfied respondents.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Dev iation
Communication	141	1.80	5.00	4.4199	.73068
Leadership	141	1.80	5.00	4.3574	.75321
Cohesion	141	1.40	5.00	4.4681	.65458
Conformity	141	1.00	5.00	3.3248	.99327
Decision	141	2.14	5.00	4.3911	.64988

One-Sample Test

	t	df	Sig.2tailed	Mean difference	Lower(95%CI of the difference)	upper(95%CI of the difference)
Communication	71.828	140	.000	4.41986	4.2982	4.5415
Leadership	68.695	140	.000	4.35745	4.2320	4.4829
Cohesion	81.053	140	.000	4.46809	4.3591	4.5771
Conformity	39.747	140	.000	3.32482	3.1594	3.4902
Decision	80.232	140	.000	4.39108	4.2829	4.4993

4.4.6 The Relationship between Communication, Leadership, Cohesion, Conformity and Decision-Making Process

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

		communication	leadership	cohesion	conformity	decision
Communication	Pearson correlation	1	.645**	.624**	-.049	.734**
Leadership	Pearson correlation	.645**	1	.669**	.191*	.671**
Cohesion	Pearson correlation	.624**	.669**	1	.058	.715**
Conformity	Pearson correlation	-.049	.191*	.058	1	.019
Decision	Pearson correlation	.734**	.671**	.715**	.019	1

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To examine the relationship between group dynamics (Communication, Leadership, Cohesion, and Conformity) and Group Decision-Making, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted.

Communication and Decision-Making ($r=0.734$, $p<0.001$): The results reveal a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between communication and decision-making. r value of 0.734 indicates that as the quality of communication improves, the effectiveness of group decision-making also significantly increases.

Cohesion and Decision-Making ($r=0.715$, $p<0.001$): Similarly, group cohesion shows a strong and positive correlation with decision-making. The r value of 0.715 suggests that the "social bond" within the association is a critical factor in ensuring members cooperate during the deliberative process.

Leadership and Decision-Making ($r=0.671$, $p<0.001$): Leadership demonstrates a moderate to strong positive correlation with decision-making. While slightly lower than communication and cohesion, the r value of 0.671 still indicates a significant relationship.

Conformity and Decision-Making ($r=0.019$, $p=0.823$): In contrast to the other variables, conformity showed a negligible and non-significant relationship with decision-making. The extremely low r value (0.019) Indicates a positive finding as it suggests that decision making effectiveness is driven by active communication and unity rather than by members simply following group pressure.

A noteworthy finding within the correlation matrix is the negligible and non-significant relationship between group cohesion and conformity ($r = .058, p > .05$), which contradicts Groupthink Theory's prediction that high cohesion generates conformity pressure ([Janis, 1972](#)). This suggests that the strong unity and belonging reported by members does not translate into pressure to suppress individual opinions. A possible explanation is that conformity is not a direct product of cohesion but rather depends on the emotional and relational climate of the group particularly trust, psychological safety, and leadership style ([Somdatta et al., 2025](#)). The significant correlation between leadership and conformity ($r = .191, p < .05$) further supports this, indicating that leadership style is a more direct antecedent of conformity pressure than cohesion alone ([Priyanto & Wening, 2024](#)). These findings suggest that cohesion and conformity function as distinct, independent constructs in these associations rather than as sequential stages in a groupthink progression.

4.4.7 Regression Analysis

The overall regression model was statistically significant $F(4, 136) = 66.745, p < .001$, confirming that the four group dynamics variables collectively and reliably predicted decision-making effectiveness. The model explained 66.3% of the total variance in decision-making scores ($R^2 = .663$), with an adjusted R^2 of .653 indicating that this explanatory power holds after accounting for the number of predictors in the model and is not inflated by overfitting. The standard error of the estimate was .383, representing the average deviation between predicted and actual decision-making scores, which is small relative to the five-point scale range and indicates precise prediction. The regression sum of squares (39.173) was approximately double the residual sum of squares (19.955), confirming that the model explained substantially more variance than it left unexplained.

