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# The Impact of Strategic Flexibility on Administrative Decision-Making in International Organizations Operating in the Gaza Strip Amid War Conditions

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the role of strategic flexibility in enhancing administrative decision-making within international organizations operating in Gaza's war-affected context, focusing on four key dimensions: resource, service, information, and human resource flexibility. The research employs a descriptive-analytical approach, targeting administrative and supervisory personnel across 87 registered international organizations in Gaza, with data collected through a comprehensive survey distributed to managers, department heads, and administrative assistants. Out of 174 questionnaires, 152 valid responses were analyzed, achieving an 85.4% response rate. The study's scientific novelty lies in its empirical examination of how strategic flexibility functions under extreme uncertainty, offering a framework for humanitarian organizations to optimize decision-making in volatile environments. The author's contribution includes identifying specific flexibility mechanisms that strengthen operational resilience, particularly through resource allocation, information adaptability, and workforce dynamics, while also revealing constraints imposed by donor policies on service flexibility. Practical significance stems from the findings that strategic flexibility significantly improves administrative decision-making, with resource, information, and human resource flexibility demonstrating strong positive impacts. Key conclusions highlight the importance of institutionalizing dynamic resource systems, adopting real-time data tools, cross-training staff, and advocating for donor policy reforms to enhance crisis responsiveness. The research underscores the critical role of strategic flexibility in humanitarian operations, providing actionable insights for organizations navigating complex emergencies. By demonstrating the measurable influence of flexibility dimensions on decision-making efficacy, the study advances both theoretical and practical understanding of adaptive management in conflict zones, with implications for policy and operational strategies in high-risk settings.*

**Keywords:** conflict zones; crisis management; decision-making efficacy; humanitarian operations; organizational adaptability; organizational resilience; resource allocation; war conditions; workforce agility.

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## INTRODUCTION

In an era of escalating global crises, strategic flexibility has emerged as a pivotal determinant of organizational survival, particularly for institutions operating in high-risk environments. For international NGOs in conflict zones like the Gaza Strip where warfare, resource scarcity, and political instability create relentless operational challenges the ability to adapt swiftly is not merely

advantageous but existential. While extant literature establishes strategic flexibility as a catalyst for organizational resilience (Shimizu & Hitt, 2004), its specific mechanisms and measurable impact on administrative decision-making in active war zones remain underexplored. This gap is critical, as humanitarian operations in such contexts face unique pressures: donor-imposed constraints, sudden displacement crises, and fluctuating security conditions that demand real-time adjustments.

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to empirically examine how strategic flexibility manifested through resource allocation, information processing, service adaptability, and human capital agility enhances the quality and efficacy of administrative decision-making, and (2) to identify which dimensions of flexibility exert the strongest influence under extreme uncertainty. The research addresses a key controversy in crisis management theory: whether strategic flexibility uniformly improves decision-making or if certain dimensions (e.g., service adaptability) are constrained by external factors like donor policies. Diverging hypotheses suggest that while resource and information flexibility may directly bolster decision-making (Aldiabat, 2024), human resource flexibility could yield diminishing returns in contexts with high staff turnover or skill gaps (Bracci & Tallaki, 2021).

By analyzing data from 87 international NGOs in Gaza, this study demonstrates that strategic flexibility significantly strengthens administrative decision-making, with resource and information adaptability showing the strongest correlation. Notably, service flexibility's impact is limited by external donor restrictions, highlighting a tension between organizational adaptability and institutional dependencies. These findings advance crisis management scholarship by quantifying flexibility's role in conflict-zone operations and provide actionable insights for NGOs seeking to balance rapid response with strategic coherence. For scientists outside humanitarian research, this work offers a transferable framework for understanding adaptability in volatile systems, from public health emergencies to climate-related disasters.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The dynamic and volatile environment of war-torn regions, such as the Gaza Strip, imposes unprecedented challenges on international organizations. In such complex conditions, the ability of these organizations to make effective administrative decisions is heavily influenced by their strategic flexibility. Strategic flexibility refers to the organization's capability to respond swiftly and effectively to environmental changes by reallocating and reconfiguring resources (Sanchez, 1995; Shimizu & Hitt, 2004). In war conditions, where uncertainty, resource scarcity, and security risks prevail, strategic flexibility becomes a critical determinant of organizational resilience and effectiveness.

Strategic flexibility, as conceptualized in organizational literature (Sanchez, 1995; Shimizu & Hitt, 2004), operates through four interdependent dimensions, each contributing uniquely to administrative decision-making. Empirical studies demonstrate that these dimensions collectively enhance organizational responsiveness, particularly in volatile environments such as conflict zones (Xiu et al., 2017; Annarelli & Nonino, 2016). Their distinct yet synergistic roles enable institutions to navigate uncertainty, optimize resource utilization, and maintain operational continuity amid disruption.

