



EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of employee participation on organizational performance in Nigeria. Employee participation, encompassing decision-making processes, communication, and involvement of employees in the organizational activities, has widely recognized as a significant factor influencing productivity, job satisfaction, and overall performance of the organization. The study was anchored on Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Y. The study explores the multifaceted effects of employee participation on both productivity and sustainability in public sector that creates a culture of silence, perpetuates unspoken issues, lack of transparency and fear of retribution or judgement, untimely stifling of employee voice, leading to a lack of direction, purpose and motivation in the organization. Problem arises when employees fails to grasp the organizations vision, mission, strategic objective and priorities. As a result, their efforts become misaligned, leading to reduced productivity, efficiency and overall performance. However, various barriers hinder the fostering of employees' participation, including non-participation in decision making, unspoken issues, lack of transparency and fear of retribution or judgement, untimely stifling employee voice, innovation and growth, disconnection from organizational goals and objectives. All these attributed to the failure of the employees to grasp the organizations vision, mission, strategic objective and priorities. The challenges faced by Nigeria workers are diverse, and the decisions made today will influence organizations to adopt participatory method and other systems that will enhance the employees and organizational performance in Nigeria business setting.

Keywords: Employee participation, Job satisfaction, Organizational Performance, bureaucratic processes

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, organizations have witnessed dramatic advancements in technologies, changes in demography, competition and adjustments in cultural trends. These results gave birth to the need for employees' flexibility, higher qualifications, and skills to secure employment in organizations from that time. Before this time, employees were only seen and not heard in issues concerning their schedules of duty in organizations, but recently,

in an effort to promote organizational efficiency, employee participation has been an area of academic concern and recent interest (Lawleg, 2021). In today's business world, employees' requirements go beyond the basic salary, which has shifted the focus of employers to understand the true essence of the employee engagement practices. Employees, in the present context, expect to be engaged in the organizational working, that is, their role should contribute and affect the business in a greater sense (Marciano, 2010). Employee engagement is critical organizational requirements as organizations face globalization, competitors and innovative individuals and others, specially recovering from the global recession to gain competitive advantage over the others (Bailey, 2016; Anitha, 2014). Workers involvement is all about creating an enabling environment in which individuals can have an impact on actions and decisions that influence performance in an organization. This makes the management team more proactive in attending to the needs of workers who are considered the organization's greatest asset. Locke & Schweiger (2017) emphasized that employee participation is a joint decision making between managers and subordinates.

According to Noah (2018), it is a special form of delegation in which the subordinate gain greater control, freedom of choice with respect to bridging the communication gap between the management and workers. It refers to the degree of employee involvement in organization's strategic planning activities. An organization can have deep or shallow employee participation in decision making (Barringer and Bleudorn 2013). The employee participation in the planning process leads to potential innovation, which may facilitate opportunity and recognition in the organization (Zivkovic, Mihajlovic & Prvulovic, 2019). Managers provide opportunities for participation of subordinates in decision making on the basis of their merits as it has been proved by researchers to have improved organizational performance (Sagie & Aycon 2013).

Productivity is the performance measure encompassing both efficiency and effectiveness, high performing and effective organization possess a culture of encouraging employee participation. Therefore, employees are more willing to get involved in decision making process, like goal setting, problem solving activities which results in higher performance (Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman 2018). Encourage more modern participative style of management raise employee productivity and satisfaction even with low compensation rates (Madison, Wisconsin 2000). Job satisfaction increases productivity through high quality motivation and through increasing working capabilities at the time of implementation (Miller and Mange, 2006). These were the evidences that participative working environment has more substantial effects on workers' productivity.

Every organization seeks to improve and increase its performance level by providing learning opportunities to its workers (Weiss and Hartle 2016). Organizations must perform at individual level to improve their performance in the entire organization. All subdivisions of the organizations must perform well to achieve overall performance level (Ward, 2017). Organizations in all over the world have designed different processes to improve performance level from functional employees to organizational level to perk up overall organizational performance. Organizations are also required to manage performance of its employees and functions by setting and achieving the expected goals (Good 2004). According to Dess and Robinson (2019), organizational performance can be enhanced by improving employee participation and management must have certain tools to improve employee participation in their respective sectors. Wheelen and Hunger (2018) says that level of performance is based on objectives and goals set by an organization. For every organization, their main target is to earn profit and reduce expenses as such, organizations can improve their profit and reduce their expenses by improving employee participation (Sorenson 2012).

