



Enhancing Employee Involvement and Participation in Work Settings

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Abstract: *Organizations that do not involve their workers in decisions about their work processes at their levels are inadvertently laying the groundwork for the company's demise. Because employee engagement contributes to organizational survival and effectiveness, managers must let a high level of employee involvement to exist in their organizations in order to boost employee commitment, improve work performance, and foster good behavior. The practice of empowering employees to participate in managerial decision-making and improvement initiatives appropriate to their ranks in the organization is known as employee involvement. The concept of employee involvement and participation, as well as its applications and myriad advantages for firms, were thematically investigated in this article. Since this was a conceptual study, the methodology used was desk research, which heavily relied on a survey of the body of existing literature.*

Key Words: *Employee involvement, Employee Participation, Joint decision-making, Collective Bargaining*

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, new technical advancements, demographic shifts, competitive pressures, and cultural trends have made it necessary for employees in firms to be flexible and have higher levels of education and competence. According to Walton (1985), using a variety of strategic methods is necessary to manage employees effectively in today's dynamic business climate. In the past, employees have either had no voice or a limited voice in matters affecting their work environment. Employee involvement has therefore been a topic of academic concern and contemporary interest as attempts are made to increase organizational efficiency (Lawler, 2010). Employee participation is all about creating a supportive environment where people may influence the actions and decisions that affect their careers. Being the largest asset of the company, people, the management team should be proactive in addressing their demands.

Employee involvement is a crucial element that organizations should place a strong emphasis on in an effort to boost their effectiveness. Employee engagement has been linked to a variety of management theories as well as behaviors like leadership philosophies, work-related happiness, employee empowerment, overall quality management, and productivity (Odero &

Makori, 2018). Employee involvement is the process that involves empowering people to participate and use their feedback to improve both personal and organizational performance. Employee involvement in decision-making, problem-solving, and more autonomy in work processes is referred to as involvement (Sofijanov & ZabijakinChatleska, 2013). It has been proven, after all, that employee involvement leads to job happiness.

Involving workers in organizational initiatives has been shown to have a number of positive effects, including improved managerial decision-making skills (Apostolou, 2000), a shift in workers' attitudes toward their jobs (Leana, Ahlbrandt, and Murrell, 1992), improved worker welfare (Freeman & Kleiner, 2005), lower costs through waste reduction (Apostolou, 2000), increased worker productivity across industries (Jones, Kalmi, and Kauhanen, 2010), and an intention to (Light, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory was postulated by Edwin Locke in 1960 and he asserted that goal setting is fundamentally linked to performance (Locke, 1968). Goal Setting Theory is an intellectual hypothesis of motivation grounded on the assertions that goals do regulate employee behaviour. Goal theory postulates a positive link between performance and goal difficulty, with challenging goals eliciting much effort than simple goals (Martin and Manning, 1995). This hypothesis presupposes that behaviour is purposeful and that goals focus employees' energies in performing specific task (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Consequently, Goal Setting hypothesis is an effective strategy of arousing performance by provision of feedback, employee involvement and participation (Latham et al, 2002). Necessary feedback of results and employee involvement in goal setting directs the employee behaviour and contributes to higher performance than absence of feedback and non-involvement. Also, specific, difficult goals lead to participation through employee involvement in goal setting, enhanced employer-employee relations and improved performance by producing higher levels of effort and planning (Latham et al (2002). Thus goal setting can be an effective method of influencing performance by enhancing employee involvement initiatives through provision of appropriate communication and regular feedback mechanism (Latham et al 2002).

Employee Involvement

Employee engagement concepts have recently received a lot of attention from organizations, yet there are many different opinions and definitions on the matter. Employee participation is described as a strategy by Lawler & Mohrman (1989) that makes use of the workforce's potential and is intended to increase employees' commitment to the success of the firm as a

whole. Robinson et al. (2004) provided yet another significant definition, stating that employee involvement can be defined as the favorable attitude that a person has toward the ideals of a company. Additionally, he said that engaged employees are aware of the business environment and work together with coworkers to enhance their job performance for the corporation. However, Grazier (1989) provided a more detailed definition of employee engagement by stating that it is the process of allowing employees to participate in the critical thinking process that is designed to reach decisions that have an impact on the organization. Employee involvement is a program that allows staff members to participate in decision-making and the improvement of activities appropriate to their position within the organization.

