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Fiscal Management Practices Framework of State Universities and Colleges in Region XII

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Abstract:
This study examined the correlation between financial literacy, decision-making practices, internal control systems, and their impact on fiscal management practices in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) within Region XII using a quantitative descriptive correlational approach. Using Pearson Correlation, the results demonstrated that these three factors are highly prevalent in SUCs and significantly influence their fiscal management practices. Interestingly, the study found that educational attainment does not mediate this relationship, as indicated by the Hayes Macro Process Model.
Moreover, the stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that only internal control systems and financial literacy substantially affected fiscal management practices, highlighting their critical role in shaping these practices. Based on these findings, the study recommends that SUCs prioritize financial education and decision-making training and reinforce internal control systems to enhance fiscal management.
By implementing these measures, SUCs can maintain efficient and effective fiscal management practices, thereby supporting their overall institutional success and financial sustainability within the region. The significance of financial literacy, decision-making procedures, and internal control systems in shaping the fiscal management practices of educational institutions is highlighted in this study.

Keywords: *Financial Literacy, Decision-Making, Internal Control System, Fiscal Management Practices*

1. Introduction

State colleges and universities (SUCs) contribute significantly to advancing national development through the cultivation of a proficient workforce and the promotion of innovation and growth. Nevertheless, the substantial expenses associated with providing top-tier education underscore the importance of proficient financial administration. This is vital to guarantee the continual accessibility of essential resources for both students and faculty members. Skillful handling of funds, encompassing budgeting, revenue diversification, cost management, and investment strategies, stands as a cornerstone for ensuring the enduring prosperity of institutions of higher learning.

The current state of research on fiscal management in higher education is demonstrative of schools that have effective financial management and often have a successful outcome (Lam, 2013). However, public SUCs face unique challenges because of uncertain government grants and endowment funding. This has increased the demand for careful financial management among finance personnel. Despite the government providing much training for the finance department, the offices in charge of managing funds in higher education institutions often lack financial knowledge and skills, leading to mismanagement of funds (COA, 2021).

Recent studies by Agyapong (2017) and Talikan (2021) have emphasized the importance of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems in fiscal management. However, limited research explicitly addresses fiscal management practices in public higher education institutions. Previous studies have investigated resource management practices but have not delved into an in-depth analysis of financial management (Acido & Kilongkilong, 2022; Dumrigue, 2019)

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems on the fiscal management practices of SUCs in Region XII. The main conclusions of this study will provide insights into areas where financial accountability, sustainability, and better decision making can lead to improved resource allocation, enhanced financial planning, and a more stable financial future for the institution.

Conceptual Framework

This research is dedicated to scrutinizing the fiscal governance protocols within State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines. To furnish an exhaustive evaluation, multiple dimensions are considered. Specifically, the study investigates the influence of the educational background of the respondents, as well as the mediating effects of financial literacy, decision-making paradigms, and internal control mechanisms on the overarching fiscal governance practices.

Financial literacy emerges as a pivotal variable in this scholarly inquiry. The research evaluates the financial acumen of the respondents through the lenses of budgetary planning, credit management, and savings strategies. The study posits that the respondents' decision-making competencies are intrinsically linked to their financial literacy levels. To quantify these decision-making competencies, the research employs four distinct metrics: control, thoroughness, heuristic approaches, and rationality in decision-making.

In addition, the internal control architecture within the SUCs is another focal point of this investigation. The study assesses this control framework in relation to resource distribution, financial disclosure, record-keeping fidelity, and procurement processes. The primary objective centers on fiscal governance practices, which are gauged through the prisms of integrity, transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. These four elements are deemed indispensable for the effective financial stewardship within SUCs.

The research aims to ascertain the presence and magnitude of correlations and causal relationships among financial literacy, decision-making frameworks, internal control systems, and fiscal governance practices. Furthermore, the study incorporates the lived experiences of the respondents to gain nuanced insights into their perceptions regarding the quality of financial governance.

The conceptual scaffolding of this study provides a comprehensive dissection of the financial governance mechanisms within SUCs. It probes into an array of determinants that collectively shape the fiscal management landscape.

Statement of the Problem

This study aim to elucidate the various facets of financial literacy, decision-making processes, and internal governance mechanisms, and their subsequent influence on the financial management protocols within State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region XII.

1. 1. What are the educational qualifications of the survey participants, delineated by demographic characteristics?

2. What is the extent of financial literacy of the respondents in terms of the following:
   2.1 Budgeting
   2.2 Borrowing
   2.3 Saving?
3. How pervasive are the decision-making protocols among the survey participants, particularly in the domains of:
   3.1 Thoroughness
   3.2 Control
   3.3 Heuristic
   3.4 Rationality?

4. What is the extent of the internal control system of SUCs in terms of
   4.1 Allocating resources
   4.2 Financial reporting
   4.3 Financial record-keeping
   4.4 Procurement?
5. What is the extent of fiscal management practices of SUCs in terms of
   5.1 Integrity
   5.2 Transparency
   5.3 Accountability
   5.4 Efficiency?
6. Is there a significant relationship
   6.1 Financial Literacy and Fiscal Management Practices;
   6.2 Decision-making and Fiscal Management Practices;
   6.3 Internal Control System and Fiscal Management Practices
7. Does Financial Literacy Decision-Making Practices, and Internal Control Systems significantly affect Fiscal Management Practices?
8. Does Educational Attainment Moderate Financial Literacy Decision-Making Practices, and Internal Control Systems in Fiscal Management Practices?
9. Based on the results of this study, what Fiscal Management Framework can be proposed as?

Methods and Materials:

Research Design

In this investigation, a quantitative research paradigm employing a descriptive correlational design was utilized. This methodological approach is quantitative in nature and aims to delineate and scrutinize the interrelations between various variables. Statistical evaluations were conducted on the gathered data to ascertain the presence of significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables. The overarching objective of employing this design is to offer an exhaustive characterization of the variable interconnections without exerting any manipulative influence on them. The study delved into the interplay between demographic factors, financial acumen, decision-making protocols, internal governance mechanisms, and fiscal management practices. Data were sourced from four academic institutions within the jurisdiction of Region XII.

Concomitantly, a qualitative component was integrated into the study, involving a select group of participants. This qualitative inquiry served as an interpretive lens for the quantitative data, enriching the study's findings by incorporating the perspectives and viewpoints of the participants.
Key informants were also engaged in interviews to contribute their experiential insights and knowledge concerning fiscal management practices. The interview protocol was meticulously designed to align with questions that probe into the challenges and experiences associated with fiscal management.

