



EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING AND FIRMS' PERFORMANCE [A STUDY OF NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY AND SEVEN UP BOTTLING COMPANY IN OWERRI, IMO STATE]

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ABSTRACT

This study examined employee involvement in decision making and firm's performance in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. In line with the above, four research objectives, four research questions and four research hypotheses guided the study. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. From the population of 200, the researcher sampled 133 staff. But out of 133 staff sampled, only 120 questionnaires was properly filled, returned and used. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage. Based on that the findings revealed that employee involvement in decision making significantly affect customer attraction; and there is significant relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation. It was recommended that organizations should incorporate in their policies effective participative management mechanism to aid decision making; organizational workers at all levels should be involved in decision making so as to contribute their quota for organizational growth and development; training of subordinate should be encouraged by organizations to enable them acquire the requisite skills needed for improved performance; and collective bargaining should be adopted by management to maintain industrial democracy, harmony and hence improved productivity.

Keywords: *employee involvement, decision making, firm's performance, manufacturing sector, customer attraction and product innovation.*

INTRODUCTION

A modern forward-looking business does not keep its employees in the dark about vital decisions affecting them. It trusts them and involves them in decision making at all levels. A more open and collaborative framework will exploit the talents of all

employees (Hewitt, 2012). Employees must be involved if they are to understand the need for creativity and if they are to be committed to changing their behavior at work, in new and improved ways (Singh, 2019; Kingler and Mesci, 2010). Employee involvement in decision making serves to create a sense of belonging among the workers as well as a congenial environment in which both the Management and the workers voluntarily contribute to healthy industrial relation (Noah, 2018). In order to increase the workers commitment and humanize the work place with the intention of improving work performance and good citizenship behavior, Managers need to permit a high degree of employee involvement of workers in decision making which is considered a tool for inducing motivation in the workers leading to positive work attitude and high productivity (Noah, 2018). Pun, Chin, and Gill (2011) highlighted that employees' involvement may provide the foundation for quality efforts and strategy development, and ensure that practices implemented conform to quality requirements that are followed by everyone in the organization.

The term decision is defined by Awujo (2013) as a course of action consciously chosen from available alternatives for the purpose of achieving a desired result. He maintains that decisions makers face different types of problems including crisis problem, non-crisis problem and opportunity problems. Employee involvement in decision making, otherwise known as participative management, has a history. Many Management scholars like Thearajah (2014) opine that participative management has a history. According to Thevarajah (2014), employee involvement in decision (participative conducted by America's National Research Council at a large Hawthorne plant near Chicago in 1924. He maintains that most writers trace the history of participative management to the post-world war II writings of scholars such as Kurt Lewin, Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris etc. Indeed, Nwachukwu (2011) sees decision making as a process of selecting a course of action from a set of alternatives. Every decision making process produces an outcome that requires management to take an action, make a recommendation, or an opinion. Decision making comprises a series of sequential activities that together structure the process and facilitate its conclusion. They steps are: establishing objectives, classifying and prioritizing objectives, developing selection criteria, identifying alternatives, evaluating alternatives against the selection criteria, choosing the alternative that best satisfies the selection criteria and implementing the decision. It can be possible that employee involvement in decision making is essential for improved organizational performance.

Employee involvement is defined as a process of participation and empowerment of employees in order to use their inputs towards achieving higher individual and organizational performance. It is therefore possible that employee involvement in decision making can affect firm's performance. Performance can involve the use of the instrument of participative management to achieve customer attraction, product

innovation, productivity, profitability and talent retention. According to Njoku (2011), performance is the extent of achievement of enterprise goals. The manufacturing sector in Nigeria has been a focal subsector; but little is probably known about the influence of its employee involvement in decision making on Firm's performance. Employee involvement in this study is defined by Schultz, Van der Walt and Bezuidenhout (2011) as creating an environment in which employees have an impact on decisions and actions that affect their jobs. It constitutes a concerted effort by employers to find participative ways on which to manage their staff by investing in human capital. The particular attention in manufacturing emanates from the conviction that the sector is a potential instrument of modernization, a creator of jobs and a generator of positive spill-over effects (Tybout, 2010). There is a body of evidence to prove that employee involvement in decision making is a key driver of organizational performance. A casual observation suggests that much of the appeal to organizational management is driven by claims that employee involvement driven bottom-line results (Macey & Schneider, 2018: 198).