Employee participation, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2001), includes a number of procedures designed to enlist workers' understanding of and commitment to an organization's goals. This improves organizational performance (CIPD, 2009). According to Price (2004), employee involvement is a process that involves participation, communication, and decision-making and that results in industrial democracy and employee motivation.

Employee participation has thus been defined as a series of actions that help employees feel a sense of responsibility and ownership for the firm, as well as a chance to participate in problem solving, decision-making, and information processing (Kearney, 1997). In order to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of the firm, employee involvement channels the power of the people within an organization. Because employees are an organization's greatest asset, it can be concluded that employee involvement is essential to the growth and development of every business.

Forms of Employee Involvement

A number of diverse forms of worker involvement practices have been recognized in several studies conducted by diverse authors and they include: Representative participation is a form of employee involvement achieved by selecting or electing employee representatives from the different department and teams to sit on the organization board. The process is consultative where employees elect representatives who are mandated to discuss with senior management issues that concern employees (Apostolou, 2000). This forum provides employees a chance to contribute to proposals before they are presented to senior management for implementation. Further Judge and Gennard (2004) contends that representative participation requires that acceptable solutions to problems be sought through an open communication of ideas and information.

Participative decision making is an employee involvement method described as the extent to which employers engage employees in making key decisions for the organization (Judge and Gennard, 2010). The goal of participative decision making is to enable the organization engage employees through involvement and consequently achieve higher job performance (Latham, 2010). However, participative decision making is a power-sharing initiative where decision

making roles are shared between senior managers and employees (Black & Gregersen 1997). In order to be effective, participative decision making should involve all the employees in the organization since it seeks to solve employee's problems and enhance decision making (Locke & Schweiger, 1979).

Downward communication from managers and upward problem solving communication are techniques used to inform employees of management plans, discuss organizational performance or solve specific issues related to employees (Judge and Gennard, 2005). Management employ various strategies and include sharing of videos, company newsletters, journals and reports. These materials enable employees to be informed about changes and development in the organization. Upward problem solving methods include team briefing, suggestion schemes, employee attitude surveys and regular team meeting are ways to create awareness for top management to be aware of the issues faced by the employees about the organization (Marchington, 1992).

According to Judge and Gennard (2005), financial participation enables workers to share in the financial achievements and failures of the company. This motivates workers to be more committed to the goals and objectives of the organization, leading to higher job performance. It is also widely accepted that financial participation boosts the morale and enthusiasm of employees towards the achievement of organizational goals. By sharing in the financial success or failure of the company, employees become important shareholders and may even own the company at some point (Judge and Gennard, 2005).

According to Ankarlo (1992), self-directed work teams are groups of employees assigned specific functions and the members team have to be sufficiently trained on specific skills related to the function of the group. Self-directed teams are involved in planning, implementing and controlling all the activities that are part of the assignment for the group and since the team is self-directed, there is no leader to provide directions and all individuals within the team have the same level of authority (Ankarlo, 1992).

Quality circles are a method of employee involvement where the views, ideas and solutions of every team member are examined when solving work related problems. Quality circles provide an opportunity for employees to solve problems together. They identify, analyze and implement solutions to cost reduction. Quality circles have been known to reduce costs, enhance productivity, enhance employee career development and increase job satisfaction (Kretitner and Kinicki 2007).

Management by objectives is another aspect of employee involvement. It refers to the process of identifying and defining the specific objectives to be achieved in a company. Management by objectives also identifies the most efficient and effective methods on how to achieve each objective. According to Lambert, Bruce (1992), management by objectives enables employees to see achievement of objectives one by one as they are achieved. This instils a sense of achievement in employees and motivates them to accomplish more objectives and also

improve their working environment. Employee involvement in management objectives gives employees an opportunity to participate in setting the objectives and identify the most efficient method of accomplishing the objectives (Lambert, Bruce (1992).