Selection of the Respondents

The focal population for this investigation encompassed the financial departments of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region XII, specifically including SKSU, CFCST, USM, and CSU. Utilizing a purposive sampling strategy—a non-probabilistic technique predicated on specific attributes or criteria—the study identified 62 regular employees from these departments as respondents. Data regarding the number of regular staff in the cashier, budget, accounting, and supply offices were furnished by the Human Resource Management departments of each respective institution. The data revealed staffing numbers as follows: 14 for CFCST, 10 for SKSU, 25 for USM, and 13 for CSU.

Interviews with key informants constitute a pivotal element in the realm of financial and public administration scholarship. This qualitative methodology facilitates the collection of nuanced insights and viewpoints from individuals possessing direct experience in fiscal management, thereby enriching the study's comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Within the framework of financial management, these informant interviews offer invaluable perspectives on the fiscal practices of SUCs. These dialogues explore multiple dimensions of financial management, encompassing policy development, execution, oversight, and assessment. By engaging in conversations with seasoned financial administrators, researchers are enabled to unravel the intricacies of fiscal management practices, pinpoint challenges and opportunities, and propose avenues for potential enhancement and innovation.

Research Instruments

To maintain the reliability and validity of the instruments used in this study, the validation process involved evaluating the accuracy and appropriateness of the tools for measuring the intended constructs or variables. Content validity was confirmed by confirming that the instruments represented specific areas and covered relevant content.

Three faculty members from the NDDU graduate school, one Commission on Audit Region XII representative, and the CFCST Vice President for Research Development and Extension served as validators. Their expertise, availability, and commitment were crucial, as the validation process might require multiple revisions.

The research team refined the questionnaire through a pilot study and employed statistical methods, such as Cronbach's alpha, to evaluate internal consistency. This ensured the reliability and accuracy of the results, which are crucial for a successful study. The pilot study served as a small-scale version of the complete study, helping to identify design weaknesses in instrumentation and providing proxy data for selecting a probability sample. By conducting the pilot test, the researchers refined the questionnaire to ensure that respondents in the main study encountered no difficulties answering the questions.

In this pilot study, the researchers pre-tested a questionnaire on seven respondents from the finance department of the CFCST (Contract of Service). the questionnaires used in the pilot study were not used in the final study. The researchers assigned 10% of the sample size to the pilot group.

The research tools were pilot tested, and the collected data were analyzed for efficacy and reliability. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach 's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. Respondent data were entered into a statistical software program such as IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 to calculate the Cronbach 's alpha coefficient. The researchers opted for a five-point Likert scale rating and the 'drop and pick up later method,' allowing participants to complete the questionnaire at their own pace and convenience over one week.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study gathered accurate and reliable data on financial management practices among financial department workers in four state universities and colleges in Region 12. To conduct a comprehensive study, the researcher began by sending a letter to the presidents of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), attaching the research instrument and a statement of the problem, and requesting permission to conduct the study. Simultaneously, a data privacy notice and informed consent form were sent to the data privacy focal point of each university to ensure adherence to privacy regulations. A copy of the research proposal was submitted to the ethics focal for review, who then provided clearance for the commencement of the study.

With the approval in hand, the researcher approached the HRMO to obtain a list of regular employees working in the finance department of each institution. The research instrument was then distributed to the respondents, accompanied by a clear explanation of the study's purpose and assurances regarding the confidentiality of their responses. Respondents signed the informed consent form to confirm their ethical participation in the study. A gatekeeper was identified from each university to facilitate communication and logistics, acting as the researcher 's primary contact for follow-up and collection of completed questionnaires. In addition, interviews were conducted to supplement the quantitative findings and enrich the study 's overall results.

The study employed a census sampling method involving all four state universities and colleges in Region 12 because the population was small and readily available. Purposive sampling was used, where regular cashier, accounting, budget, and supply office employees were handpicked. The sample size chosen for the study was 62 respondents.

RESULTS And DISCUSSION

Educational Attainment

Table 1 displays the demographic profiles of the respondents in terms of their educational attainment. College level/graduates constituted the majority, totaling 40, accounting for an equivalent percentage of 64.5%. Following closely were those with a Masters' level/graduate degree, numbering 15 (24.2%). Doctoral level/graduate respondents were the fewest, comprising only 7 or 11.3%. This indicates that a college degree has been completed by the majority of respondents.

Table 1 Demographic profile of respondents in terms of educational attainment.

Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentage
College-level/graduate	40	64.5
Masters level/graduate	15	24.2
Doctoral level/graduate	7	11.3
Total	62	100.0

The study's findings indicated that a majority of the participants, approximately 64.5%, possessed a college-level education or had graduated. This trend can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it's crucial to acknowledge that a college education typically imparts a strong foundation in finance-related subjects, thereby equipping individuals with the essential knowledge and skills needed to excel in finance-related roles. Furthermore, a college degree often serves as the minimum qualification for many positions within the realm of finance offices.

The relatively lower percentage of respondents with a Ph.D. (approximately 11.3%) can be explained by the fact that obtaining a Ph.D. usually entails a substantial investment of both time and resources. Moreover, a Ph.D. is not a prerequisite for numerous roles in the finance sector. Additionally, individuals with Ph.D. qualifications may opt to pursue more specialized positions in academia, research, or the financial industry, leading to their underrepresentation in the finance department of SUC.

Previous research has established a positive correlation between higher educational attainment and financial literacy (Baihaqqy et al., 2020; Bhushan & Medury, 2013; Tejero, 2019). This suggests that SUC finance departments are staffed by individuals with a robust understanding of financial literacy—a critical asset for effective fiscal management, optimal fund allocation, and the promotion of transparency and accountability.

The implications of these findings are significant for the financial governance of SUCs, particularly in the realm of human resource development and capacity building. Given that the majority of finance staff hold college degrees, SUCs should prioritize ongoing professional development and training to ensure alignment with contemporary best practices and evolving financial management paradigms.

The underrepresentation of staff with doctoral qualifications underscores the necessity of cultivating a culture of continuous learning within SUC finance departments. This could involve encouraging advanced educational pursuits and fostering collaborations with subject-matter experts from both academia and the financial industry. By investing in the professional growth of their staff, SUCs stand to augment their fiscal management efficacy, thereby contributing to the institutions' long-term financial viability and success.

Financial literacy

Table 2 presents the outcomes of the financial literacy survey conducted among respondents. With an average score of 4.25, the respondents showcased an exceptionally high level of extensive knowledge when it comes to budgeting practices, signifying their strong capability to create and manage budgets proficiently. Additionally, the survey highlights a very high level of extensive understanding regarding the concept of borrowing, as reflected in their mean score of 4.22. This clearly illustrates that the respondents have a deep familiarity with various facets of borrowing, which is indispensable for effective debt management and responsible borrowing decisions.