According to Le (2004) the level of progress and participation is different in every organization. Many organizations delegate authority and power to their employees which enhances organizational performance at the same time the employee's skills. Rashid (2013) says that organizations also require more profit on their input and financial benefits on all expenses occurred. According to Ho (2016) organizations require different analysis to measure their profitability and this shows that organization profitability can be increased when performance level of an organization also increases.

Management researchers have mentioned many benefits of involving workers in organizational initiatives. They include, enhanced ability in managerial decision-making, positive attitude to work, better employees' welfare, lower operational cost through reduction of waste, high performance of employees across all section of the organization (Jones, Klami and Kauhanen, 2010). These benefits were further summarized into motivation, commitment, creativity, empowerment and job satisfaction (Light, 2004). There are too many evidences that shows organization's performance increase with the increase in employee participation (Arthur, 2020; Daft and Lewin, 2015; Denninson and Mishra, 2022). Based on the above background, the researcher seeks to carry out research work to ascertain the effect of employee participation on organizational performance in Nigeria specifically in Anambra State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual and Theoretical Explanations of Employee Participation

Workers participation can be defined as a process of involving and empowering workers to use their input towards creating value and improving organizational productivity (Sofijanovna and Chatleska, 2018). Employee involvement also means direct participation or engagement of employee towards applying ideas, expertise, and efforts on solving organizational problems and achieving its goals or objectives. Beteman and Crant, (2021) envisaged that the term participation include people's involvement in decision making processes, in carrying out programs, their taking part in the benefits of growth and involvement in efforts to evaluate.

The idea of worker participation suggested a practice, which grants employees considerable opportunity to be called for in decision making (David, 2019). Employee participation in Westhuizen (2020) definition is the totality of forms, that is directly or indirectly involvement of individuals and groups to contribute to the decision making process. To Beardwell and Claydon (2017) employee participation can be defined as the dissemination of power between employer and worker in decision making processes, either by means of direct or indirect involvement. Employee participation stands for the amalgamation of task-related practices, which focus at magnifying employee sense of involvement in their organization and their commitment to the wider workplace (Bhatti and Mawab, 2021).

It is possible for an organisation to have different levels of worker involvement, which indicates that corporate organisations have all levels of workers that are involved in the planning process, but in some companies, only top leadership will take part in the planning process. A high level of worker involvement in decision making enables the frontline worker to interact directly with customers (Barringer and Leudorn, 2019). McFarland (2018) brought it to our understanding that the foundation of participation decision making is based on the firm philosophy and leadership style and in the overall workplace environment. The organisation's environment, as it was used by McFarland, involves people, laws, economic and market conditions and technology.

Locke and Schweiger (2020) in their definition expressed that it is a joint decision making between a leader and subordinates. Noah (2018) emphasized that it is a special form of delegation in which the subordinate is given greater control, greater freedom of choice with regard to closing the communication gap between the management and the employees. Its reference is to the degree of workers participation in an organization's strategic planning activities. It is possible for a company to have a high or low level of worker participation.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is described as the process of assessing progress made in achieving predetermined goals (Amaratunga and Baldry, 2023). Rosenzweig (2017) defined organizational performance as its actual outcomes when compared to its benchmark outputs. It is the organization's capacity to execute its stated objectives through strong corporate governance, efficient management and a consistent commitment to achieving expected results (Pierre, 2019).

In the broadest sense, the concept of organizational performance is founded on the notion that an organization is the voluntarily collaboration of productive assets, including human, physical and capital resources, to create the greatest value for the users and contributors of the assets (Carton, 2018). Value creation, specified by the resource provider, is therefore the fundamental overall organizational performance criterion for any organisation. This value creation depends on how an organisation is managed and the employees' correct and active participation in achieving the strategic goals of the organisation (Doval, 2020).

Employees' Involvement and Organizational Performance

Empowerment and ownership

Empowerment is a fundamental concept in understanding employee participation in decision-making. When employees are actively involved in decisions that affect their work, they often experience a greater sense of control and ownership. This sense of ownership enhances their emotional investment in their tasks and the organisation as a whole. Empowerment consists of four cognitive dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. When employees perceive their work as meaningful and feel competent in their roles, they are more likely to take initiative and engage fully with their tasks, leading to increased job satisfaction (Thomas and Velthouse, 2018).

Increased Motivation

Employee participation in decision-making can significantly enhance intrinsic motivation, which is critical for job satisfaction. When employees feel that they have a voice in the decisions affecting their work, they are more likely to be motivated to perform well. Self-determination theory posits that people are most motivated when they feel that their actions are self-directed and aligned with their interest (Deci and Ryan, 2017). Participation in decision-making fosters sense of autonomy, which is critical for enhancing job satisfaction, motivation and performance.