Examining the standardized beta coefficients, communication emerged as the strongest and most statistically significant individual predictor of collective organizational decision making ($B = .354$, $\beta = .398$, $t = 5.615$, $p < .001$), indicating that for every one standard deviation increase in perceived communication quality, decision-making effectiveness increased by approximately 0.4 standard deviations, holding all other variables constant. Group cohesion was the second strongest predictor ($B = .337$, $\beta = .339$, $t = 4.761$, $p < .001$), followed by leadership as the third significant predictor ($B = .165$, $\beta = .191$, $t = 2.525$, $p = .013$). Conformity, by contrast, was not a statistically significant predictor in the regression model ($B = -.011$, $\beta = -.017$, $t = -.335$, $p = .738$), with a near-zero beta coefficient and a t statistic well within the non-significant range, indicating that conformity contributes no meaningful independent variance to the prediction of decision-making effectiveness when the other three variables are controlled. The negative direction of conformity's coefficient, though non-significant, is theoretically consistent with Groupthink Theory's prediction that conformity is less useful rather than beneficial to decision quality. The model constant was statistically significant with ($B = .641$, $t = 2.489$, $p = .014$).

Table 4 Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std.Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Decision	0.641	0.257		2.489	0.014
Communication	0.354	0.63	0.398	5.615	0.000
Leadership	0.165	0.65	0.191	2.525	0.013
Cohesion	0.337	0.71	0.339	4.761	0.000
Conformity	-0.011	0.34	-0.017	-0.335	0.738

Note. $R^2 = .66$, $F(4, 136) = 66.75$, $p < .001$. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; beta= standardized coefficient.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 The Influence of Communication on Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Communication emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of decision-making effectiveness across all analyses in this study, with a strong positive correlation ($r = .734$, $p < .001$) and the highest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .398$, $p < .001$) among all four independent variables. This means that for every standard deviation improvement in perceived communication quality within a youth association, the effectiveness of its decision-making process increased by nearly 0.4 standard deviations an effect size that is both statistically significant and practically meaningful. Descriptively, 70.2% of respondents strongly agreed that members listen carefully to one another, 86.5% agreed that information is clearly communicated, and 81.5% confirmed timely information sharing collectively showing associations characterized by open, inclusive, and responsive communication cultures.

These findings are consistent with [\(Shehad and Bashkim,2025\)](#), who demonstrated that communication clarity ($\beta = .310$, $p = .006$) and perception of communication ($\beta = .532$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted managerial decision quality, and with [\(Lu et al.,2025\)](#), who found that expanding communication channels increased participation in shared decision making by more than 30%. At the local level, [\(Yadessa et al.,2022\)](#) identified communication processes as the critical factor determining the extent of student involvement in institutional decision-making within Ethiopian universities, with four major communication themes emerging as decisive in either facilitating or limiting participation. (Nuri,2026), similarly found that youth engagement which is fundamentally communication dependent had both direct ($\beta = .211$) and indirect ($\beta = .631$) effects on community development outcomes, accounting for 75% of the total relationship.

The present study's findings show that open communication is the foundational mechanism through which groups convert individual knowledge into collective decisions.

From an Ethiopian cultural perspective Ethiopia is classified as a strongly collectivistic society, in which cultural norms strongly emphasize group harmony, mutual reliance, and interdependence, captured in the cultural concept of collective life ([Cultural Atlas, 2024](#)). Within such a cultural context, open communication within a group is not merely an organizational competence but a culturally expected expression of collective belonging and reciprocal obligation. When youth association members communicate openly and listen actively to one another, they are enacting deeply embedded Ethiopian cultural values of group solidarity and mutual accountability, which may explain why communication in these associations reaches the high mean scores observed ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.730$). Importantly however, the communication skill itself structured, clear, feedback-oriented, and inclusive still requires deliberate development and institutional support, since cultural collectivism alone does not guarantee the quality of communication, only its general orientation toward the group.