Moreover, the respondents displayed a highly extensive comprehension of saving, boasting an average score of 4.15. This underscores their familiarity with a wide array of saving strategies. In sum, the overall financial literacy of the respondents remained highly extensive, evident from their mean score of 4.20. This underscores their comprehensive grasp of diverse financial concepts and practices, an essential foundation for making prudent financial decisions.

Table 2 Financial literacy among respondents.

Statement	**Mean**	**Description**
Budgeting	4.25	Very High Extensive
Borrowing	4.22	Very High Extensive
Saving	4.15	Highly Extensive
Financial Literacy	4.20	Highly Extensive

The investigation into the financial literacy of the finance department at State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) unveiled a broad-based understanding of multiple financial dimensions among the staff. The findings revealed that respondents possess an in-depth knowledge of budgetary practices, suggesting their capability to allocate financial resources judiciously and maintain organizational expenditures within prescribed limits. Likewise, the staff exhibited a considerable depth of understanding in the realm of borrowing. This level of expertise equips them to make judicious decisions concerning loan acquisition and the negotiation of terms that are congruent with the institution's financial objectives.

Furthermore, the study accentuated a pronounced proficiency in savings among the finance department personnel, indicating their aptitude for instituting sound financial strategies that contribute to the organization's enduring fiscal stability. In aggregate, the level of financial literacy among the staff was found to be highly extensive, underscoring their foundational strength and skillfulness in financial matters. This positions them advantageously to excel in their respective roles and contribute to the financial prosperity of the institution.

The study substantiates the notion that high levels of financial literacy among the staff of SUC finance departments can exert a positive influence on fiscal management practices. Their comprehensive understanding of budgeting, borrowing, and saving equips them to allocate resources optimally, exercise vigilant expense monitoring, and uphold accountability. This, in turn, fosters the institution's financial stability and growth. The staff's acumen in borrowing practices enables strategic decision-making, the negotiation of advantageous terms, and effective debt management. Their grasp of savings mechanisms promotes fiscal prudence and the accumulation of financial reserves, thereby ensuring the long-term sustainability of the SUC. Overall, the high levels of financial literacy among the staff serve as a significant asset to the organization's financial health.

Decision-Making Practices

Table 3 reveals that respondents consistently demonstrate very high extensive levels of thoroughness (4.31) and rationality (4.31) in their decision-making practices. The mean values underscore that respondents place paramount importance on comprehensive analysis and logical reasoning when making decisions.

Control (4.06) and heuristic (4.12) were equally highly extensive among respondents, indicating that individuals exercise substantial self-regulation and employ cognitive shortcuts to streamline decision-making.

In summary, respondents' decision-making practices remained highly extensive (4.20), underscoring their utilization of a blend of thoroughness, control, heuristic, and rationality in their decision-making processes.

Table 3. ***Extent of the decision-making practices of the respondents.***

Variables	**Mean**	**Description**
Thoroughness	4.31	Very High Extensive
Control	4.06	Highly Extensive
Heuristic	4.12	Highly Extensive
Rationality	4.31	Very High Extensive
Decision-making practices	4.20	Highly Extensive

The findings of the current investigation reveal a uniform and elevated propensity for judicious decision-making among the participants, spanning a variety of variables. Specifically, the variable denoted as "Thoroughness" registered the highest mean score, signifying that participants exercise meticulous care in their decision-making processes. Such a characteristic is advantageous, as it facilitates a comprehensive evaluation of available alternatives, leading to more informed decisions.

Equally noteworthy is the variable "Rationality," which exhibited a mean score commensurate with that of "Thoroughness." This suggests that the participants predominantly employ logical and objective frameworks in their decision-making endeavors. Such a methodical approach mitigates the likelihood of precipitous or impulsive choices, anchoring decisions in empirical data and rational analysis.

Additionally, the variable labeled "Heuristic" also garnered a relatively elevated mean score. This indicates that participants incorporate prior experiences and intuitive judgments into their decision-making schema. Such an approach is efficacious, as it enables rapid and proficient decisions predicated on individual expertise.

Lastly, the variable termed "Control" yielded a high mean score as well, implying that participants possess the ability to adeptly manage and prioritize tasks. This resilience against external distractions or pressures enhances their capacity to maintain focus and make superior decisions.

In the context of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), the finance department's adherence to principles of rationality and thoroughness can significantly augment fiscal governance. By making data-driven and well-considered decisions, the department can bolster transparency and accountability, optimize resource distribution, and minimize financial discrepancies. Consequently, this empowers SUCs to achieve their institutional objectives and deliver educational services of exceptional quality to their student body.

Internal control system

Table 4 depicts the extent of the internal control system of the SUCs. For Allocating Resources, the statistical mean was 4.40; described as very highly extensive. In other words, the internal control system regarding resource allocation in the SUCS was very noticeable. In addition, the statistical mean for Financial Reporting is 4.31, which was described as highly extensive. In other words, the internal control system regarding financial reporting in the SUCS was very noticeable.

Moreover, financial record-keeping had a statistical mean of 4.38 was described as very highly extensive or very highly noticeable. Lastly, procurement had a mean of 4.17, which was highly extensive or highly noticeable.

The grand mean for the extent of the internal control system of SUCs was 4.32, which was interpreted as “very highly extensive.” This implies that the respondents’ immediate supervisors support a strong internal control system to achieve excellent results.

Table 4 ***Extent of the internal control system of the respondents.***

Variables	Mean	Description
Allocating Resources	4.40	Very High Extensive
Financial Reporting	4.31	Very High Extensive
Financial Record-keeping	4.38	Very High Extensive
Procurement	4.17	Highly Extensive
Internal Control System	4.31	Very High Extensive

State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) have established stringent internal control systems that are vital for adept fiscal management. These systems play a pivotal role in facilitating the effective allocation of resources, ensuring the accuracy of financial statements, maintaining meticulous financial records, and upholding transparent procurement operations. These core components collectively enable SUCs to adeptly manage their financial assets while maintaining a high level of institutional accountability.

Firstly, SUCs place a significant focus on the strategic allocation of resources. This focus is a hallmark of a finely-tuned system that directs resources toward high-priority sectors, ensuring their most efficient use. A "very high extensive" rating in resource allocation is a testament to the robust budgeting and planning measures that SUCs have implemented, thereby enhancing their fiscal management prowess.

Secondly, SUCs excel in the area of financial record-keeping, as indicated by their "very high extensive" rating. The diligent upkeep of accurate and current financial records is a foundational element of an effective internal control system. SUCs prioritize the systematic documentation and safekeeping of financial transactions, which allows for the easy retrieval and analysis of financial data. Such robust record-keeping practices also minimize the risk of errors and fraudulent activities, thereby fortifying the integrity of the financial information.