Participation can have statistically significant effects on performance and motivation (Wagner, 2004). Participate practices may provide power opportunities earlier to minority workers in an increasingly diverse workforce, since such workers need not wait until reaching higher organizational levels. It also helps to satisfy the awakening employee need for meaning and fulfillment at work. Participation typically brings higher output and a better quality of output. It tends to improve motivation because employees feel more accepted and involved in the situation. Turnover and absences may be reduced if the employees feel that they have a better place to work (Newstrom & Davis, 2014). Employee involvement is a very important component of operating for the future enterprise. Participation is helping management to decide in selecting the courses of action in enterprise. It gives the employee an opportunity to express their viewpoints about action. Participating in goal setting, the employees can play a vital role in achieving business target. Workers can select their work schedules which ensure workforce diversity in organization. This study on evaluation of employee involvement in decision making and firm's performance in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria is intended towards encouraging improvement in corporate performance indicators in Nigerian enterprises.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is often worrisome when people are not allowed to participate in making decisions on matters that concern them and such has the capability of discouraging business workers from being committed in attracting and retaining customers. Even, it has been observed by the researcher that many a time, when people's opinions are not required by their superiors, the same subordinates refuse to innovate products for the good of the organization; they become less committed to enhancing productivity;

they become less conscious of profitability and turnover of talents increase. The researcher is therefore faced with the major problem of evaluating employee involvement in decision making and firms' performance in the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study focused on employee involvement in decision making and firms' performance. Specifically, the following objectives are to:

1. Evaluate the relationship between employee involvement in decision making and customer attraction.
2. Find out the relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above objectives, the researcher proposed the following research questions:

1. How does employee involvement in decision making affect customer attraction?
2. How does employee involvement in decision making affect product innovation?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were derived from the above research questions:

Ho1: Employee involvement in decision making does not significantly affect customer attraction.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Decision Making

The frequency and recurrence of a decision determines whether the decision is programmed or non-programmed. A programmed decision recurs often enough for decision rules to be developed. A decision rule tells decision makers which alternative to choose once they have predetermined information about the decision situation. The appropriate decision rule is used whenever the same decision is encountered. Programmed decisions are usually highly structured, that is; the goals are clear and well known, the decision making procedure is already established and the sources and channels of information are clearly defined (Moorhead and Griffin, 2014). If a problem or situation is unique the decision made is known as non-programmed decision and such requires problem solving (Moorhead and Griffin,

2004). Problem solving is a special form of decision making in which the issue is unique. It requires developing and evaluating alternatives without the aid of decision rules. Non-programmed decisions are poorly structured because information is unambiguous and there is no clear procedure for decision making and the goals are often vague (Moorhead and Griffin, 2014).

Employee Involvement

Involvement refers to the employee participation in decision making and problem solving and increase autonomy in work processes (Noah, 2018). As a result, employees are expected to be more motivated, more committed, more productive and more satisfied with their work. Basic dimension of involvement are: employee participation (as individual or in teams), empowerment and self-managed teams. Employee participation is a management initiative and, as a concept means that the employees are given the opportunity to discuss issues relating to their work, to influence Managerial decisions, but Management reserves the right to govern. The idea of empowering employee means abandoning command - control system and mechanistic structure. In order to achieve results, modern managers and leaders need to act as facilitators rather than controllers of the work processes. As a socio-technical approach to technological processes and production methods, empowerment is seen as a peak in the employee involvement, social participation and social integration in the organizational system. Although often equated with the delegation, employee empowerment goes further strengthening the granted authority to those most qualified.

Mullina (2015) asserts that in any organization power relations are crucial in determining the way in which managers and subordinates work together. The power is in social relations and can be switched from one side to the other depending on which is the most appropriate person to hold power. The autonomy of the work can refer to an individual employee or the team as a whole. Usually teams have autonomy in managing task, although management decided which task to assign. Autonomy can be given to an employee who has expertise and best information. From the perspective of the employee, granting autonomy to the team or to individual has identical interest with those of the employer (Mullina, 2015). Team work is considered as an effective way to reduce the organizational hierarchy and increase the employee involvement. But although problem-solving teams allow employee involvement in decision making, they only have the right to make recommendations. Examples include quality aides (groups for improvement). Some organizations go further and create teams that will not only solve problems, but also implement solution and take responsibility for results. The concept of employee participation emphasizes the need for cooperation between employer and employee, and for employees to share in the decision making processes of management (Bendix, 2010).

Employee participation entails the involvement of the employee in as many facets of his/her work life as possible; this may occur either directly or indirectly through TU(s), which are the representatives of the employees (Bendix, 2011). It is widely believed that employee participation may affect an employee's job satisfaction, productivity, commitment, which can create comparative advantage for an organization (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2017). High performing, effective organizations have a culture that encourages employee involvement, since employees are willing to get involved in the decision making process, goal setting and problem solving activities, which then results in higher employee performance (Parker & Wright, 2012, cited in Bhatti & Qureshi, 2017). Employee participation can either be direct or indirect, in direct participation employees are involved in the activity or process in the case of indirect participation, their involvement occurs through TU(s), which are the employees' representatives (Bendix, 2010). In the same vein, Kester (2017) states that indirect participation is a situation where employees share in some or all decisions that are made in the workplace via their representatives.

