

The Role of the Subconscious Mind in Strategic Decision-Making for Achieving Organizational Mission and Vision: A Case Study of Private Universities in Nangarhar.

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Received: 9/10/2025

Revised: 13/10/2025

Accepted: 18/10/2025

Published: 6/12/v2025

Citation: stanikzai. I. U. and Noor. M. T. (20205) The role of subconscious mind in strategic Decision – making for Achieving organizational Mission and vision: a case study of private universities in nangarhar, rmsj. 1(1)

Abstract:

Strategic decision-making is essential for achieving organizational mission and vision, particularly in higher education institutions operating in dynamic and competitive environments. This study aimed to examine the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind and organizational environment on strategic decision-making and mission and vision alignment in private universities in Nangarhar, Afghanistan. A quantitative research approach is adopted used a structured questionnaire administered to 300 academic and administrative staff selected through convenience sampling. Data are analyzed using STATA through Cronbach's alpha, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, simple regression, multiple regression, and multi collinearity diagnostics. The findings revealed that the measurement instrument demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.925$). Correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships among awareness of the subconscious mind, strategic decision-making, mission and vision alignment, and organizational environment ($p < 0.001$). Regression results showed that awareness of the subconscious mind significantly influenced strategic decision-making ($B = 0.907$) and mission and vision alignment ($B = 0.758$), while organizational environment also exerted significant positive effects on strategic decision-making ($B = 0.598$) and mission and vision alignment ($B = 0.613$). Multiple regression analysis further confirmed that both predictors significantly explained mission and vision alignment, with awareness of the subconscious mind having the strongest influence. The study concludes that enhancing subconscious awareness and fostering a supportive organizational environment can strengthen strategic decision-making and improve mission and vision alignment. It recommends leadership development programs that integrate subconscious cognitive awareness, reflective thinking, collaboration, and evidence-based strategic planning to improve institutional effectiveness in private universities.

Keywords: subconscious mind, strategic decision-making, mission and vision

Introduction:

Strategic decision-making is one of the most critical functions of organizational leadership, as it determines the direction, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability of an organization. In higher education institutions, strategic decisions influence academic quality, institutional growth, resource allocation, innovation, and the successful achievement of organizational mission and vision. Traditionally, strategic decision-making has been viewed as a rational process based on systematic analysis, evidence, and logical evaluation of available alternatives. However, recent developments in cognitive psychology and organizational behavior suggest that strategic decisions are also influenced by subconscious cognitive processes, including intuition, experience, pattern recognition, emotions, and implicit knowledge.

The subconscious mind plays a significant role in processing information beyond conscious awareness. It continuously stores experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and learned behaviors that unconsciously influence judgment and decision-making. Leaders often rely on intuition and subconscious thinking when making decisions under conditions of uncertainty, time pressure, or incomplete information. Rather than replacing rational analysis, subconscious cognition complements analytical thinking by enabling leaders to recognize patterns, anticipate outcomes, and respond effectively to complex organizational challenges. Consequently, understanding the contribution of the subconscious mind has become increasingly important in the field of strategic management and organizational leadership.

Problem Statement

Strategic decision-making plays a vital role in enabling organizations to achieve their mission and vision. While most organizational decisions are assumed to be based on rational analysis, growing evidence suggests that subconscious cognitive processes also influence how leaders perceive information, evaluate alternatives, and make strategic choices. However, the role of the subconscious mind in organizational decision-making remains underexplored, particularly in higher education institutions in developing countries. In Afghanistan, private universities operate in a challenging environment characterized by limited resources, increasing competition, and changing educational demands, making effective strategic decision-making essential. Despite these challenges, little empirical evidence exists on how subconscious mental processes influence strategic decisions and their alignment with organizational mission and vision. Therefore, this study investigates the role of the subconscious mind in strategic decision-making for achieving the mission and vision of private universities in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, with the aim of providing evidence that can support more effective institutional leadership and strategic management.

Research Objectives

To examine the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind on strategic decision-making in private universities.

To assess the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind on mission and vision alignment.

To examine the influence of organizational environment on strategic decision-making.

To assess the influence of organizational environment on mission and vision alignment.

Research Questions

Does awareness of the subconscious mind influence strategic decision-making?

Does awareness of the subconscious mind influence mission and vision alignment?

Does organizational environment influence strategic decision-making?

Does organizational environment influence mission and vision alignment?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Awareness of the subconscious mind positively influences strategic decision-making.

H2: Awareness of the subconscious mind positively influences mission and vision alignment.