5.2 The Influence of Cohesion on Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Group cohesion was the second strongest predictor of decision-making effectiveness in this study ($r = .715$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .339$, $p < .001$), with the highest descriptive mean among all five variables ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.654$). Particularly notable was the finding that 80.1% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I am proud to be a member of this association" the single highest agreement rate for any individual item across the entire questionnaire and 92.2% agreed that members support one another, reflecting an exceptionally strong sense of social cohesion and collective identity within these associations.

These findings are consistent with [\(Forsyth,2019\)](#), who argues that cohesive groups experience higher trust and stronger interpersonal relationships that facilitate decision making, and with Social Identity Theory [\(Tajfel & Turner, 1979\)](#), which predicts that strong group identification shifts members' orientation from individual self-interest toward collective goal pursuit.

[\(Jeruto,2015\)](#), studying youth associations in Kenya's Kikuyu sub-county, found a strong positive correlation between entry behaviour and cohesion ($r = .754$) and reported that 92.9% of youth respondents had clearly defined group goals, a pattern closely mirrored in the present study's finding that 92.2% agreed on cooperation toward group goals. [\(Ritter et al.,2023\)](#), however, demonstrated in an experimental study that group cohesion did not significantly affect group decision-making, suggesting that cohesion's benefits may be relevant when tasks require social coordination and consensus.

From the Ethiopian cultural context, the high cohesion scores are readily interpretable through the lens of collective life and the concept of sensitivity to opinions of others a deeply rooted Ethiopian cultural norm of deference to group welfare and communal. [\(Triandis & Gelfand, 1998, as cited in Frontiers in Psychology, 2023\)](#) who stated that youth who join community associations are entering a social context that culturally predisposes them toward strong group identification and collective commitment. This cultural helps explain why cohesion scores were so uniformly high across the three woredas it is not merely an organizational achievement of these specific associations but reflects the broader cultural environment within which all Ethiopian youth organizations operate. The implication for interpretation is that the high cohesion observed may partially reflect culturally induced group identification rather than independently developed organizational bonding which is worth exploring in future qualitative research.

5.3 The Influence of Leadership on Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Leadership was a statistically significant but relatively weaker predictor of decision-making in this study ($r = .671$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .191$, $p = .013$) compared to communication and cohesion.

However, leadership received strongly positive evaluations 87.2% of respondents agreed that their leaders encouraged member participation in discussions, 64.5% agreed their leaders treated them fairly, and 81.5% confirmed that leaders considered members' opinions before making decisions.

These findings align with [\(Özsarı and Tek,2024\)](#), who found a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between leadership and rational decision-making among youth camp leaders ($r = .421$), and with [\(Bhavneet,2024\)](#), who identified leadership as the most prevalent and effective approaches in organizational decision-making contexts. [\(Sahar and Mona,2017\)](#) similarly concluded that leadership behaviour significantly predicted decision-making ($p = .004$), with supportive and fair leadership strengthening trust and cooperative behaviour among members. The lower beta coefficient for leadership in this study ($\beta = .191$) compared to communication ($\beta = .398$) and cohesion ($\beta = .339$) may reflect the fact that when communication is open and cohesion is strong, individual members are already empowered to drive the decision-making process. In other words, leadership in these associations appears to act as a background creating the space for communication and cohesion to flourish rather than as the primary driver of decisions itself, consistent with a facilitative rather than directive leadership function [\(Bhavneet, 2024\)](#).

From the Ethiopian policy and cultural context, the participatory leadership pattern found in this study is consistent with the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's institutional mandate, which explicitly positions youth centre leaders as facilitators of youth participation rather than as

authorities directing youth [activities \(Addis Ababa City Administration Youth and Sports Bureau, n.d.\)](#). Ethiopia's National Youth Policy ([MoYSC, 2004](#)) similarly emphasizes the cultivation of youth who are competent citizens with a democratic outlook, implying an expectation that youth association leadership should be democratic and participatory in character. The fact that the associations in this study appear to operationalize this policy in practice with leaders who encourage discussion and consider member opinions it represents a meaningful alignment between policy intent and organizational reality, though the moderate beta coefficient suggests this alignment is not yet strong enough to independently drive decision-making quality without the support of strong communication and cohesion.