Additionally, SUCs have received high praise in the domain of financial reporting. This reflects their commitment to producing comprehensive, timely, and accurate financial statements. The financial reporting procedures within SUCs involve not only the compilation of financial statements but also their subsequent review and audit by both internal and external entities. These practices collectively enhance the reliability of financial information, thereby empowering stakeholders to make informed decisions and effectively monitor the institution's fiscal performance.

Lastly, the procurement practices within SUCs have been recognized as "highly extensive," indicating that these institutions have put in place transparent, competitive, and efficient procurement systems. These systems are carefully designed to minimize the risk of corruption and to maximize the effective use of resources. The procurement policies adopted by SUCs are in strict alignment with applicable laws and regulations, thereby fostering fair competition and achieving value for money.

In conclusion, the internal control systems employed by State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) have a significant impact on their fiscal management strategies. By prioritizing strategic resource allocation, accurate financial reporting, meticulous record-keeping, and transparent procurement processes, SUCs are able to manage their financial resources effectively and maintain high levels of accountability. The "very high extensive" and "highly extensive" ratings in these areas underscore the robustness of the internal control systems, which in turn promote fiscal responsibility and integrity. This ultimately leads to improved decision-making, enhanced financial performance, and increased stakeholder confidence in the fiscal governance of SUCs.

Fiscal Management Practices of SUCs

Table 5 summarizes the fiscal management practices of the respondents. The findings revealed that the respondents exhibited very high extensive fiscal management practices regarding integrity, transparency, and accountability, with mean scores of 4.57, 4.46, and 4.61, respectively. In addition, the respondents demonstrated a highly extensive efficiency level, as indicated by a mean score of 4.39.

Taking all of these variables into account, the overall internal control system of the respondents was categorized as very high extensive, with a mean score of 4.51. This result highlights the respondents' strong commitment to maintaining a robust and effective fiscal management system characterized by high levels of integrity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

Table 5 ***Extent of fiscal management practices of respondents.***

Variables	**Mean**	**Description**
Integrity	4.57	Very High Extensive
Transparency	4.46	Very High Extensive
Accountability	4.61	Very High Extensive
Efficiency	4.39	Highly Extensive
Internal Control System	4.51	Very High Extensive

The fiscal management practices of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) have been rigorously evaluated against four pivotal indicators: integrity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency. Each of these indicators has been substantiated by empirical research, thereby reinforcing their critical role in effective fiscal governance within these educational institutions.

Firstly, the high mean score for accountability resonates with the findings of Murdayanti & Puruwita (2017) and Khamis et al. (2019). These studies illuminate the direct correlation between elevated levels of accountability and superior financial performance. Furthermore, Yasin & Mokhtar (2022) advocate for the necessity of training programs and stakeholder engagement as mechanisms to further enhance accountability within these institutions.

Secondly, the high mean score for integrity underscores its intrinsic value in fiscal management, emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability. This is corroborated by research from the CFO Selections Team (2021) and Nafi & Kamaluddin (2019), who collectively assert that integrity serves as a cornerstone for ethical and transparent financial governance.

Thirdly, the high mean score for efficiency accentuates the critical role of cost control, revenue diversification, and resource optimization in fiscal management. These principles are elaborated upon by Kuzmina (2021) and Li & Guo (2022), who argue that efficiency is not merely a financial metric but a comprehensive strategy that encompasses various facets of fiscal governance.

Lastly, the high mean score for transparency is indicative of its indispensable role in financial management. Transparency serves as a conduit for a more nuanced understanding of financial conditions and actively contributes to the mitigation of corruption and embezzlement. This is substantiated by the research of Murdayanti & Puruwita (2017) and Xhemollari (2019), who emphasize the importance of transparency in fostering an environment of trust and accountability.

In summation, the high mean scores across these four key indicators—integrity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency—underscore their collective importance in shaping effective fiscal management practices within SUCs. These indicators not only contribute to enhanced financial performance but also cultivate stakeholder trust and contribute to the overall success of the institution. Therefore, the empirical evidence provided by these various studies serves as a robust validation of the critical role these indicators play in the fiscal governance of State Universities and Colleges.

Relationship between Financial Literacy and Fiscal Management Practices

Table 6 delineates the association between financial literacy and fiscal management, as evidenced by Pearson correlation analysis. The results indicate a statistically significant positive correlation (sig=0.000) between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient of r=0.520. This moderate positive correlation suggests that a higher level of financial literacy is concomitant with more robust fiscal management practices, while a lower level of financial literacy is associated with weaker fiscal management practices.

As the level of financial literacy escalates, individuals are increasingly inclined to employ more effective financial management techniques. Conversely, those with a paucity of financial knowledge are likely to face challenges in the proficient management of their financial resources. This empirical evidence underscores the imperative for stakeholders such as policymakers, educational institutions, and organizations to place a heightened emphasis on financial education. Enhanced financial literacy has the potential to positively influence individuals' capabilities in fiscal management.

Table 6 ***Relationship between financial literacy and fiscal management***

Variables		**Financial Literacy**	**Fiscal Management Practices**
Financial Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.520**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	62	62
Fiscal Management Practices	Pearson Correlation	.520**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	62	62

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

The research findings revealed a moderate yet significant positive association between financial literacy and fiscal management behaviors. This suggests that individuals possessing a greater degree of financial literacy are inclined to engage in more efficacious fiscal management strategies. Such a correlation underscores the pivotal role that financial literacy plays in facilitating informed decisions in areas like budgeting, saving, and borrowing. Being financially literate empowers individuals with the requisite knowledge and competencies to adeptly navigate intricate financial scenarios, thereby making choices that are in their best financial interests.

Lusardi (2019) articulates that the essence of financial literacy lies in the acquisition, comprehension, and critical evaluation of information pertinent to financial decision-making, as well as an understanding of the financial repercussions stemming from those decisions. This is especially salient in the contemporary financial milieu, characterized by an array of financial products and services, coupled with the onus on individuals to manage their financial health.

The observed moderate positive linkage between financial literacy and fiscal management behaviors in the present study accentuates the value of financial education for achieving improved financial outcomes. This observation is congruent with extant literature in the domain. For instance, research conducted by Lusardi and Mitchell (2014) corroborates that individuals who are more financially literate tend to steer clear of high-cost debt, thereby affirming the utility of financial literacy in fostering sound financial practices.

It was evident in the statement that

P1: "It is really important, sir. Because the financial aspect is the backbone of an organization, without a budget, no projects can be implemented.).

Moreover, key informants claimed that

P2: "When we have physical accomplishments, such as licensure and other achievements, our financial performance is also relatively good. Moreover with our zero-based budgeting approach, where we have no reverts… our financial situation is even better. This is especially true now that we utilize a zero- or cost-based budgeting approach".