H3: Organizational environment positively influences strategic decision-making.

H4: Organizational environment positively influences mission and vision alignment.

Literature Review:

According to Siddiqui, A., & Gupta, C. (2025). which state that the effect of affirmations on decision-making by involving 50 participants in a 21-day affirmation program. Results showed increased rational decision-making, reduced impulsive choices, and decreased avoidant behavior. The findings suggest that subconscious reinforcement through affirmations can enhance cognitive flexibility and decision-making effectiveness. These results have practical applications in psychology, self-improvement, and cognitive training.

As reported by Sinnaiah, T., Adam, S., & Mahadi, B. (2023) a framework connecting strategic thinking, decision-making styles, and organizational performance. It highlights key strategic thinking factors and emphasizes the role of

intuitive and rational decision-making in improving organizational outcomes. The framework offers guidance for future research and strategic management practices

According to Ajmal, M., Islam, A., & Islam, Z. (2024) framework for organizational consciousness, emphasizing collective awareness, values, and purpose. It highlights the importance of aligning organizational goals with stakeholder well-being, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability. The framework suggests that conscious leadership and continuous learning contribute to long-term organizational success.

As reported by Calabretta, G., Gemser, G., & Wijnberg, N. M. (2017) the relationship between intuition and rationality in strategic decision-making. Using case studies of innovation projects, it proposes a three-step process for managing the tension between intuitive and rational thinking. The findings suggest that combining both approaches can improve decision quality and support effective organizational outcomes.

I this paper Hristov, I., Camilli, R., & Mechelli, A. (2022) says that explores how cognitive biases affect managers' decisions during performance management system implementation. Based on interviews with experienced professionals, it identifies key biases, their impact, and strategies to reduce them. The study proposes a framework to improve decision-making and organizational performance by integrating behavioral insights into management practices. According to Karami, A., & Gorzynski, R. A. (2022) which says that explores how a strong connection with nature influences strategic thinking in environmental organizations. The findings show that strategic thinking is an interconnected and value-driven process shaped by cognitive, emotional, and experiential factors. The study concludes that connection to nature plays a key role in decision-making and organizational effectiveness.

In this paper Useem, M., Cook, J. R., & Sutton, L. (2005) says that leadership decisions during the South Canyon fire disaster and identifies underpreparation, stress, and unclear authority as major causes of poor decision-making. The findings highlight the importance of leadership training and timely decision-making in high-pressure situations. The study emphasizes that effective preparation can improve strategic thinking and organizational performance.

According to Rajagopal, N. K., Qureshi, N. I., Durga, S., Ramirez Asis, E. H., Huerta Soto, R. M., Gupta, S. K., & Deepak, S. (2022) which says that explores the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in improving organizational and entrepreneurial decision-making. The findings suggest that AI enhances decision quality, efficiency, and innovation, while customer preferences, industry standards, and stakeholder involvement influence its effectiveness. The study proposes a framework for integrating AI with organizational goals to improve performance and strategic outcomes.

As reported by Acciarini, C., Brunetta, F., & Boccardelli, P. (2021) the importance of using multiple research methods to understand both conscious and unconscious processes in consumer decision-making. The findings suggest that consumers often have limited awareness of the true reasons behind their choices. Using diverse techniques, including metaphor elicitation, can provide deeper insights into beliefs, motivations, and decision-making behavior.

In this paper Shrestha, Y. R., Ben-Menahem, S. M., & Von Krogh, G. (2019) says that how AI influences organizational decision-making by comparing AI-based and human decision processes. It proposes a framework showing that combining human judgment with AI can improve decision quality, efficiency, and consistency. The study identifies several models of human-AI collaboration, including delegation, sequential, and integrated decision-making approaches.

As reported by Klein, G. (2015) intuition in decision-making from the Naturalistic Decision Making (NDM) perspective, emphasizing that intuition develops through experience and tacit knowledge. Unlike other theories that view intuition as simple heuristics or a source of bias, NDM considers it a valuable tool for effective decisions. The study suggests that expanding experience and strengthening mental models can improve intuitive decision-making.

According to Mori, N., & Munisi, G. (2009) which says that explores the role of stakeholders in the strategic decision-making process of microfinance organizations. It suggests that stakeholder representation on boards can improve decision quality and organizational competitiveness. The study highlights the importance of involving stakeholders in governance and encourages further research on their influence in strategic decisions.