5.4 The Relationship between Conformity and Collective Organizational Decision-Making Process

Unexpected finding of this study is the negligible and non-significant relationship between conformity and decision-making ($r = .019$, $p = .823$; $\beta = -.017$, $p = .738$), occurring alongside the highest cohesion scores in the dataset ($M = 4.46$). This finding directly contradicts the central prediction of Groupthink Theory ([Janis, 1972](#)) that high group cohesion generates conformity pressure sufficient to suppress dissent and undermine decision quality and constitutes the most important theoretical contribution of the study.

[\(Priyanto and Wening,2024\)](#) argued and demonstrated that groupthink patterns emerge specifically when dominant leadership behaviour combines with high cohesion in the absence of dominant leadership, cohesion does not produce conformity. [\(Nemeth and Goncalo,2011\)](#) showed experimentally that groups with dissenting minorities achieved 24.5% higher decision accuracy than unanimously agreeing groups, providing empirical evidence that the absence of conformity is not merely harmless but actively beneficial to decision quality a finding consistent with this study's result that conformity contributes nothing to decision-making effectiveness even

when group unity is high. ([Mathieu et al.,2015](#)), studying 62 technology work teams, found that cohesion was positively related to decision effectiveness ($r = .485$) but that cohesion without psychological safety produced conformity and lower accuracy suggesting that it is the psychological safety dimension, rather than cohesion itself, that determines whether the cohesion-conformity pathway activates.

([Somdatta et al.,2025](#)), in a systematic review of 38 studies on conformity, found that conformity functions as an adaptive process shaped by emotional regulation, and that trust and commitment within a group can actively mitigate conformity pressures by creating an environment where constructive disagreements are welcomed rather than sanctioned. This finding is directly relevant to the present study in which the high mutual support scores (92.2% agreed members support one another) and the strong sense of belonging (80.1% proud to be members) suggest that the emotional foundation of these associations may be one in which trust rather than pressure is the dominant relational norm, effectively suppressing conformity even as cohesion rises.

At the local level, ([Jekamo et al.,2024](#)), studying youth participation in Hadiya Zone, Ethiopia, found that despite high community cohesion values rooted in collectivist culture, youth engagement in decision-making was significantly mediated by confidence, competence, and connection rather than by conformity to group norms, suggesting that Ethiopian youth in organized associations may be capable of maintaining collective identity while exercising individual judgment.

The low conformity finding becomes more complex when interpreted through the lens of Ethiopian cultural values one to expect that Ethiopian youth in community associations would score higher on conformity rather than lower, since cultural norms predispose members toward group harmony and avoidance of public disagreement. The fact that conformity scores were the

lowest of all variables ($M = 3.32$) despite this cultural backdrop constitutes what this study terms the conformity paradox high collectivism at the cultural level coexisting with low reported conformity pressure at the group level.

From a policy perspective, the finding that conformity does not drive decision-making in these associations is broadly positive it suggests that the participatory values articulated in Ethiopia's National Youth Policy ([MoYSC, 2004](#)) and operationalized through the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau's mandate are, at least partially, being realized at the grassroots level. However, the conformity described above means that this conclusion cannot be accepted uncritically without further investigation into whether the low conformity scores reflect genuine psychological freedom.

Chapter Six

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the influence of group dynamics specifically communication, leadership, group cohesion, and conformity on the collective organizational decision-making processes of selected community-based youth associations operating under the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa. Data were collected from 141 active youth association members across Woreda 1, Woreda 4, and Woreda 7, achieving a 100% response rate. The sample was predominantly young (85.1% aged 18–22) and relatively new to their associations (86.6% with less than three years of membership), a demographic profile that contextualizes the findings as reflecting the dynamics of relatively recently formed groups. Sex was statistically controlled in the regression analysis as a demographic variable. The findings are summarized in relation to the four specific objectives as follows.