Moreover, P3 claimed that

P3: "Here because we are an agency, we already have a known budget for specific expenses at the beginning of the year. So, every month, we check the balance... we have it every month or quarter. For example, for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), we ensure that we do not exceed the budget for that quarter.)

Additionally, the observed association between financial literacy and fiscal management behaviors suggests that initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy could have a considerable influence on an individual's financial health. This underscores the imperative for policymakers and educational authorities to prioritize the formulation and execution of financial education curricula. Such educational interventions can serve as a catalyst for elevating financial literacy levels, which, in turn, can lead to more informed financial choices and superior fiscal management strategies.

Relationship between Decision-making Practices and Fiscal Management Practices

Table 7 presents the relationship between decision-making practices and fiscal management practices. The Pearson Correlation results revealed a significant positive correlation (sig=0.002) between decision-making and fiscal management practices, with a correlation coefficient of r=0.378. This value indicates a low positive correlation between the two variables.

The low positive correlation implies strong decision-making practices result in strong fiscal management practices. Conversely, weak decision-making practices lead to weak fiscal management practices. Although the correlation was relatively low, it still demonstrated a connection between the quality of decision making and the effectiveness of fiscal management practices. This relationship highlighted the importance of developing and implementing sound decision-making strategies to maintain robust fiscal management.

Table 7 ***Relationship between decision-making and fiscal management practices.***

Variables		**Decision - making Practices**	**Fiscal Management Practices**
Fiscal Management Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	Nß	62	62
Decision-making practices	Pearson Correlation	.378**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	62	62

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

The research revealed a low yet positive correlation between decision-making capabilities and fiscal management practices. This suggests that although a relationship exists between these two variables, its strength is relatively weak, and the direct influence of one upon the other is marginal. This nuanced relationship implies that enhancements in decision-making could potentially lead to improved fiscal management practices, but the correlation is not robust enough to ensure a significant impact. This observation aligns with the findings of Tandberg and Hillman (2014), who investigated the interplay between state higher education performance funding policies and institutional outcomes, including fiscal management. Their research indicated that while such policies may incentivize the adoption of particular decision-making frameworks, their effect on fiscal management outcomes is relatively constrained.

Moreover, as Northouse (2019) elucidates, the organizational context and culture are pivotal factors in shaping both decision-making and fiscal management practices. The unique contexts and cultures within different organizations can significantly influence the manner in which these processes and practices are executed. For example, organizations with a risk-averse culture may adopt more conservative fiscal management strategies, irrespective of the quality of their decision-making processes. Consequently, it becomes imperative to account for an organization's specific contextual and cultural factors when assessing the impact of decision-making on fiscal management practices. In the context of participants ' experiences, it was mentioned that their decision-making process relies heavily on line-item budgets, demonstrating thoroughness and control. Unplanned activities require careful decision making to reallocate budgets accordingly, illustrating rationality. Participant 4 emphasized the importance of adhering to Republic Act 9184, which ensures integrity, transparency, and accountability in fiscal management practices.

Despite the elements of thoroughness, control, and rationality exhibited by the participants, the low positive correlation found in the research implies that these relationships may not be directly causal or strongly intertwined. It is possible that other factors, such as organizational culture or individual work ethics, also influence fiscal management practices' effectiveness.

In conclusion, while there is a relationship between decision making and fiscal management practices, it is not strong enough to ensure a significant impact. Other factors, such as organizational culture and individual work ethics, may also play a role in the effectiveness of fiscal management practices.

This was observed in the following responses of the informants:

P2: *"*And for the decision-making… We follow those line item budgets, but if activities were not included in our calendar of activities, they require decision-making to determine if they are necessary, just like the university hood, which was not programed However, we needed to find a way to purchase whatever was recommended by accrediting agencies... So, we realigned our budget.*"*

Another informant used a combination of thoroughness, control, and rationality. The decision-making process involves thoroughness, control, and rationality. Thoroughness is achieved by requiring detailed Project Procurement Management Plans (PPMPs) before budget allocation. Control is maintained by prioritizing the centralized DBM procurement service for common supplies, leading to cost-saving and efficiency. Rationality is demonstrated by rational criteria, such as prioritizing DBM procurement and resorting to local suppliers when necessary. The process emphasizes thoroughness, control, and rationality, with some heuristic elements.

Participant 4 claimed that

P4: *"*The budget administration requires all offices to submit their PPMPs before crafting the budget for each office. ... Therefore, the PPMP is the Project Procurement Management Plan. So each office, aside from the common supplies, because we are procuring, if available, our common supplies, the first supplier should be prioritized, which is the DBM procurement service. ... So if the supplies are not available there, it will resort to local suppliers."

Relationship between the Internal Control System and Fiscal Management Practices.

Table 8 depicts the relationship between the internal control system and fiscal management practices. Correlation revealed a high significant positive correlation (sig=0.00) between the internal control system and fiscal management practices. This correlation (r =0.701) was a high positive correlation. This positive correlation also showed that a strong internal control system would create a strong fiscal management practice.

Table 8 ***Relationship between the internal control system and fiscal management practices.***

Variables		**Internal Control System**	**Fiscal Management Practices**
Fiscal Management Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	62	62
Internal Control System	Pearson Correlation	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	62	62

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

The study's outcomes revealed a pronounced positive association between internal control systems and fiscal management practices, with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.701 and a significance level of 0.00. This suggests that having a robust internal control system is pivotal for the implementation of efficacious fiscal management practices. The interrelation between these variables underscores the salience of internal control systems in ensuring accountability and curtailing fraudulent activities, both of which are integral facets of fiscal management.

Findings from Omwono & Nduruchi (2019) and Sofyani et al. (2021) corroborate this assertion, emphasizing the indispensability of a comprehensive financial internal control system in bolstering accountability and reducing the risk of fraud. This becomes especially pertinent in fiscal management contexts, where organizations are obligated to uphold stringent standards of financial transparency and probity. A lack of a competent internal control system can pave the way for financial mismanagement, culminating in substantial financial losses, reputational setbacks, and potential legal ramifications.

Further, Johnes & Tone (2016) and Solikin et al. (2017) accentuate the instrumental role played by internal control systems in organizational management and the cultivation of robust fiscal management practices. Such systems facilitate the monitoring of organizational progress, juxtaposing it with predefined objectives, and instituting corrective measures, thereby fostering superior financial governance. Within the academic realm, internal control systems can augment both operational efficacy and pedagogical efficiencies. Demeke et al. (2020) advocate for regular internal audits and the integration of technological solutions to refine these systems, especially within tertiary education institutions, underscoring the importance of internal control systems in engendering prudent financial practices across diverse organizational settings.