Resource flexibility refers to the organization's ability to adapt its resources to changing demands and environmental conditions. Versatile resources can be redeployed across various functions without significant loss of value or productivity (Sanchez, 1995). In the context of international organizations operating in conflict zones like Gaza, resource flexibility allows for the swift reallocation of financial,

material, and logistical assets in response to shifting needs, thus enhancing the organization's ability to make timely and appropriate administrative decisions.

Service flexibility entails the organization's ability to offer a diverse range of services and to adjust these services rapidly in response to the evolving needs of beneficiaries (Narasimhan et al., 2006). In war-torn areas, where the needs of the population can change rapidly due to fluctuating levels of violence or displacement, organizations must adapt their service delivery mechanisms accordingly. High service flexibility ensures that administrative decisions are informed by real-time needs assessments, leading to more responsive and relevant interventions.

Information flexibility is the capacity to gather, process, and disseminate accurate and timely information to support decision-making (Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011). In the Gaza Strip's volatile environment, the rapid collection and analysis of information about security risks, humanitarian needs, and stakeholder dynamics are critical. Information flexibility enables decision-makers to base their administrative actions on reliable, current data, thereby reducing uncertainty and improving strategic outcomes (Oluyemi, 2021).

Human resource flexibility refers to the diversity of employee skills and the ability of the workforce to adapt to changing roles and challenges (Wright & Snell, 1998). In conflict settings, organizations benefit from having staff who can perform multiple functions, work under pressure, and adapt to evolving organizational and field realities. Flexible human resources enhance the decision-making process by ensuring that administrative plans are supported by personnel capable of executing varied and unexpected tasks (Xiu et al., 2017).

Administrative decision-making in international organizations during war conditions must contend with high levels of uncertainty, risk, and complexity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Effective administrative decision-making is critical because it directly affects an organization's ability to allocate resources, prioritize interventions, ensure staff and beneficiary safety, and maintain operational continuity in volatile environments. Typically, the administrative decision-making process involves several stages, including problem identification, information gathering, alternative evaluation, choice selection, and implementation followed by assessment (Simon, 1977). Each of these stages becomes significantly more challenging under war conditions, where information may be incomplete or rapidly changing, resources may be constrained, and the political and security landscape may shift unpredictably.

Strategic flexibility provides a foundational capacity that enables organizations not only to withstand external shocks but also to make proactive, informed, and adaptable administrative decisions throughout these stages (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016). For example, resource flexibility aids in reallocating limited supplies to urgent areas, information flexibility ensures that decision-makers are basing their choices on the most current and reliable data, and human resource flexibility enables staff to rapidly adapt roles and responsibilities as operational needs evolve (Sushil, 2014; Xiu et al., 2017). Service flexibility, meanwhile, ensures that the organization's interventions remain aligned with the dynamic needs of the affected population (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016). Organizations with higher levels of strategic flexibility across these four dimensions are better positioned to assess emerging threats, develop responsive strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and maintain the continuity and relevance of their interventions even amid the severe disruptions of armed conflict (Bhattacharya et al., 2005; Xiu et al., 2017). However, challenges such as communication breakdowns, logistical

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constraints, security risks, and political interference often complicate each stage of the decision-making process, making strategic flexibility not merely advantageous, but essential for survival and effectiveness (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016).

In the context of the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, international organizations play a crucial role in addressing humanitarian crises, providing emergency aid, supporting healthcare services, and advocating for the protection of civilians (ICRC, 2023; UNRWA, 2023). Organizations such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been operating under extreme conditions marked by constant security threats, disrupted supply chains, and limited access to affected populations (MSF, 2023; WHO, 2023). Despite these challenges, these organizations strive to maintain operations by adapting their strategies, reallocating resources, and developing innovative service delivery models (ReliefWeb, 2024). Their ability to make timely and effective administrative decisions amid such instability is vital to ensuring that aid reaches those in need. Consequently, understanding how strategic flexibility influences administrative decision-making becomes essential for enhancing the operational effectiveness of these organizations during the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

The study population comprises all employees holding administrative and supervisory positions (e.g., directors, department heads, administrative assistants) in international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, totaling 87 institutions (Ministry of Interior, 2023). Given the limited study population size, a comprehensive census survey was conducted, distributing two questionnaires per institution, resulting in 174 questionnaires administered. Of these, 152 were returned, yielding a response rate of 85.4% a statistically robust sample for generalizing findings to the population (Saunders et al., 2019). The study tests the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant correlation (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between strategic flexibility (measured across its four dimensions resource flexibility, service flexibility, information flexibility, and human resource flexibility) and administrative decision-making in international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip amid war conditions.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a statistically significant effect (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of strategic flexibility on administrative decision-making in international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip amid war conditions.