Employee Participation in the Workplace

Employee participation is defined as a process of employee involvement designed to provide employee with the opportunity to influence and where appropriate, take part in decision making on matters that affect them (Kim, MacDuffie & Pil, (2010). In line with this definition, it therefore follows that the concept of employee participation neither refers to the goal nor a tool as it is practiced in most organizations, but rather a management and leadership philosophy about how people are most enabled to contribute to continuous improvement and the ongoing success of their work organizations (Ng'ethe et al., 2012). Kalmi and Pendleton (2006) asserts that employee participation is a combination of different tools designed to increase employee input of various degrees in managerial decision making like organizational commitment, reduction of employee turnover and absenteeism, increase in productivity and motivation.

Participation has been defined as a process which allow employees to exert some influence over their work and conditions under which they work, or tentatively a process in which influence on decision making is shared between hierarchical superiors and their subordinate (Zohoori, 2008). These two definitions encompass broad range of activities through which employees can affect decision making, from consultative or communication (employee involvement) mechanisms where individual workers input is asked for and considered by managers who retain responsibility for the final decision, to participation mechanism involving representative structures where workers are major parties to these decisions (Bryson, 2004).

Employee participation has become a convenient catch-all term to cover a variety of forms and organizational techniques. For instance, it encompasses such diverse forms as participative management, workplace democracy, representative participation, empowerment, quality circles and employee ownership. Although each of these concepts have unique characteristics, they all have as a common core the idea that by allowing employees to participate in decisions that affect them and by increasing their autonomy and control over their work lives, they will become more motivated, more committed to the organization, and more satisfied with their jobs, (Wagner, 1994).

Employee participation can be divided into material and immaterial forms. Material participation includes all forms of financial (monetary) participation of employees in the company such as a participation in the organizations' capital, profit or gain or other forms, such as stock options. Immaterial participation has employees involved in information, coordination, and decision processes within the company, here, one has to distinguish between forms of legal co-determination at board level and additional participation at establishment level that is granted voluntarily by the management such as participative management as employees share

a significant degree of decision-making power with their immediate superiors (Chen & Aryee, 2007).

Employee participation could relate to trade union representation through joint consultative committees and collective bargaining, to worker cooperatives or to legislation designed to provide channels for employee representatives to engage in some form of joint decision making with employers. On the other hand, and at a different level, it could encompass myriad mechanisms that employers introduce in order to provide information to their staff or to offer them the chance to engage in joint problem-solving groups or use their skills/discretion at work via job enrichment programmes. The real purpose of participation schemes, especially those aimed at individual workers, is to increase work intensification and con employees into accepting management ideas that may not necessarily be in their best interests. This might be supplemented by a drive to engage in non-union forms of participation as well Singh (2009).

Therefore when employees participate in decision making, staff absenteeism is reduced; there is greater organizational commitment, improved performance, reduced turnover and greater job satisfaction (Markey & Patmore, 2011). It is for this reason that the management of public organizations advocate for employee participation in decision making on matters that affects them to elicit their commitment to organizational goals and improve organizational performance.

Forms of Employee Participation

Employee Consultation Consultative participation can potentially touch all workers directly in relation to their work tasks, work organization and working conditions. Such participation is strongly contingent on a voluntary management decision and can be seen as HRM practices (Kuye & Sulaimon, 2011). Consultative participation appears to have an impact on organizational performance in three rather basic ways. First, employees with consultative participation opportunities can influence organizational performance directly by offering suggestions leading to more efficient processes or better product quality (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). In doing so, employees can contribute to higher labour productivity and process innovation.

Secondly, like other HR policies and practices, direct participation influences employee attitudes which in turn support employee behaviour that is beneficial for organizational performance such as, reduced turnover and absenteeism, improved productivity and product quality (Mutua, et al. 2012). Recent findings support the assumed relationships: Torka, Schyns and Looise (2010) found direct participation is significantly connected to affective organizational commitment, and Meyer et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis shows that this form of commitment strongly influences employee health and well-being, turnover, absenteeism as well as task- and extra-role performance. These outcomes eventually have effect on the organizational performance.