6.1.1 Levels of Communication, Leadership, Cohesion and Conformity

With respect to the first step of the study examining the levels of each group dynamics variable descriptive analysis revealed that group cohesion was rated highest among all variables ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.654$), followed closely by communication ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.730$), decision-making ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.649$), and leadership ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.753$). Conformity was rated substantially lower than all other variables ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.993$) and exhibited the highest variability in responses, indicating that members disagreed most among themselves about whether conformity pressure exists within their associations. These descriptive results indicate that the selected youth associations are characterized by high levels of group unity, open

communication, and participatory leadership, while social pressure to conform is not a dominant feature of their group climate.

6.1.2 The Relationship between Communication, Leadership, Cohesion and Conformity and Decision-Making process

With respect to the specific objective examining conformity and communication and the bivariate relationships among all variables Pearson correlation analysis revealed that communication ($r = .734, p < .001$), group cohesion ($r = .715, p < .001$), and leadership ($r = .671, p < .001$) all demonstrated strong, statistically significant positive relationships with decision-making effectiveness. Conformity, by contrast, showed a negligible and non-significant relationship with decision-making ($r = .019, p = .823$), indicating that social pressure to agree with the majority is unrelated to how effectively these associations make decisions. Among the independent variables themselves, the near-zero correlation between cohesion and conformity ($r = .058, p > .05$) was particularly noteworthy, directly challenging the groupthink prediction that high cohesion produces conformity pressure.

6.1.3 The Combined Influence of Communication, Leadership, Cohesion and Conformity on Decision Making Process

Multiple regression analysis confirmed that the four group dynamics variables collectively and significantly explained 66.3% of the variance in decision-making effectiveness ($R^2 = .663, F = 66.745, p < .001$). Communication was identified as the strongest independent predictor ($\beta = .398, p < .001$), followed by group cohesion ($\beta = .339, p < .001$) and leadership ($\beta = .191, p = .013$). Conformity was not a statistically significant predictor in the regression model ($\beta = -.017, p = .738$), confirming its negligible role in the collective decision-making processes of these associations. The hierarchy of predictors communication > cohesion > leadership > conformity

remained consistent across both the bivariate correlation and the multivariate regression analyses, strengthening confidence in the strength of these findings.

6.2 Conclusions

This study set out to assess the influence of group dynamics on the decision-making processes of community-based youth associations in Addis Ababa and has produced findings that are both empirically strong and theoretically significant. The following conclusions are drawn from the findings.

First, this study conclusively establishes that open, clear, and inclusive communication is the single most powerful determinant of effective decision-making in community-based youth associations in Addis Ababa ($\beta = .398, p < .001$). Beyond this finding, the conclusion that follows is that communication quality is not merely a desirable organizational attribute but a prerequisite for democratic group functioning without it, even high cohesion and supportive leadership cannot fully compensate in driving quality decisions. This has a direct policy implication in which any intervention aimed at improving youth association effectiveness must treat communication capacity-building as its primary, non-negotiable component rather than a secondary or supplementary concern.

Second, group cohesion emerged as the second strongest predictor of decision-making ($\beta = .339, p < .001$) and the highest rated construct overall ($M = 4.46$). Beyond this finding, the study concludes that the strong group identity and mutual support observed in these associations reflects a productive alignment between Ethiopia's deeply collectivistic cultural values expressed through collective life and the organizational design of youth associations under the Youth and Sports Bureau's mandate. This alignment represents an important institutional asset that policymakers and youth leaders should actively cultivate and protect rather than take for granted.

Third, leadership significantly influenced decision-making in these associations ($\beta = .191$, $p = .013$) and was predominantly participatory in character, with over 87% of members reporting that their leaders encouraged participation. Beyond this finding, the study concludes that the facilitative, consensus-oriented leadership model observed here represents a meaningful though incomplete realization of the democratic youth leadership vision articulated in Ethiopia's National Youth Policy ([MoYSC, 2004](#)). The relatively weaker beta coefficient suggests that leadership capacity in these associations has not yet developed to the point where it independently and powerfully drives decision quality, indicating that targeted leadership development programs are still needed.