**Results.** Table 1 demonstrates that the study sample comprised 109 male employees (71.7%) and 43 female employees (28.3%). The researcher attributes this gender distribution to the recruitment, appointment, and selection policies of international institutions in the Gaza Strip, which reflect gendered employment practices. Notably, this 28.3% female representation exceeds the 18% female labor force participation rate reported in the Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (March 8, 2023), suggesting relatively progressive hiring practices in these institutions.

**Table 1.** Distribution of study sample according to gender

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Male</b>	109	71.7
<b>Female</b>	43	28.3
<b>Total</b>	152	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the study sample, revealing that 41.4% of participants were under 35 years old, 30.3% were aged 35–40, and 28.3% were over 40. The researcher suggests this predominance of younger employees (<35 years) reflects international organizations' strategic prioritization of youthful energy, skills, and creative potential in the Gaza Strip. These institutions appear to actively leverage these attributes to enhance operational effectiveness and maximize performance.

**Table 2.** Distribution of study sample according to age

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Under 35 years old</b>	63	41.4
<b>From 35 to 40 years old</b>	46	30.3
<b>More than 40 years</b>	43	28.3
<b>Total</b>	152	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

Table 3 presents the educational attainment distribution among sample members, revealing that 13.2% held diplomas, 61.2% possessed bachelor's degrees, and 25.7% had postgraduate qualifications. The researcher attributes the predominance of bachelor's degree holders to international institutions' recruitment policies, which prioritize field-specific expertise. The substantial proportion of postgraduate degree holders (25.7%) further demonstrates these organizations' commitment to attracting highly qualified personnel capable of applying advanced scientific principles to institutional management.

**Table 3.** Distribution of study sample according to academic qualification

<b>Academic qualification</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Diploma</b>	20	13.2
<b>Bachelor's</b>	93	61.2
<b>Postgraduate studies</b>	39	25.7
<b>Total</b>	152	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

Table 4 displays the distribution of sample members by job title, with 13.2% serving as Directors, 30.9% as Heads of Department, and 55.9% as Administrative Assistants. This hierarchical distribution demonstrates that respondents occupy key decision-making positions within international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. The predominance of Administrative Assistants (55.9%) reflects their critical operational role as the primary workforce executing organizational tasks. The researcher notes that this distribution pattern also indicates lean management structures, where single individuals typically lead departments or divisions, resulting in proportionally fewer leadership positions relative to support staff.

**Table 4.** Distribution of study sample according to job title

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Director</b>	20	13.2
<b>Head of department</b>	47	30.9
<b>Administrative assistant</b>	85	55.9
<b>Total</b>	152	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

Table 5 presents the distribution of sample members by years of experience, revealing that 37.5% have less than 5 years of experience, 29.6% possess 5-10 years of experience, and 32.9% have more than 10 years of experience. The relatively high proportion of junior staff (<5 years' experience) likely reflects the contractual employment system prevalent in Gaza Strip international institutions, where appointments typically range from one to five years. Notably, 62.5% of respondents exceed five years of professional experience, indicating that the majority of the sample possesses substantial field expertise a positive indicator of workforce competency.

**Table 5.** Distribution of study sample according to number of years experience

<b>Number of years experience</b>	<b>Number (%)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Less than 5 years</b>	57	37.5
<b>5-10 years</b>	45	29.6
<b>Over 10 years</b>	50	32.9
<b>Total</b>	152	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

First hypothesis

Table 6 demonstrates that the correlation coefficients between strategic flexibility and administrative decision-making are statistically significant, indicating a direct and significant relationship ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between these variables in international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

**Table 6.** Correlation coefficient between strategic flexibility and administrative decision-making dimensions

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Problem definition</b>	<b>Alternative selection</b>	<b>Final choice</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Administrative decision-making</b>
<b>Resource flexibility</b>	0.63	0.479	0.602	0.585	0.853	0.683
<b>Service flexibility</b>	0.62	0.355	0.468	0.571	0.690	0.620
<b>Information flexibility</b>	0.69	0.545	0.668	0.586	0.869	0.688
<b>Human resource flexibility</b>	0.66	0.500	0.685	0.598	0.856	0.653
<b>Strategic flexibility (overall)</b>	0.77	0.537	0.659	0.719	0.865	0.773

All correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the level (0.05) for a sample size of (151) and a critical value of (0.159). Sources: developed by the authors.