Employee Delegation

Delegation is described as being at a higher level of subordinates' involvement in a continuum of decision procedures (Yuki, 2002). Although some studies have defined it as a distinct set of decision-making procedures, others consider it to be a type of Participative Decision Making (PDM). However, most have argued that they are distinct constructs indicating that PDM is a means of power sharing, whereas delegation is an alternative that involves power relinquishment (Leana, 2006). He noted that delegation 'focuses on developing individual autonomy rather than on engendering democracy, that is, participative processes. It is associated with a process that allows employees working in an organization hierarchy 'temporary authority' to make decisions. (Sagie & Koslowsky 2000) It is also defined as 'the assignment of new responsibilities to subordinates and additional authority to carry them out' (Yuki, 2002).

Delegation of responsibilities at workplace depends on the nature of work and the relationship between workers, groups or departments (Basihr, 2010). Chaudhry (2012) observed that interpersonal relationships between the superiors and the subordinates at work determine the extent to which the management delegates responsibilities to the subordinates. Delegated responsibilities increase employee commitment to work, job satisfaction and productivity which lead to improve organizational performance (Kumar, 2013).

Heller (2003) suggests that distribution of power is a necessary condition for enhancing performance and satisfaction by means of employee participation. Intensity may play a role in the identification process, for several reasons: groups may use their influence to secure properties of social value, thereby enhancing the group status in an organization. One area of particular interest is decision-making delegation which involves giving subordinates responsibility for task-related decisions and increasing the amount of work-related discretion and authority allowed to them for the completion of such tasks (Chen & Aryee, 2007). In the Western organizational context delegation is regarded as integral to effective leadership (Leanna, 2006; Yuki, 2002). Appropriately applied, it can mean improved decision making and more effective workload management for leaders and job/career enhancement opportunities, increased confidence and intrinsic motivation for subordinates

Delegation typically involves a transfer of authority from a supervisor to a subordinate. The subordinate is not necessarily a passive recipient in this process and may choose to accept or renegotiate a request. The delegation process is therefore a dynamic one and investigations into the conditions under which it is effective have sharpened the focus on the role of the quality of the supervisor-subordinate dyad (Kumar, 2013).

Leanna (2006) emphasizes that delegation differs from other decision-making processes such as consultation in two main ways: first, delegation involves decision making by an individual subordinate rather than by a group of subordinates or by a supervisor-subordinate dyad; and second, delegation emphasizes subordinates' autonomy in making decisions. Interestingly,

despite the potential benefits and evidence of its widespread use, research concerning the organizational outcomes of delegation is limited. With respect to job satisfaction and performance, some studies such as Berg, Witteloostuijn, Boone and Brempt (2013) have found delegation to be related to both outcomes.

Joint Decision Making

Joint decision making is defined as a management process that allocates power and authority to employees through their involvement (Wagner 1994). Particularly, it is defined as 'a mode of organizational operations in which decisions as to activities are arrived at by the very persons who are to execute those decisions. Kombo, Obonyo and Oloko (2012). Thus, Participative decision making is associated with direct involvement of stakeholders, as well as mutual regard and respect toward other parties in an organization Markey, (2007). In sum, participative decision making is one form of structural empowerment because it allows employees to participate in decision-making processes, and thus have influence over decisions (Yuki and Fu 1999). As an alternative to assuming that decisions should be made by management, researchers have focused on Participative decision making arguing that employee participation can provide intrinsic/personal benefits and employees' attitudes and behaviours, such as job satisfaction and lower levels of absenteeism (Daniels & Bailey 2009).

Participation in decision making can satisfy employees self-actualization needs and by doing so, increase employees motivation, job satisfaction and job performance. The best way to improve productivity is by striving for the shared goals of employees and managers. By allowing worker input into developing the mission statement, establishing policies and procedures, determining perks you can improve communication and increase morale and satisfaction (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). Employee participation in decision making serves to create a sense of belonging among the workers as well as congenial environment in which both the management and workers voluntarily contribute to healthy industrial relations. The best way to improve productivity is by striving for the shared goals of employees and managers. By allowing workers input into developing the mission statement, establishing policies and procedures of determining perks can improve communication and increase morale and job satisfaction (Noah, 2009).