Fourth, and most theoretically significant, conformity showed no meaningful relationship with decision-making ($r = .019$, $\beta = -.017$, $p = .738$) despite high group cohesion a finding that directly challenges Janis's (1972) Groupthink Theory in this specific cultural and institutional context. Beyond this finding, the study concludes that the pathway from cohesion to conformity to poor decision quality is not inevitable but is contingent on leadership and cultural context. In the absence of dominant, directive leadership and within an institutional framework that explicitly values participation and transparency highly cohesive youth groups can maintain unity without sacrificing independent critical thinking. This conclusion has important theoretical value in that it specifies a boundary condition for Groupthink Theory.

Overall, the study concludes that the internal social environment of community-based youth associations shaped by communication, cohesion, and leadership is a powerful and improving the quality and inclusiveness of youth participation in urban community governance in Addis Ababa. Realizing the full potential of this lever requires deliberate, evidence based institutional investment in communication training, leadership development, and the preservation of the

participatory, trust-based group cultures that this study found to already exist within the Bureau's youth centres.

6.3 Recommendations

For Policymakers and the Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau

The Addis Ababa Youth and Sports Bureau should institutionalize structured communication training as a mandatory component of youth centre programming specifically training covering active listening, inclusive meeting facilitation, constructive feedback, and conflict resolution through open discussion. Since communication was found to be the strongest predictor, this represents the highest return investment available to the Bureau for improving decision making quality across its youth centres. Additionally, the finding that conformity was non-significant while cohesion was strongly positive suggests that current Bureau programming which appears to foster unity without creating pressure to conform is functionally effective and should be maintained and replicated across other sub-cities.

For Youth Association Leaders

Leaders should deepen their approach by establishing regular structured meeting protocols that guarantee speaking opportunities for all members regardless of seniority, age, or gender. The finding that sex was included as a control variable due to documented gender differences in conformity tendencies ([Eagly, 1978](#)) further suggests that leaders should pay deliberate attention to creating conditions where female members in particular feel as empowered as male members to express dissenting views.

For Capacity-Building Organizations and NGOs

The finding that 66.3% of variance in decision-making is explained by internal group dynamics rather than external factors confirms that investing in the internal social competencies of youth associations produces measurable returns. NGOs and capacity-building organizations working with youth in Addis Ababa should design programs that address all three significant predictors simultaneously communication, cohesion, and leadership rather than treating them as separate training modules, since the high intercorrelations among these variables indicate they reinforce each other and are most effective when developed together. Team-building activities that strengthen social cohesion while simultaneously building communication and leadership skills would produce multiplier effects across all three predictors.

For Future Researchers

The finding that conformity was non-significant and that the cohesion-conformity correlation was near zero contrary to Groupthink Theory's prediction raises questions about whether the Western-derived conformity scale adequately captured the culturally specific forms of social pressure operating in Ethiopian youth associations. Future researchers should develop and validate culturally adapted conformity measurement tools for Ethiopian community-based contexts, potentially using participatory scale development methods that draw on local conceptualizations of group pressure, deference, and sensitivity to opinions of others.

Additionally, since this study used a cross-sectional design that cannot establish causation, future studies should employ longitudinal designs tracking the same associations over two to three years to determine whether communication causes better decision-making or whether groups that make good decisions tend to develop better communication over time.

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Appendix A

Introduction

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is designed to collect data for a study that aims to explore how group dynamics influence the decision-making process among youth associations. Your responses will help in understanding how factors such as communication, leadership, cohesion, and conformity affect group decisions.

Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. There are no right or wrong answers—please respond honestly based on your experience.

General Instructions

Please answer all questions as accurately as possible.

For Section I, write your responses in the spaces provided.

For Section II, indicate your level of agreement by placing a (1-5) in the space that best represents your opinion.

Section I

Demographic

Sex _____

1. Age _____

2. Educational level _____

3. Length of Membership (in years) _____

A. Communication

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Members freely express their opinions during meetings.					
2	Information is clearly communicated among members.					
3	Members listen carefully to one another.					
4	Important information is shared in a timely manner.					
5	Misunderstandings are resolved through open discussion.					

B. Leadership

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	The leader encourages member participation in discussions.					
2	The leader treats members fairly.					
3	The leader provides clear direction to the group.					
4	The leader supports members in achieving group goals.					
5	The leader considers members' opinions before making decisions.					