This finding suggests that higher levels of strategic flexibility are associated with enhanced decision-making effectiveness in these institutions. The results confirm the vital importance of strategic flexibility for organizations operating in volatile environments. By cultivating this capability, institutions can: (1) rapidly adapt to unstable conditions, (2) seamlessly transition between operational strategies, and (3) execute administrative decisions with greater efficiency and effectiveness. This adaptive capacity ultimately contributes to sustained institutional excellence even amidst challenging circumstances.

Second hypothesis

This hypothesis was verified using linear regression analysis as shown in Table 7. The calculated F-value of 55.835 ( $p = 0.000$ ) indicates a statistically significant effect ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of strategic flexibility on administrative decision-making in international institutions operating in the Gaza Strip. These results demonstrate that the implementation of strategic flexibility significantly influences the quality and effectiveness of administrative decisions in these organizations.

**Table 7.** Multiple regression analysis

Independent variables	Beta coefficient	T value	Sig. value	Significance level
Constant	0.598	1.305	0.194	Not significant
Resource flexibility	0.209	2.537	0.012	Significant
Service flexibility	0.134	1.740	0.084	Not significant
Information flexibility	0.234	3.065	0.003	Significant
Human resource flexibility	0.301	3.802	0.000	Significant

T Tabulated = (1.98) at significance level (0.05) and degrees of freedom (151). Calculated F = (5.853), Sig. = (0.000) < 0.05 → the model is statistically significant. Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = (0.603). Adjusted  $R^2$  = (0.592). Sources: developed by the authors.

Three dimensions of strategic flexibility demonstrated statistically significant effects ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) on administrative decision-making: resource flexibility, information flexibility, and human resources flexibility. These findings confirm that these specific components significantly influence decision-making quality in international institutions operating in the Gaza Strip. Service flexibility was found to be statistically non-significant ( $\alpha > 0.05$ ), indicating no measurable impact on administrative decision-making levels in Gaza-based international institutions. The researcher suggests this may stem from donor-imposed constraints, as funding organizations predominantly determine the scope and nature of services provided to beneficiaries in the Gaza Strip, thereby limiting institutional autonomy in service adaptation. These findings carry both practical and theoretical significance for international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. Practically, the results demonstrate how enhancing strategic flexibility can strengthen institutional decision-making capacity and improve responsiveness to environmental changes.

These findings underscore the critical importance of implementing strategic flexibility particularly its key dimensions (resource flexibility, information flexibility, and human resource flexibility) in enhancing decision-making processes within international institutions operating in the Gaza Strip. The results further reveal that these institutions demonstrate substantial awareness and operational understanding of strategic flexibility's multidimensional nature, reflecting its vital role in supporting their core activities amid challenging operational environments.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into how strategic flexibility enhances administrative decision-making for international organizations operating in Gaza's war conditions. The results confirm that resource, information, and human resource flexibility have a strong positive impact on decision-making efficacy, aligning with prior research (Sanchez, 1995; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011). However, the study also highlights a critical divergence: service flexibility showed limited influence, likely due to donor restrictions a contextual factor often overlooked in existing literature. This challenges Narasimhan et al.'s (2006) framework, suggesting that in conflict zones, external constraints

may override organizational adaptability. Additionally, while human resource flexibility proved valuable, high staff turnover in Gaza (25% annually) moderated its effectiveness, contrasting with Wright and Snell's (1998) emphasis on skill diversity as a standalone advantage. These findings underscore the need to contextualize strategic flexibility models, accounting for conflict-specific barriers such as blockades, funding rigidities, and workforce instability.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that strategic flexibility is indispensable for effective decision-making in Gaza's volatile humanitarian operations, with resource and information flexibility emerging as the most impactful dimensions. To enhance operational resilience, organizations should prioritize dynamic resource allocation systems, real-time data tools, and staff cross-training while advocating for more flexible donor policies. The study also identifies key areas for future research, including comparative analyses across different conflict zones (e.g., Ukraine, Yemen) and investigations into how flexibility mechanisms perform across various crisis phases. By bridging theoretical insights with practical recommendations, this research not only advances organizational adaptability frameworks but also provides actionable strategies for humanitarian agencies working in high-risk environments. Ultimately, the findings emphasize that in war zones, strategic flexibility must be tailored to overcome contextual constraints a crucial consideration for both practitioners and scholars.

**Conflicts of interest:** Authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Data availability statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects involved in the study.

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