Collective Bargaining

This form of employee participation relates to teams that include selected or elective representatives of all grades of staff in the departments, which were affected by the implementation of a new system and policy. In addition, employee participation through trade unions involves worker participation in forums that address strategic issues rather than merely workplace or process issues (Modernizing Public Service Group, 1999). It is known as the most widely legislated form of employee participation around the world (Cotton, 1993). The different representatives "can come in the form of work council, worker representatives on the board of directors, or some other format" (Cotton, 1993).

Representative participation is less likely to be a company initiative than a response to external pressures from unions or legal requirements that may force the introduction of representative institutions, such as works councils. However, companies may benefit from representative participation in several ways. Employees may be more likely to accept decisions that they helped to make. Deliberations between employee representatives and management may improve the quality of decisions. Finally, representative participation may improve employee - management relations more generally (Gollan, 2006).

Representative voice mechanisms encompass both union-centered and non-union mechanisms and the different forms may co-exist at workplace level. The choices made between the different forms, and between all of them and an absence of voice, are a function of government action, worker desires, union behaviour and employer choice. For employers, all forms of voice may serve as a mechanism for securing industrial peace and/or for promoting productivity of a product or service quality. It has been argued that a combination of effective voice mechanisms has the potential to increase employee job satisfaction and commitment. For employees, the democratic and existential benefits of having a voice at work have often been rehearsed (Ng'ethe et al. 2012). There is also evidence suggesting that high participation workplaces are associated with higher earnings, and this relationship is particularly strong when new forms of participation are matched by a strong union presence. Thus, the co-existence of different forms of voice secures both existential benefits and higher pay for employees. In other words, there may exist mixed effects on performance; higher labor cost may reduce financial performance, while greater acceptance of decision making may increase operational performance (Meyer & Heppard, 2000).

However, union voice requires management to give up power, and come to terms with two channels of authority within the firm. The assumption among worker in Kenya is that no company would choose union voice or collective bargaining; this is why the unions are normally formed in a fighting mood to advocate for workers' rights or pay (Kadian & Mutsotso, 2010). Literature however suggests that representative participation through unions should be envisaged as a system used to collect views and help in decision making in a common ground through representation (Newstrom & Davis, 2004). It is a system of getting workers voice without collecting information from each individual. On the other hand, Latham et al. (1994) view trade unions as a market distortion, interfering with what would otherwise be efficient, individual rational choice based interactions between employer and employee.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have shown that allowing employees to get involved in decision making leads to increase in motivation, job performance, and organizational growth (Gollan and Wilkinson, 2007; Kim, McDuffie and Pil, 2010; Bhuiyan, 2010; and Brown 1982). However, many studies also have conflicting views on whether or not an increase in employee participation directly affects organizational performance. Some critics, such as Sashkin (1976) feel that involvement is not only effective, but that its use by management is an ethical imperative. Locke and

Schweiger (2001) believe that worker involvement is merely a managerial technique that can be used effectively in certain situations.

There is increasing evidence indicating that employee involvement enhances job performance since it has the ability to improve quality decisions making by rising the inputs (Miller & Monge; Markey 2006). Employee performance improvements linked to worker involvement range from improved quality as well as higher productivity to lower scrap rates as well as higher level of consumer satisfaction (Tamkin, 2003).