C. Cohesion

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Members feel a strong sense of belonging to this association.					
2	Members support one another					
3	I am proud to be a member of this association.					
4	Members cooperate to achieve group goals					
5	There is unity among members of this association					

D. Conformity

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Members tend to agree with the majority opinion					
2	I sometimes change my opinion to match the group.					
3	Members avoid expressing views that differ from the group					
4	Group pressure influences members' decisions					
5	Members follow group norms even when they personally disagree.					

E. Decision Making

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Our group makes decisions effectively					
2	The decisions made by our group are of high quality					
3	Members are given the opportunity to participate in decision making					
4	Decisions are made in a timely manner					
5	The decision-making process in this association is fair					
6	Decisions made by the group are successfully implemented					
7	I am satisfied with how decisions are made in this association					

መግቢያ

ውድ ተሳታፊዎች፣

ይህ መጠይቅ በወጣቶች ማህበራት ውስጥ የቡድን ተለዋዋጭነት በውሳኔ አሰጣጥ ሂደት ላይ የሚኖረውን ተፅዕኖ ለማጥናት የተዘጋጀ ነው። የእርስዎ መልሶች በተግባቦት፣ አመራር፣ አንድነት እና ተስማሚነት ያሉ የቡድን ሁኔታዎች በውሳኔ አሰጣጥ ላይ እንዴት ተፅእኖ እንደሚፈጥሩ ለመገንዘብ ይረዳሉ።

ተሳትፎዎ በፈቃደኝነት ላይ የተመሰረተ ነው፤ ሁሉም መረጃ በሚስጥር የሚጠበቅ ሲሆን ለትምህርት ዓላማ ብቻ ይውላል። እባክዎ እውነተኛ እና ትክክለኛ መልስ ይስጡ።

አጠቃላይ መመሪያ

ሁሉንም ጥያቄዎች በትክክል ይመልሱ።

በክፍል ፩ ውስጥ መልስዎን በተዘጋጀው ቦታ ይፃፉ።

በክፍል ፪ ውስጥ ከእያንዳንዱ ሀሳብ ጋር የሚስማማዎትን በ(1 እስከ 5) ደረጃ ያመልክቱ።

ክፍል ፩፡የተሳታፊው ሥነ ህዝብ ሁኔታ

የታ

እድሜ (በዓመት) -----

የትምህርት ደረጃ -----

በማህበሩ ያሉት የአባልነት ቆይታ (በዓመት) -----

በማህበሩ ያሉት ሚና/ ሀላፊነት -----

ክፍል ፪፡ የቡድን ተለዋዋጭነት እና ውሳኔ አሰጣጥ

መመሪያ

ተግባቦት፣ አመራር፣ አንድነት እና ተስማሚነት ያሉ የቡድን ተለዋዋጭነት አባላትን የሚመዘኑ ሀሳቦችን ይዟል። ተሳታፊዎች ከእያንዳንዱ ሀሳብ ጋር የሚስማማዎትን ደረጃ በ1 (በጭራሽ አልስማማም) እስከ 5 (በጣም እስማማለሁ) በሚያመለክት አምስት ደረጃ ሚዛን በተገቢው አምድ ይምረጣሉ።

ሀ. ተግባቦት

ተ. ቁ	ሀሳብ	በደንብ እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መካከለኛ	በደንብ አልስማማም	አልስማማም
1	አባላት ሀሳባቸውን በስብሰባ ወቅት በደንብ ይገልጻሉ					
2	መረጃ በአባላቱ መካከል በግልፅ ይተላለፋል					
3	አባላት እርስ በርስ ይደማመጣሉ					
4	ወሳኝ መረጃ በሰአቱ ይደርሳል					
5	አለመግባባት ወይም ቅሬታ በግልፅ ይፈታሉ					