In this paper Berthon, P., Pitt, L. F., & Ewing, M. T. (2001) says that how organizational culture and memory influence managers' decision-making. The findings show that culture shapes how managers perceive and approach problems, while organizational memory supports learning and decision quality. The study highlights the importance of a strong learning-oriented culture in improving strategic decision-making and organizational performance.

As reported by Yu, Y., & Pena, C. A. R. (2006) This article highlights the growing importance of intuition in modern decision-making due to rapid technological and organizational changes. It argues that intuition complements analytical methods, especially in complex and uncertain situations where quick decisions are required. The study concludes that intuition is a valuable managerial tool that can enhance strategic and business decision-making.

According to Tourish, D. (2005) which says that the importance of critical upward communication in improving organizational decision-making and strategic success. It highlights how lack of honest feedback can lead to poor

managerial decisions and misaligned strategies. The study suggests that encouraging open communication and constructive feedback can enhance organizational awareness, decision quality, and overall performance.

In this paper Akinci, C., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2019) researcher says that introduces the concept of collective intuition and examines its role in team decision-making and organizational learning. It shows that shared expert intuition, combined with deliberation, can improve decision quality and support organizational learning. The findings suggest that developing and using collective intuition can enhance knowledge sharing and decision-making effectiveness in organizations.

As reported by Richardson, L. E. (2024) which says that explores how organizational leaders make decisions during crises in uncertain and complex environments. Based on interviews with 19 leaders, it found that teamwork, communication, and decision-making constraints are key factors influencing crisis decisions. The research also highlights the impact of crisis decision-making on leaders' mental, emotional, and physical well-being, emphasizing the need for resilient and effective leadership practices.

Research Methodology:

In this study utilize a quantitative research approach to examine the role of the subconscious mind in strategic decision-making and its contribution to achieving organizational mission and vision in private universities in Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Research Data Collection:

Primary data collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 25 items, which measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire measured four constructs: awareness of the subconscious mind, strategic decision-making, mission and vision alignment, and organizational environment. Data are collected directly from respondents after obtaining their informed consent and ensuring confidentiality.

Population:

The target population of this study comprised academic and administrative staff working in private universities in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. These individuals are selected because they are directly involved in organizational decision-making and contribute to achieving institutional mission and vision.

Sample Size:

A total of 300 respondents participated in the study. The sample size is considered adequate for conducting correlation and regression analyses and for providing reliable statistical results.

Sampling Technique:

A convenience sampling technique is used in this study. Respondents selected based on their availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate. This approach facilitated efficient data collection from academic and administrative staff in private universities in Nangarhar.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data are coded and analyzed through STATA. Reliability of the measurement instrument is assessed, used Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) are computed to summarize the study variables. Pearson correlation analysis is conducted to examine the relationships among the constructs. Furthermore, simple linear regression is applied to test the four research hypotheses and evaluate the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind and organizational environment on strategic decision-making and mission and vision alignment. Statistical significance is determined at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

Finding:

Table 1. Reliability Analysis of the Study Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Awareness of the Subconscious Mind	Q1–Q5	0.809	Good reliability
Strategic Decision-Making	Q6–Q10	0.836	Good reliability
Mission and Vision Alignment	Q11–Q15	0.783	Acceptable reliability
Organizational Performance	Q16–Q20	0.458	Poor reliability
Organizational Environment	Q21–Q25	0.706	Acceptable reliability
Overall Questionnaire	Q1–Q25	0.925	Excellent reliability

The above table stated that the overall questionnaire demonstrated excellent internal consistency. Awareness, strategic decision-making, mission and vision alignment, and organizational environment had acceptable or good reliability. However, organizational performance had poor reliability and is excluded from the main composite-variable analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Awareness of the Subconscious Mind	300	3.536	0.853	Moderately high awareness
Strategic Decision-Making	300	3.680	0.889	Moderately high strategic decision-making
Mission and Vision Alignment	300	3.688	0.779	Positive mission and vision alignment
Organizational Environment	300	3.848	0.547	Supportive organizational environment

The above table shows that all study constructs have mean scores above 3.50, indicating generally positive perceptions among respondents. The organizational environment recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.848$, $SD = 0.547$), reflecting a supportive environment, followed by mission and vision alignment ($M = 3.688$, $SD = 0.779$) and strategic decision-making ($M = 3.680$, $SD = 0.889$). Awareness of the subconscious mind also demonstrated a moderately high level ($M = 3.536$, $SD = 0.853$), suggesting that respondents generally recognize the role of the subconscious mind in organizational decision-making.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Awareness of the Subconscious Mind	1.000			
2. Strategic Decision-Making	0.871***	1.000		
3. Mission and Vision Alignment	0.830***	0.859***	1.000	
4. Organizational Environment	0.333***	0.368***	0.431***	1.000