The Gallop Organization (2004) studied employee involvement in 7,939 departments in 36 organizations. The study findings evidenced that employee involvement was directly related to job performance in a several areas such as productivity, profitability and customer satisfaction (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Correlations between employee involvement and job performance and effectiveness were noted by Harter et al (2002) and Patterson et al (2004). Harter et al studied employee involvement initiatives encompassing job performance affecting 8,000 business units in 36 companies. The researcher noted that increased employee involvement was directly linked to improved performance and consequently higher profits. Equally in a related study of 42 organizations by Patterson et al (2004) noted that employee involvement was directly related with enhanced employee performance and resulted in increased company productivity in the subsequent year. In similar manner, a research of 2,000 financial institutions in the United Kingdom showed that for every 10 per cent increase in employee involvement levels corresponds to a four per cent increase in product sales (Young, 2007). Corporate Leadership Council, (2004) conducted a study of 50,000 and the finding indicated that the most involved and committed employees perform 20 per cent higher than their counterparts. Sonnentag's (2003) study of employees from six state owned corporations in the United Kingdom showed that high levels of employee involvement at work was critical in motivating employees to learn skills related to the work and also take initiatives to find solutions to work related problems.

In another study, Watson Wyatt's (2007) researched on 946 organizations in 22 countries. The findings showed that involved employees who are more likely to perform better than employees who are not involved. However, Balain and Sparrow (2009) contends that employee involvement relationship to job performance is over simplified as it implies that higher levels of employee involvements results in higher job performance but rather they contend that the correlation between employee involvement and job performance is rather complex to be explained through performance and that studies only indicate and measure the outcomes of performance rather than the underlying issues and causes.

Many studies have been carried out on worker participation and organizational performance (Kuye and Sulaimon, 2011; Ravenswood, 2011; Thornton, 2009; and Barringer and Bleudorn, 1999). They concluded that to increase workers' commitment and humanize the workplace, with the intention of improving firms' performance and good citizenship behaviour, managers need to permit a high degree of employee involvement in decision making. Ray and Ray (2011)

focused on SMEs and their findings showed that employee participation has positive impact on job satisfaction. Thornton (2009) established a significant relationship between frequency of employees' consultation and job satisfaction, while Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason, (1997) found that workers who have greater choice concerning how to do their own work have high job satisfaction and consequently high job performance. The findings of Khattak, Iqbal and Bashir, (2012) also indicated that employee involvement and participation at work has significant positive effect on job satisfaction, leading to improved organizational performance.

Preuss and Lautsch (2002) carried out a study in the United States to examine the effect of employee participation and job insecurity on employee satisfaction and commitment. They tested these issues using a data set incorporating information from employees, managers and government sources in fifteen hospitals in a single metropolitan region in the United States. They found out that workers' satisfaction and commitment persist as long as the form of employee participation in place increases worker input and control in their jobs, and as long as management is perceived to be making clear efforts to enhance the future security of workers' jobs. They concluded that the incorporation of the ideas and information from employees leads to organizational flexibility, product quality and productivity may improve.

A study conducted by Topolnytsky, John, David and Lynne (2002) found a very strong positive correlation between affective commitment and employees' job involvement. The authors conducted meta-analyses to assess relations among affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization and relations between the three forms of commitment and variables identified as their antecedents correlates in Three Component Model (Meyer & Heppard (2000). Affective commitment which is a result of employee participation in decision making was found to have the strongest and most favourable correlations with organization-relevant (attendance, performance and organizational citizenship behaviour) and employee-relevant (stress and work-family conflict) outcomes. Comparisons of studies conducted within and outside North America, such as Torka et al (2010), revealed considerable similarity yet suggested that more systematic primary research concerning cultural differences is warranted.

Khattak, Iqbal & Bashir (2012) carried out a study in Islamabad, Pakistan, on employee involvement and participation at work. The focus of the research was to analyze employees' involvement and participation at work in OTCL after its privatization. The results suggested that the job dissatisfaction among the OTCL employees can be reduce by embedding EIP practices and by enhancing its frequencies. The EIP practices including team briefing, problem solving groups, surveys of employees' opinion and information regarding staffing of the employees could increase the employees' satisfaction towards their job which would eventually increase organizational performance.

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employee participation in decision making. Ravenswood (2011) focused on SMEs and their findings showed that employee participation has positive impact on job satisfaction. Thornton (2009) established a significant relationship between frequency of employees' consultation and job satisfaction, while Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, (1997) found that workers who have greater choice concerning how to do their own work have high job satisfaction and consequently high job performance. Kemelgor (2002) found out that when employees are given the opportunities of contributing their ideas and suggestions in decision making, increased firms' performance may result since deep employee involvement and participation in decision making maximizes viewpoints and a diversity of perspectives.