The University Supply Office has instituted an internal control mechanism tailored for financial reporting and record maintenance. This framework mandates periodic inventory checks and meticulous reporting of supplies and materials disbursed, ensuring the precision of financial records and thwarting potential fraudulent activities or resource misallocation. This system involved regular inventory and reporting of supplies and materials issued, which helps ensure accurate financial records and prevents fraud or misappropriation of resources. Implementing semi-annual inventories indicate commitment to continuously improving internal controls to further strengthen the university ’s financial management. Participant 4 stated that

P4: " Sir, we perform an annual inventory count and produce monthly reports on the supplies and materials issued. This includes an inventory of consumables, semi-expendable, and expendable supplies. In addition, we conduct an annual inventory of our properties and equipment. However, we plan to conduct this semi-annually as recommended by the commission on audit. All our procedures are based on regulations and circular reports”.

Moreover, key informants actively engaged in resource allocation practices, including presenting budget use reports, seeking recommendations, and maintaining transparency by posting financial accountability reports. Consequently, regular reviews of budget use and financial accounting reports allowed the office to identify potential risks and promptly take corrective action. This proactive approach to risk management contributed to the effectiveness of the internal control system.

Participant 2 stated

P2: “During the Administrative and Academic Council (ADAC), we typically present our budget use reports to the relevant parties for their feedback and recommendations. We will then forward these reports to the board for further suggestions and comments. Our quarterly budget financial accountability reports are also publicly available on our transparency seal”.

Moreover, participant 5 emphasized the importance of strengthening internal control.

P5: “All transactions that support the financial data should be correct, starting from there. So, we should have a checklist of what we need to ensure a smooth flow of financial recording”.

State universities and colleges (SUCs) have acknowledged the importance of technology in making transactions more efficient and accurate. They understand that technology is necessary to streamline processes and improve accuracy, leading to faster and more reliable transactions.

This is supported by Participant 1, who said

P1: "We would like to implement computerization to generate trial balances and automatically encode transactions and vouchers."

And participant 3 said,

P3: "Since the system helps with efficiency because it only requires simple encoding and then directly transfers to the ledgers, it speeds up office work."

Finally, participant 5 mentioned

P 5: "It has not been implemented yet, pa. However, it is very important, especially now that we are overwhelmed and bombarded with large amounts of data. It is difficult to record data manually because it always results in delays. Imagine if an office is doing an inventory report or a cashier is making a report. Everything is done manually. Therefore, every office experiences delays regarding manual processes. Imagine if it is already digitalized, it fast, and a report will come out with just one click".

Financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems significantly affect fiscal management practices.

Table 9 illustrates how financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems significantly affect fiscal management practices. Stepwise multiple regression analysis (MRA) results revealed that only internal control system and financial literacy emerged as significant predictors, exhibiting substantial effects (sig=0.000). Collectively, these two factors accounted for 74.4% of the variance in fiscal management practices. This finding elucidated that the influence on fiscal management practices could be attributed to the presence of a robust internal control system and a high level of financial literacy.

Table 9 ***Financial literacy, decision-making practices, and Internal Control System Significantly Affect Fiscal Management Practices***

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error in the Estimate
1	.701[a]	.492	.483	.36195
2	.744[b]	.554	.539	.34190

a. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Control System

b. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Control System, Financial Literacy

The stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that the internal control system and financial literacy significantly affected fiscal management practices (sig=0.000). The combined effect of these two factors explained 74.4% of the variance in fiscal management practices. In other words, 74.4% of fiscal management practices were influenced by the internal control system and financial literacy.

The results showed that the internal control system and financial literacy are significant predictors of fiscal management practices. The strong influence of these factors indicated the importance of maintaining a robust internal control system and enhancing financial literacy within organizations to achieve better fiscal management.

This could be because a strong internal control system helps to ensure accuracy, efficiency, and compliance with rules and regulations. Furthermore, when combined with the internal control system, financial literacy empowers individuals to make informed decisions about budgeting, financial planning, and resource allocation, contributing to effective fiscal management.

A recent study presented a contrasting perspective, indicating that decision-making practices have a minor effect on fiscal management practices. In support of this notion, Hastings et al. (2013) underscored the critical role that financial knowledge and expertize play among decision makers to achieve effective financial management practices. Furthermore, Lusardi contends that individuals possessing a solid comprehension of financial management principles are better equipped to handle fiscal resources efficiently.

These well-informed individuals are more likely to make sound financial decisions, thereby contributing to overall financial stability and well-being. In other words, financial literacy serves as the foundation for effective fiscal management practices, which in turn leads to better decision making. Consequently, it becomes evident that decision-making practices and fiscal management are closely intertwined, with financial literacy being a crucial factor in optimizing both processes.

The internal control system ensured compliance with policies and procedures, safeguarded assets, prevented fraud, and improved overall financial performance. A strong internal control system contributes to effective fiscal management practices by establishing checks and balances that minimize risks and enhance the organization 's ability to achieve its objectives.

Financial literacy refers to the knowledge and understanding of financial concepts that enable individuals to make informed decisions regarding allocating and managing financial resources. A higher level of financial literacy among employees and management can lead to more prudent and effective fiscal management practices as they will be better equipped to understand, analyze, and manage financial resources. Top

As defined by Lusardi (2019), financial literacy refers to an individual 's ability to utilize their skills and resources to achieve their goals by understanding and evaluating pertinent financial information for decision making. Agyapong (2017) highlights the importance of internal control activities in the public sector for financial management, as they promote accountability, prevent fraud, and enhance overall performance. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, lack of training, and resistance to change hinder effective implementation.

Participant 2 's statement demonstrated the participant 's financial literacy and understanding of internal control in several ways. First, the participant recognizes the connection between physical accomplishments and financial performance. They understand that achieving goals such as obtaining licenses can positively impact an organization 's finances. This awareness highlights their comprehension of how various aspects of a business can influence its financial health.

Second, the participant mentioned zero-based and cost-based budgeting approaches. This indicates their familiarity with different budgeting methods and ability to adapt to new financial strategies. Zero-based budgeting involves justifying every expense from scratch, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and eliminating unnecessary costs. By emphasizing the importance of not reverting to previous budgets, participants showcase their commitment to implementing adequate internal controls and continuously improving the organization 's financial performance.

Participant 2 claimed

P2: "Yes. That is correct. Furthermore, some physical accomplishments affect financial performance. Our financial performance is also good when physical accomplishment, licensure, and others are good. Moreover, at the same time, the zero-based, those that are not reverted, and others. Especially now that we are on a zero-based or cost-based budgeting approach".

This is supported by Participant 5, who said

P5: "Most important, sir, is strengthening internal control. We should scroll through and review and examine our documents. A recording is necessary, but it starts with a pre-audit. All transactions-supporting financial data should be correct, sir, starting from there".