ለ. አመራር

ተ. ቁ	ሀሳብ	በደንብ እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መካከለኛ	በደንብ አልስማማም	አልስማማም
1	አባላት ሀሳብ እንዲለዋወጡ የቡድኑ መሪ እድል ይሰጣል					
2	የቡድኑ መሪ አባላትን በእኩል ይመራል					
3	የቡድኑ መሪ ግልፅ የሆነ አቅጣጫ ይሰጣል					
4	የቡድኑ መሪ አባሉ በጋራ እንዲሰራ ያበረታታል					
5	የቡድኑ መሪ ከውሳኔ በፊት የአባሉን ሀሳብ ይወስዳል					

ሐ. አንድነት

ተ.ቁ	ሀሳብ	በደንብ እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መካከለኛ	በደንብ አልስማማም	አልስማማም
1	አባላት ከዚህ ማህበር ጋር ጠንካራ የአባልነት ስሜት አላቸው					
2	አባላት እርስ በርስ ይደጋገፋሉ					
3	የዚህ ቡድን አባል በመሆኔ እኮራለሁ					
4	አባላት በጋራ ለመስራት ይጥራሉ					
5	በአባላት መካከል የአንድነት ስሜት አለ					

መ. ተስማሚነት

ተ.ቁ	ሀሳብ	በደንብ እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መካከለኛ	በደንብ አልስማማም	አልስማማም
1	አባላት ከብዙኃኑ አስተያየት ጋር ለመስማማት ያዘኑባቸዋል					
2	የቡድኑ ሀሳብ ለመምሰል የራሴን ሀሳብ እቀይራለሁ					
3	አባላት ከቡድኑ የተለየ ሀሳብ ከመናገር ይቆጠባሉ					
4	የቡድን ጫና በአባላት ውሳኔ ላይ ተፅዕኖ ያሳድራል					
5	አባላት በግል ሀሳብ ቢሊያዩም የቡድኑን መመሪያ ይከተላሉ					

ሠ. ወሳኔ አሰጣጥ

ተ. ቁ	ሀሳብ	በደንበ እስማማለ ሁ	እስማማለ ሁ	መካከለኛ	በደንበ አልስማማ ም	አልስማማ ም
1	ቡድኖችን ወሳኔን በተገቢው ያስተላልፋል					
2	በቡድኑ የሚሰጡ ወሳኔዎች ጥራት አላቸው					
3	አባላት በወሳኔ ሂደት ላይ ለመሳተፍ ዕድል ይሰጣቸዋል					
4	ወሳኔዎች በጊዜው ይሰጣሉ					
5	በዚህ ማህበር ውስጥ የወሳኔ ሂደት ፍትሃዊ ነው					
6	ከቡድኑ የተላለፉት ወሳኔዎች በአግባቡ ይተገበራሉ					
7	በማህበሩ የወሳኔ አሰጣጥ መንገድ ደስተኛ ነኝ					

Appendix B

Pilot Data

Descriptive statistics

Table 5 Pilot Study Report

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Skewness Statistics	Std.Error	Kurtosis Statistics	Std.Error
Communication	26	3.97	.808	-.981	.448	1.481	.872
Leadership	26	4.34	.917	-1.524	.448	1.733	.872
Cohesion	26	4.08	1.003	-1.416	.448	1.434	.872
Conformity	26	3.54	1.021	.004	.448	-1.167	.872
Decision	26	4.32	.731	-1.019	.448	.691	.872

Correlation analysis

		communication	leadership	cohesion	conformity	decision
Communication	Pearson correlation	1	.718**	.843**	.543**	.647**
Leadership	Pearson correlation	.718**	1	.888**	.436*	.452*
Cohesion	Pearson correlation	.843**	.888**	1	.621**	.583**
Conformity	Pearson correlation	.543**	.436*	.621	1	.429*
Decision	Pearson correlation	.647**	.452**	.583**	.429**	1

Regression

	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std.Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Decision	2.165	.713		3.034	.006
Communication	.462	.271	.511	1.705	.102
Leadership	-.163	.294	-.205	-.555	.584
Cohesion	.219	.372	.301	.589	.562
Conformity	.039	.154	.054	.251	.804

Note. $R^2 = 0.436$ $F(4, 22) = 4.255$, $p < .001$. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; beta = standardized coefficient.