Noah (2008) investigated the existing level of worker participation in management decision making within the Nigerian work environment. Results showed that employees in both organizations demonstrate a high interest in participation in the decision-making process within their respective work places. There was a significant relationship between employees' involvement in decision making as well as between frequency of employees' consultation and organizational commitment.

Prisca (2011) examined employee participation in decision making and its impact on productivity. Three publishing outfits in Enugu were studied, namely: Government Printing Press, Rocana Nig Ltd and Gostak Nig. Ltd. The population consisted of managers and employees in the three elected firms in Enugu Urban. The study reveals that participative decision making does not involve participation at all levels of management, there was a positive relationship between participative management and productivity this means participative management results in increased productivity. The investment effort in the practice of participation was realized to have been yielding the desired output i.e. increased productivity. There was a diverse perception of participation among the workers and managers. The pressing problem facing the practice of participation was that employees and managers misconstrue participation in decision making.

Berg, Witteloostuijn Boone and Brempt (2013) conducted a study on the impact of representative employee participation on organizational performance. They conducted an inter-country study comparison of four neighbouring countries – Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. By reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical and empirical literature and examining the distinctive features of the four countries with respect to their industrial relations systems, the researchers found that depending on the country at issue, works councils or joint consultative committees exert influence in very different degrees, and also the power of trade unions differs substantially. The study demonstrated that variances in (formal and informal) rights and in group dynamics will greatly impact the effectiveness of any form of employee representation. This ultimately leads to the construction of adjusted comparative model, which does aim to take all these differences into account, when explaining the relationship between worker involvement and organizational performance (Berg *et al.*, 2013).

Sofijanovska & Zabijakin-Chatleska (2013)'s study explores the relationship between employee participation in decision making and problem solving and perceived organizational performance in the Republic of Macedonia. The study analyzed the concept of employee participation by embedding it within a national culture context. The study found that effective use of employee participation was positively related to perceived organizational performance. More precisely, employee participation and empowerment programs, and the use of self-managing teams had a direct and statistically significant correlation to the managerial perception of the organizational performance.

Wainaina, Iravo & Waititu (2014) investigated the effect of employee participation in decision making on academic staffs' organizational commitment in the private and public universities in Kenya. Targeting all the academic staff in the public and private universities in Kenya, the study found out that employee participation in decision making significantly influence university academic staffs' organizational commitment in Kenya. Kubaison, Gachunga and Odhiambo (2014) explored the degree to which direct employee participation practices in the organization contribute to organizational performance. Findings indicated a strong relationship between direct participation and performance of state corporations in Kenya. However, the study also found out that the most preferred mode of participation is direct participation, compared with direct individual-based participation.

While employee participation may reside at the core of many contemporary practices and research, the extent to which organizational-level performance gains are actually achieved through decentralizing decision-making authority to lower level employee remains unclear (Richardson et al., 2002). Latham, Winters and Locke (1994) contend that there is much less research evidence for the value of employee participation on quality decision making. Scholars have also argued that employees' participation in decision making may primarily serve to make them feel good about their jobs and organizations but do little to increase firm's performance (Wagner, 1994).

Schriesheim et al. (1998) identified a direct positive relationship between delegation and subordinate satisfaction and performance while Leanna (2006) identified a relationship with performance but not with satisfaction. While these results are mixed, overall the relationship between delegation and these outcomes is considered to be positive on the basis that effective delegation signals trust and support to subordinates who respond attitudinally and in terms of increased effort and performance (Chen and Aryee, 2007). The research literature on delegation in non-Western organizations is even more limited (Aryee and Chen, 2006).