Participant 5 stressed the significance of strengthening internal controls to ensure accuracy in financial data and recording and the need for a pre-audit process to verify that all transactions are correct.

Moderating Effect of Educational Attainment on Financial Literacy, Decision-Making Practices, and Internal Control System on Fiscal Management Practices.

Table 10 analyzes the moderating effects of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control

systems on fiscal management using the Hayes macroprocess model. The study results revealed that Educational Attainment (Int_1) did not hold statistical significance (p=0.2337) as a moderating factor for the independent variables, including financial literacy, decision-making practices, internal control system, and the dependent variable, fiscal management practices. Therefore, it can be concluded that educational attainment did not significantly impact the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.
Overall, this finding highlights the importance of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems in determining an organization's fiscal management practices, regardless of educational attainment.

Table 10 ***Moderating effects of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems on fiscal management practices***

Model	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**P**	**LICI**
ULCI Constant 4.4862	2.3148	1.0848	2.1339	.0371	.1434
IndVaria 1.0655	.5641	.2505	2.2518	.0281	.0626
EducAttn .4296	-.9233	.6759	-1.3661	.1772	-2.2763
Int_1 .4962	.1863	.11548	11.2034	.2337	-.1236

A study employing the Hayes Macro Process was conducted to scrutinize the potential moderating effect of educational attainment (Int_1) on the interrelationships among financial literacy, decision-making practices, internal control systems, and fiscal management practices. The data revealed that the role of educational attainment in this nexus was not statistically meaningful (p=0.2337). This infers that educational attainment does not significantly modulate fiscal management practices by affecting financial literacy, decision-making practices, or the internal control system. Essentially, the educational background of individuals doesn't seem to be a pivotal determinant in their proficiency in financial management.

Furthermore, the research ascertained that educational attainment did not act as a moderator between the independent and dependent variables. This denotes that the influence of financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems on fiscal management practices remains invariant, irrespective of an individual's educational pedigree.

This observation resonates with the findings of Lusardi and Mitchell (2014), who discerned that financial literacy exerted a notable influence on financial decision-making behaviors across diverse educational strata. They specifically posited that "higher educational qualifications do not necessarily equate to enhanced financial literacy" (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). This insinuates that even those with advanced educational credentials might grapple with effective financial management if they are deficient in financial literacy.

Moreover, cognitive biases and heuristics, which are essentially mental shortcuts influenced by prior experiences and perceptions, can profoundly sway decision-making, irrespective of one's educational level (Berthet, 2022). Such biases might induce suboptimal financial decisions, even in those with extensive education. There's a propensity for highly educated individuals to overvalue their knowledge, leading them to make precarious financial decisions that might culminate in losses.

In the realm of internal control systems, Arens et al. (2017) posit that competency and hands-on experience overshadow educational qualifications in terms of their importance. Professionals seasoned in areas like procurement, resource distribution, financial record maintenance, and financial reporting are predisposed to establish robust controls and adeptly manage finances, independent of their academic qualifications.

The study's data underscored that a majority of the participants possessed a college degree but not postgraduate qualifications. This indicates that such individuals, even without advanced degrees, can still make meaningful contributions to financial management practices. This buttresses the notion that one's educational attainment isn't the exclusive metric determining proficiency in fiscal management.

Participant 5 response emphasized the importance of hiring individuals with the right skills and technical know-how, regardless of their educational background. This further reinforces the notion that financial literacy and decision-making skills, and competency are not limited to those with higher education. Participant 5 stated

P5: "Aside from that, we ensure that the people we hire are equipped with the right skills. ... This means that they have the technical know-how because it is difficult because the language is not the same".

Similarly, Participant 6 discussed the need for capacity building and training for newly hired individuals. This implies that even if someone does not have a higher level of education, they can still develop the necessary competencies for fiscal management through training and capacity-building programs. Participant 6 mentioned;

P6: "The capacity building that is needed is like this. The competency required for a person is like this. So, when we hire here, it like this. Therefore, the capacity building they need is like this. Training and education. Once they are hired, we train them for this".

It is evident in the statements of participants 3 and 4 that the use of accounting software and the expertize of people in the finance department were significant. The following were extracted from the statements:

P3: " Yes, sir. I believe having accounting software is a big help. However, in our agency, we are yet to engage in that software".

P4:: "So again, we have a pool of experts and technical working groups for this effective procurement process." Furthermore, our third-ranking official is the head of the committee, the Bids and Awards Committee. Therefore, again, we have a pool of experts and technical working groups for this effective procurement process. They are the ones who craft the specifications because, you know, we have a pool of engineers regarding engineering and infrastructure. They create the technical specifications. Regarding IT and IT equipment, we also have IT experts and faculty members. For goods under 9 under my responsibility, these are common supplies, office supplies."

In conclusion, the information from Table 4 and the participants responses collectively support the statement that financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems on fiscal management practices are not exclusively dependent on individuals ' level of education. Practical skills, technical know-how, and targeted training are crucial in equipping individuals with the competencies required for effective fiscal management.

Fiscal Management Framework

Introduction

The Fiscal Management Practices Framework for State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region 12, known as the SOCCSKSARGEN region, is crucial for maintaining financial stability and ensuring optimal resource distribution. This, in turn, enhances the quality of education for students in the provinces of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City. As this region emerges as a center for socioeconomic and educational growth, it's imperative to have robust fiscal management practices for the prosperity of its SUCs.

Guiding Principles

At the heart of effective fiscal management in SUCs lie the principles of integrity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency. These tenets are vital for fostering financial responsibility, building trust, promoting openness, preventing malfeasance, ensuring financial resilience, bolstering stakeholder confidence, and optimizing resource use. By prioritizing these principles, SUCs can make judicious decisions, maintain a robust financial standing, and excel in their primary objective: delivering top-tier education.

Framework Components Discussion

The fiscal management of SUCs hinges on three pivotal components: financial literacy, decision-making practices, and the internal control systems of their financial units. These components manifest in the practices of four SUCs, encompassing regulatory compliance (RC), continuous learning and performance evaluation (CLPE), financial management (FM), transparency, internal control and accountability (TICA), and interdepartmental collaboration and external coordination (ICEC).

Regulatory compliance ensures SUCs align with governmental directives, thereby mitigating legal and financial pitfalls and upholding their institutional reputation. Continuous learning and performance evaluation are instrumental in pinpointing growth areas and adapting to shifting demands, fostering an ethos of innovation and excellence.

Interdepartmental collaboration and external coordination are paramount for fostering unity and synergy across various departments and external stakeholders. This collaborative approach allows SUCs to pool expertise, resources, and connections to realize common objectives. Transparency is essential for engendering trust among stakeholders, ensuring they are well-informed and can actively participate in the institution's trajectory.