Note: $N = 300$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3 shows that all study variables are positively and significantly correlated ($p < 0.001$). Awareness of the subconscious mind has a strong positive correlation with strategic decision-making ($r = 0.871$) and mission and vision alignment ($r = 0.830$). Strategic decision-making is also strongly associated with mission and vision alignment ($r = 0.859$). In addition, the organizational environment demonstrates positive, moderate relationships with awareness ($r = 0.333$), strategic decision-making ($r = 0.368$), and mission and vision alignment ($r = 0.431$). Overall, these findings indicate that greater awareness of the subconscious mind and a more supportive organizational environment are associated with improved strategic decision-making and stronger mission and vision alignment.

Table 4. Simple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	Robust SE	t	p-value	R ²	Decision
H1	Awareness	Strategic Decision-Making	0.907	0.023	39.75	<0.001	0.758	Supported
H2	Awareness	Mission and Vision Alignment	0.758	0.036	20.81	<0.001	0.688	Supported
H3	Organizational Environment	Strategic Decision-Making	0.598	0.088	6.77	<0.001	0.136	Supported
H4	Organizational Environment	Mission and Vision Alignment	0.613	0.066	9.36	<0.001	0.185	Supported

The above table stated that all four hypotheses are supported. Awareness of the subconscious mind had the strongest positive effect on both strategic decision-making ($B = 0.907$, $R^2 = 0.758$) and mission and vision alignment ($B = 0.758$, $R^2 = 0.688$). The organizational environment also had significant positive effects on strategic decision-making ($B = 0.598$, $R^2 = 0.136$) and mission and vision alignment ($B = 0.613$, $R^2 = 0.185$), although its explanatory power is lower than that of awareness of the subconscious mind. Overall, all relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 5. Multiple Regression Predicting Mission and Vision Alignment

Predictor	B	Robust SE	t	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Awareness of the Subconscious Mind	0.705	0.039	17.86	<0.001	0.627–0.783
Organizational Environment	0.247	0.060	4.15	<0.001	0.130–0.364
Constant	0.246	0.237	1.04	0.300	–0.220–0.712

The above table stated that The multiple regression analysis showed that both awareness of the subconscious mind and the organizational environment are significant positive predictors of mission and vision alignment. Awareness of the subconscious mind had the strongest effect ($B = 0.705$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher awareness is associated with greater alignment with the organization's mission and vision. Similarly, the organizational environment is also a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.247$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that a supportive organizational environment enhances mission and vision alignment. The constant term is not statistically significant ($p = 0.300$). Overall, the findings indicate that both factors contribute significantly to improving mission and vision alignment, with awareness of the subconscious mind having the greater influence.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Awareness of the Subconscious Mind	1.12	0.889
Organizational Environment	1.12	0.889
Mean VIF	1.12	—

The above table stated that the multi collinearity diagnostics indicate that there is no evidence of multi collinearity among the independent variables included in the regression model. Both Awareness of the Subconscious Mind and Organizational Environment have a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.12, which is well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5 (or 10). Their tolerance values of 0.889 are substantially higher than the minimum acceptable level of 0.20, indicating that each predictor contributes unique information to the model. The mean VIF of 1.12 further confirms that multi collinearity is not a concern. Therefore, the regression coefficients can be interpreted with confidence, as the independent variables are not highly correlated with one another.

Table 7. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship	Decision
H1	Awareness positively influences strategic decision-making.	Supported
H2	Awareness positively influences mission and vision alignment.	Supported
H3	Organizational environment positively influences strategic decision-making.	Supported
H4	Organizational environment positively influences mission and vision alignment.	Supported

the above table summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing. All four hypotheses are supported, indicating that both awareness of the subconscious mind and the organizational environment have significant positive effects on strategic decision-making and the achievement of organizational mission and vision. These findings suggest that increasing awareness of the subconscious mind and fostering a supportive organizational environment can enhance strategic decision-making and strengthen mission and vision alignment in private universities in Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Discussion:

The study shows that awareness of the subconscious mind and a supportive organizational environment significantly influence strategic decision-making and the achievement of organizational mission and vision. The first hypothesis investigated the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind on strategic decision-making. The regression analysis demonstrated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ($B = 0.907$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that leaders with greater awareness of subconscious cognitive processes tend to make more effective strategic decisions. This finding suggests that subconscious thinking, accumulated experience, intuition, and pattern recognition play important roles in managerial decision-making, particularly when leaders face uncertainty and complex organizational challenges. The result supports the theoretical perspective that strategic decisions are influenced not only by rational analysis but also by subconscious cognitive mechanisms. The second hypothesis examined the influence of awareness of the subconscious mind on mission and vision alignment. The findings indicated that awareness significantly improved mission and vision alignment ($B = 0.758$, $p < 0.001$). Leaders who recognize and effectively utilize subconscious cognitive processes are better able to make decisions that support long-term organizational objectives. This finding demonstrates that subconscious awareness contributes to organizational effectiveness by helping leaders maintain consistency between strategic decisions and institutional goals. The third hypothesis evaluated the influence of organizational environment on strategic decision-making. The results showed that organizational environment had a significant positive effect on strategic decision-making ($B = 0.598$, $p < 0.001$). Although its explanatory power is lower

than that of subconscious awareness, the finding indicates that organizations promoting collaboration, knowledge sharing, innovation, and open communication create favorable conditions for effective strategic decision-making. A supportive organizational environment enables leaders to apply both analytical reasoning and intuitive judgment when addressing organizational issues. The fourth hypothesis investigated the influence of organizational environment on mission and vision alignment. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ($B = 0.613$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that organizations with supportive leadership practices and positive organizational cultures are more likely to achieve their mission and vision. Such environments facilitate the successful implementation of strategic decisions and improve institutional performance. The multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that awareness of the subconscious mind and organizational environment jointly explained 71.5% of the variation in mission and vision alignment. Both variables remained statistically significant predictors after controlling for each other, indicating that each contributes independently to organizational success. Among the two predictors, awareness of the subconscious mind exhibited the larger regression coefficient, highlighting its substantial contribution to mission and vision alignment within the fitted model.

organizational environment. Leaders who effectively combine analytical thinking, intuition, accumulated experience, and organizational support are better positioned to make strategic decisions that contribute to the successful achievement of institutional mission and vision.

Conclusion:

This study investigated the role of the subconscious mind in strategic decision-making for achieving the organizational mission and vision in private universities in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The findings confirmed that awareness of the subconscious mind significantly enhances strategic decision-making and positively contributes to mission and vision alignment. Organizational environment is also found to have a significant positive influence on both strategic decision-making and organizational mission and vision. The regression analyses showed that awareness of the subconscious mind is the strongest predictor of strategic decision-making and mission and vision alignment. Organizational environment also contributed significantly, although its effect is comparatively smaller. The multiple regression model further confirmed that both variables independently contribute to mission and vision alignment. The study concludes that effective strategic leadership requires a balanced integration of analytical reasoning, subconscious awareness, professional experience, and a supportive organizational environment. Universities that encourage reflective thinking, innovation, collaboration, and informed decision-making are better positioned to achieve sustainable organizational performance and accomplish their strategic objectives.

Recommendations:

Private universities should provide regular leadership development programs that increase awareness of subconscious cognitive processes and their role in strategic decision-making.

University leaders should combine analytical reasoning with intuition, accumulated experience, and reflective thinking when making strategic decisions.

University management should establish organizational environments that encourage innovation, collaboration, trust, knowledge sharing, and open communication.

Strategic planning activities should incorporate both evidence-based analysis and intuitive judgment to improve organizational mission and vision alignment.

Higher education institutions should organize continuous professional development programs that strengthen strategic leadership, decision-making skills, and organizational effectiveness.

Policymakers and higher education authorities should encourage leadership training that recognizes both rational and subconscious dimensions of strategic decision-making.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all respondents who voluntarily participated in this study. The authors also acknowledge the support of Rokhan University, Afghanistan, for facilitating this research and appreciate the valuable cooperation of all individuals who contributed to the successful completion of the study.

Funding

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or non-profit funding agency. The study is conducted using the authors' personal resources.

Conflict of Interest

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

Ethics Approval

This study is conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants. Ethical approval is obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Rokhan University, Afghanistan, prior to data collection. Participation is voluntary, and all ethical standards concerning confidentiality, anonymity, and participant rights are strictly observed.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is obtained from all participants before data collection. Respondents are informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants.

Author Contributions

Irfan Ullah Stanikzai: Supervision, Conceptualization, research design, questionnaire development, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, manuscript writing, and corresponding author.

Dr. Muhammad Tariq Noor: methodology development, critical review of the manuscript, validation of findings, and final approval of the manuscript.

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