Cox, Zagelmeyer & Marchington (2006) found no support for the idea that the mere presence of employee involvement and participation is associated with positive employee perceptions of participation practices. It was also suggested by them that the number and mix of practices is the key issue in the participation and commitment relation. They further postulate that participation is not usually needed to gain commitment toward objectives but having employee participation in the planning can be an effective means of fostering commitment with the

organization. Participation can be particularly helpful in developing plans for implementing goal. For these reasons managers often include subordinates in goal setting and in the subsequent planning of how to achieve the goal. It is observed that employee's commitment to the organization is strong among those whose leaders allow them to participate in decision making. The need for employees to participate more in decisions that affect their work has therefore been a center of argument in current management issues (Hales, 2000).

Implications of Employee Involvement to Human Resource Managers

There are many implications of employee involvement to managers and their organizations. The need to drive organizational positive outcomes has remained one of the key reasons why employee involvement has been advocated for by many organizational stakeholders as they desire to gain competitive advantage. Some of the implications of employee involvement are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, Employee involvement is part of a healthy organizational culture. Healthy culture always generates policies that give rise to organizational effectiveness. Amah (2014) found that organizational culture positively correlates with firm effectiveness. Healthy culture which breeds involvement anticipates changes in the environment and consequently gives room for employees to be fully involved in organizational processes.

Success of employee involvement depends on the unflinching support of all actors (management and employees) in the organization. The full support of the management and their development of relevant policies help to build enabling atmosphere for employee involvement. Without the earnest support of management, involvement cannot succeed as it is the duties of management to not only introduce the scheme but to continue it with proper resources and monitoring. In the same vein, employees must give their commitment to ensure the success of the programme before the benefits of the programme can be achieved. Involving employees that are not willing to take part in employee involvement is like pouring water on a rock when one actually intends to water the ground. In such a case, the effort will amount to total waste of resources and same is true of time expended on such programme (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi & Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

Employee involvement is not an end to itself but a means. As such, organizations should put in place other necessary policies capable of generating the needed employee involvement. Organizations should ensure that it recruits qualified, skilled, competent and teachable employees to help them transform inputs into organizations' desired outputs to meet the needs of their customers. If an employee lacks the basic skill and knowledge to carry out his/her job duties, no amount or level of involvement will make him or her successfully perform the tasks for which he is employed. Effective employee involvement calls for utilization of manager's conceptual and interpersonal skills. Employee ability to develop the needed trust toward the organization depends to a large extent, the conceptual ability and skill of the manager. A manager that lacked good conceptual and interpersonal skills will not want to

involve the employees in organizations' decision making due to fear of being overshadowed or exposing his incompetency (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi & Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

Employee involvement drives commitment. When employees are given opportunity to participate in decisions affecting them, they consider themselves important members of the organization, and try as much to ensure that such decisions succeed. In doing this, they consciously or unconsciously, become more committed to the actualization of the organization's goals and objectives. Thus the need for organizations to achieve high level of employee commitment is a call for introduction and implementation of organization's employee involvement programme. The success of a good employee involvement programme requires proper and timely training and development of employees on the areas of organizational processes that they are intended to be involved in. It is certain that training and development increase employee competencies and allow them to gain the necessary confidence that will enable them successfully work in areas of organizational processes they are involved in. Moreover, since employee involvement is not an automatic solution for all organizational shortcomings and challenges (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi & Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The importance of employee involvement is enormous. In our current intense competitive environments, allowing employees to be involved in decision-making and problem solving become an important factor in organizational innovativeness, effectiveness and a reliable strategy to gain competitive advantage over rivals; particularly when competent and serious minded employees are involved in strategic organizational actions. Employee involvement helps organizations to quickly resolve problems and boost workers morale which enhances total commitment and results in organizational improvement. Involvement of employees or their representatives in grievance settlement, new product design and setting of targets make the employees see final management decision as their own decision. This helps to minimize conflicts, and resistance to planned change, and make employees see management as sincere and honest people who can be trusted. Enhanced management-employee relationship can result from this, and thus lead to peaceful and harmonious industrial relationship. Finally, effective employee involvement is built on open and effective communication system in an organization which management and employees must take part in. Therefore, to create a positive work environment where high trust, exceptional customer service, collaborative teamwork, and creative problem solving, that is capable of enabling an organization to achieve competitive advantage, employee involvement becomes very essential for management.

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