Improved communication

Effective communication is essential for any organisation and employee participation in decision-making significantly improves communication channels. When employees are included in the decision-making process, it improves open dialogue and enhances the flow of information throughout the organisation. Participative management practices improve

communication, as employees feel more comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns. This improved communication reduces misunderstandings and fosters a culture of trust, which is essential for job satisfaction (Pincus, 2016).

Enhanced Job Role Clarity

Participation in decision-making leads to clearer job roles and expectations. When employees are involved in setting goals and procedures, they better understand their responsibilities and how they contribute to the organisation's objectives. The Job Characteristics Model proposed by Hackman and Oldham (2016) emphasizes that clarity in job roles enhances employee motivation, satisfaction and performance, because when employees are engaged in decision-making, they gain insights into how their roles fit into the larger organizational context, which can increase their job satisfaction and performance.

Fostering Trust and Collaboration

Employee participation in decision-making fosters a culture of trust and collaboration within organisations. When management invites employees to contribute to decisions, it signals respect for their insights and expertise. Kahn (2020) found that psychological safety, which is encouraged by participative practices, allows employees to feel safe to express their ideas and take risks. This culture of trust not only enhances collaboration but also increases job satisfaction as employees feel more connected and supported by their peers.

Feedback Mechanism

Participatory decision-making often incorporates mechanisms for feedback, which significantly enhance job satisfaction and performance. Employees who feel their opinions are sought and valued are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Morgeson and Humphrey (2016) emphasize that feedback in participative environments leads to greater job satisfaction as employees see their suggestions being acknowledged and implemented.

Impact on Personal Values

Employee participation allows individuals to align their work with personal values, which is crucial for job satisfaction and performance. When employees can express their values and priorities in the workplace, it enhances their overall work experience. Brief and Motowidlo (2017) found that when employees are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to find alignment with their personal values and the organisation's mission, leading to increased job commitment and performance.

Empowerment and Engagement

Research indicates that employee participation in decision-making enhances feelings of empowerment. According to Spreitzer (1995), empowerment is characterized by a sense of self-efficacy, meaning employees who are involved in decisions perceive themselves as capable and influential within their roles. This sense of empowerment directly correlates with job satisfaction, as empowered employees are likely to report higher levels of motivation and commitment to their work.

Sense of Ownership

Participation fosters a sense of ownership over tasks and responsibilities. Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model, when employees have a say in their work processes, they experience increased intrinsic motivation. This feeling of ownership

enhances job satisfaction and performance as individuals see their contributions as integral to the organization's success.

Job Secure

Organisations with effective employee participation practices (direct and indirect) have more positive attitudinal outcomes (commitment, job and pay satisfaction, retention). When employees have effective role in devising policies and decisions within their organisation, leaving the organisation can become difficult for them (Ojasalo, 2016). Studies conducted by Hytter (2017) and Hausknecht (2019) have shown that compensation has an indirect influence in employee retention. They also stated that salary or wages has a moderate influence on compensation but compensation satisfaction and transparency have a direct influence on retention.

Challenges and Considerations to Employee Participation

Despite all the benefits of employees' participation, there are challenges often faced in the course of driving participatory management in organisations. One of them is identified by Behbehani (2012) which relates to leadership attitude. He noted that leadership attitudes towards the participation of subordinates can be positive or negative and has significant influence on the success or failure of participatory management. Thus, attitude of organisation's management to encourage employee participation in decision-making has often posed serious challenge where such attitude is negative.

Chikeleze and Don-Egesimba (2020) in Johnson (2012) also observed that since participation is an aspect of employment empowerment some supervisors may not feel that employees under them are competent enough to handle the responsibility of participation at certain levels. Consequently, they are more prone to deny them access to the decision making process. In addressing the supposed shortfall in knowledge and skills of employees necessary to make good suggestions or decisions. Greenfield (2004) suggest that management should provide them with information or training that will help make informed contributions. Sometimes, providing several alternatives and allowing employees to choose from them may be as effective as if they thought of the alternatives themselves. Again there is need to visibly integrate employees' suggestions, where they are applicable in the final decision and implementation plan to enable them know that their contributions counts. This creates a sense of commitment, motivation, ownership and job satisfaction among other in them.