Robust internal control and accountability mechanisms are vital for overseeing and assessing the financial and operational endeavors of SUCs, ensuring ethical operations. These systems curtail the risks associated with fraud and mismanagement. Comprehensive financial management practices, spanning planning, budgeting, cash handling, procurement, accounting, and auditing, empower SUCs to maximize their financial assets while upholding their institutional integrity.

These intertwined components are foundational for fiscal management endeavors like planning and budgeting, which protect assets and maximize resource use. Effective cash management ensures seamless institutional operations, while adept procurement management bolsters institutional efficacy. Precise accounting and reporting practices transparently depict the financial stance, and stringent auditing processes validate the institution's financial integrity.

Incorporating these elements into SUCs' fiscal management mirrors the foundational governance principles, including integrity, accountability, efficiency, and transparency. By adhering to these tenets, SUCs can elevate their financial management, ensuring resources are judiciously allocated to further the institution's goals.

The ramifications of this holistic fiscal management approach are extensive. It results in the judicious distribution and use of resources, enhancing the educational and research quality of SUCs. Robust financial practices engender trust among stakeholders, ensuring sustained backing and expansion. Moreover, commitment to governance principles diminishes the chances of financial mismanagement, preserving the institution's esteem and public confidence. This, in turn, has profound implications for the institution's overall success, fostering financial resilience and engendering trust.

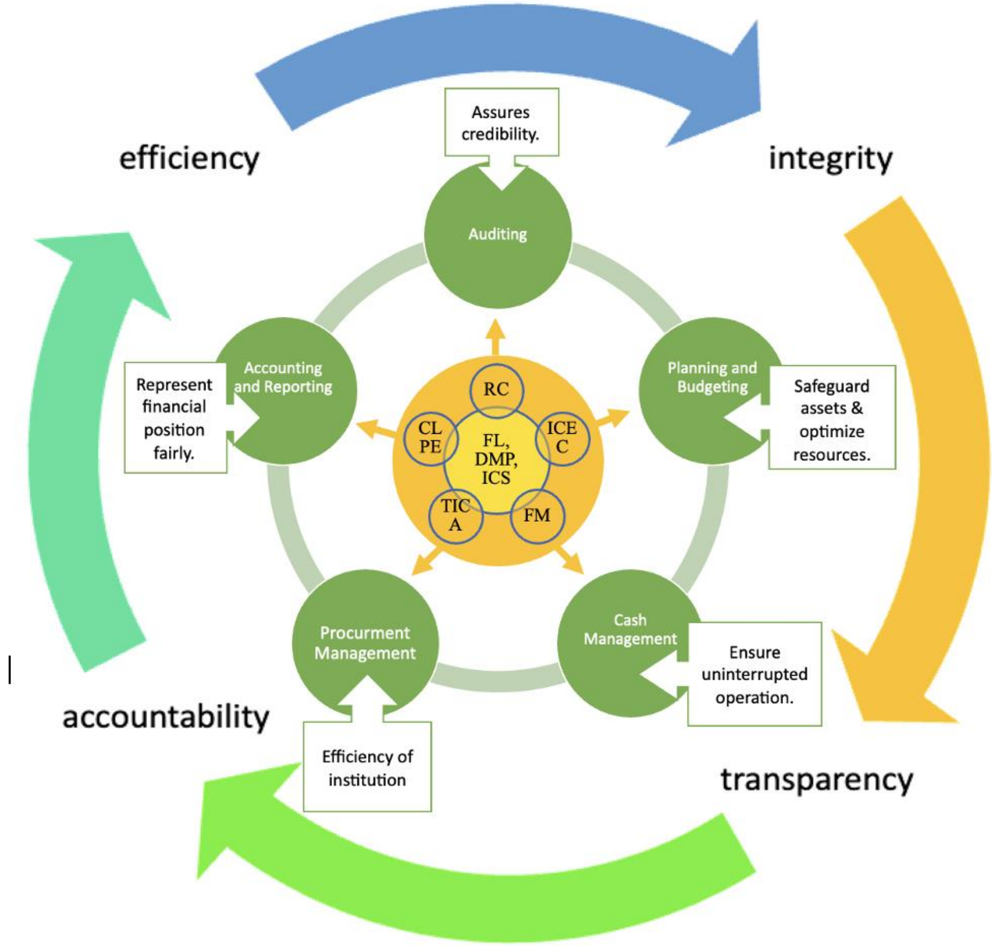

Figure 2. Fiscal Management Framework for SUCs

FL, *Financial Literacy; DMP, Decision-Making Practices; ICS, Regulatory Compliance; CLPE,Continuous Learning and Performance Evaluation; FM, Financial Management; TICA,Transparency, Internal Control and Accountability; ICEC, Interdepartmental Collaboration and External Coordination*

4. **Conclusion**

1. Demographic Profile: The study revealed that a majority of respondents, 64.5%, held college degrees, underscoring the significance of tertiary education in equipping individuals with finance-related skills. In contrast, only 11.3% had doctoral degrees, likely due to the extensive commitment required for such qualifications and their inclination towards academia or specialized sectors. This distribution highlights the varied educational backgrounds present in SUC finance departments and their implications for role suitability.
2. Financial Literacy: The study found that financial literacy was highly extensive in SUCs. This implies that SUCs must continue investing in financial education programs to further improve their personnel 's financial literacy. This could help them make informed decisions and more effectively manage financial resources.
3. Decision-making practices: The study found that decision-making practices were highly extensive in SUCs. This implies that SUCs must continue investing in decision-making training and development programs to improve the quality of decisions made. This could help SUCs achieve their goals and objectives more efficiently and effectively.
4. Internal control system: The study found that the internal control system in SUCs was very extensive. This implies that SUCs must continue strengthening their internal control systems to ensure that their financial resources are properly allocated, reported, recorded, and procured. This could help SUCs avoid fraud, waste, and abuse of resources.
5. Fiscal management practices: The study found that the fiscal management practices of SUCs were highly extensive. This implies that SUCs must maintain high fiscal management standards to ensure that their financial resources are used efficiently and effectively.
6. Relationships between variables: The study found that financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control systems were significantly related to fiscal management practices. This implies that SUCs must ensure a strong financial literacy program, effective decision-making practices, and a robust internal control system to achieve strong fiscal management practices.
7. Educational attainment: The study found that educational attainment did not moderate financial literacy, decision-making practices, and internal control system to fiscal management practices. This implies that regardless of educational attainment, SUCs must invest in training and development programs to ensure their personnel has the necessary knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of financial literacy, decision-making practices, internal control systems, and fiscal management practices in SUCs. SUCs must continue investing in programs that improve these areas to ensure that they use their financial resources efficiently and effectively.

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