Further, Root (2014) observed that as employees gain more confidence in the participatory process, they begin to feel they can take on more crucial decisions. This further demand by employees to have more space in management process may generate some apprehension in some supervisors who believe that they will be running the risk of compromising the hierarchy within the organizational structure leading to a breakdown of order and increased difficulty in maintaining control over their employees. In response to this fear, they may narrow down participatory spaces available to their subordinates to maintain the status quo.

Furthermore, Benfield and Kay (2008) share the view that subordinates who question the views of their superiors may be mistaken as trouble makers as threats to organisation's authority and as such should be kept at best distance from participation and at worst disengaged from the organizations. This situation poses strong limitations to employees' participation in the decision making processes.

While participation in decision-making can boost job satisfaction and performance, challenges may arise if employees perceive that their input is not genuinely valued. Research by Chikeleze and Don-Egesimba (2020) in Kahn (1990) indicates that if employees feel their

contributions are overlooked or if the decision-making process lacks transparency, it can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. Thus, organizations must ensure that participatory practices are implemented authentically.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Theory X and Y which was propounded by Douglas McGregor in 1960. Douglas McGregor an American social psychologist, proposed his famous X-Y theory in his book 'The Human Side of Enterprise'. McGregor's ideas suggest that there are two fundamental approaches to managing people. Many managers tend towards theory X and generally get poor results. Enlightened managers use theory Y, which produces better performance and results, and allows people to grow and develop.

Douglas McGregor's Theory X assumes that people are lazy, they don't want to work, and it is the job of the manager to force or coerce them to work. McGregor's Theory X makes three basic assumptions: The average human being dislikes work and will do anything to avoid or get out of it; Therefore, most people must be forced, controlled, directed, threatened or punished to get them to toward organizational objectives; and the average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, and places job security above ambition. According to this theory, responsibility for demonstrating initiative and motivation lies with the employee and failure to perform is his or her fault. Employees are motivated by extrinsic rewards such as money, promotions, and tenure. Theory X believes that people are inherently lazy, need to be told what to do and will work only when pushed. They use techniques commonly known as the "stick" (Hard X) to punish or threaten employees. Or, they may use the "carrot" technique (Soft X), by promising some reward for compliance with the manager's directives.

Douglas McGregor's Theory Y suggests employees would behave differently if treated differently by managers. Theory Y assumes that higher-order needs dominate individuals. The set of assumptions for Theory Y is: The average human has effort in work as natural as work and play; People will exercise self-direction and self-control in the pursuit of organizational objectives; Rewards of satisfaction and self-actualization are obtained from effort put forth to achieve organizational objectives; The average human being usually accepts and often seeks responsibility; Human beings are creative and use high degree of imaginative in solving organizational problems and creativity in solving organizational problems; and The intellectual potential of the average human is only partially realized.

The researcher anchored on McGregor's Theory X and Y as the theory is highly related to the topic employee participation and organizational performance. According to Theory Y, people are motivated and capable of self-direction, and they will work towards achieving organizational goals if they are given the opportunity. Employee participation is essential for achieving organizational success and it has a significant effect on productivity, performance and decision making. By adopting a participative management style that encourages employee participation and involvement in decision making, managers can improve organizational performance and achieve their goals. The relevance of McGregor's theories lies in their implications for management practices. By fostering a culture that embraces Theory Y principles, organizations can enhance employee participation, ultimately leading to improved organizational harmony and performance.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive assessment of the impacts of employee participation on the organizational performance in Nigeria has shed light on the intricate challenges and opportunities that many organizations and employees faces. Specifically, it is evidently

showed that employees participation in decision making in an organization has been found to have positive effects on participative management policy, in job satisfaction and on job commitment which results to improvement in the organizational performance. Thus, employees' participation in organizational decision making should be seen as an inevitable tool in any organization both public and private.

RECOMMENDATION

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, environmental concerns, rigid bureaucratic processes, limited resources, leadership problems among others many organizations in Nigeria stand at a crossroads, facing a unique array of challenges and to adopt employee participatory decision-making process. This set of recommendations outlines key steps that can help organizations harness their organizational performances which includes:

- i. Managers should put more effort in encouraging their employees to come up with suggestions and useful decisions and endeavor to incorporate them into the organization's decisions and policy.
- ii. Management should increase the frequency and level of worker participation in decision-making considering the fact that they are the people carrying out the main operative work as they are in the better position to know what goes on those areas.
- iii. Every organization should endeavor to create a clear-cut understanding and notion of the concept of participative decision making to avoid confusion and clashes of interest between the employees and the managers. More importantly is that the main objective of any scheme for participation should be specific and exact in any organization that care to enable workers recognize the areas their suggestions and opinions are most needed.

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