The Impact of Employee Involvement in Decision Making on Firm Performance

- ❖ **Employee involvement in decision making and customer attraction:** There appears to be a relationship between employee involvement in decision making and customer attraction. Veya (2013) maintains that employees that are allowed by their superiors to participate in decision making become so happy and motivated to attract customers for patronizing the organizations they work for. Also, Carcey (2012) is of the view that when workers are involved in the decisions taken by management, then, their degree of commitment to the realization of corporate goals knows no bounds. According to him, workers in such organizations sacrifice their time and money to increase the customer base of their enterprises.
- ❖ **Employee involvement in decision making and product innovation:** It is possible that when workers are involved in decision making, they show their talents by virtue of product innovations. Product 'innovation according to Brace (2011) implies the ability to be creative and inventive. It is the ability of organizational personnel to create new products for the purpose of increasing the competitive abilities of the firm; for the purpose of attracting more customers and for the purpose of increasing both corporate profitability and general performance.

Therefore, employee involvement in taking decisions bordering on product innovation can be quite encouraging to employees that have product ideas to show their skills. Employee empowerment helps cultivate innovation. Employees that have stake in the organization and apply status quos, growth and sustainability will

offer more ideas and problem-solving solutions when obstacles come. Moreover, as the employee meets particular challenges or funds improvements in policies, procedure or products, it fosters growth and more critical and imaginative thinking, employees may see particular issues differently than managers and be able to think a creative solution which may not be considered in a close circle of managerial staff. Innovation must go through into several processes of what is known as “innovation process”. A clear innovation phase involves three levels namely: generation, development and implementation (Maertz, & Campion, 2012).

An ultimate innovation impact can be measured through a last innovation process, the implementation phase. Implementation phase starts with application and adoption activities commenced for an innovation through previous phases which innovation is generated and developed, and then the implementation phase takes place involving transferring innovation to the operating locations, establishing the innovation into the market and reaching it to possible users (Steel, Grilleth, & Horn, 2014). Participative decision making is where employees have significant influence in the decision-making process (Taplin, Winterton, Winteron, 2013). For product innovation processes to succeed, decision making process plays an important role (Parker and Wright, 2012). Participative decision making increases commitment and involvement and to innovate (Hytter, 2014).

Obstacles to Effective Employee Involvement

Many scholars argue that most organizations fear to switch from their traditional autocratic rule to democratic rule. They view democratic rule as a threat to their authority towards employees. Patterson, West, Lawthorn and Nickell (2017) explains that fear of change is a major factor that has prevented most organizations from embracing democratic style of rule. Another factor that has impeded employee involvement is failure to respond to employee recommendation. Failure to respond to employee is another sure way to kill an employee involvement. Towers (2017) explain that if the management cannot acknowledge employee efforts, staff will conclude that the management has no interest in the welfare of employees. The management should take a step to recognize the improvement of employees even if it is small.

Cole (2017) notes that most managers are not enthusiastic about sharing strategic decisions with employee representatives, partly because they do not want to alert their competitors of important strategic moves (for example, a major investment or significant takeover) and partly because they often have to face up to some unpleasant decisions about redundancies and redeployments among existing staff. Participative management is not a magic cure for all that ails an organization has. Managers should carefully weigh the pros and cons before implementing this style of management. Pashiardis (2014) in the article, “Teacher Participation in Decision

Making', notes that for participation in decision making to be successfully implemented, policy has to be changed to support this approach. He further adds that time, resources, participatory involvement and support will determine the effectiveness of participation in decision making and recommends training to enable members participate effectively.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The researcher used the following theories for the theoretical review:

Goal Setting Theory

This performance management theory which assumes that a direct relationship exists between the definition of specific and measurable goals and performance is the first to be applied in this study. If managers know what they are aiming at, they are motivated to exert more effort by embracing all strategies geared towards including subordinate involvement in decision making. This theory was advanced by Branch (2002) who emphasized goal setting and encouragement of decision rights as a basis for employee performance. Taking responsibility for results requires that organizational members are given the opportunity to influence their results favourably and have the freedom to take action. This implies that people have to be authorized by their managers to independently and swiftly take action on problems without having to ask for permission first. Decision rights allow greater involvement of employees in deciding on issues that affect their work.

This implies that workers have a say in defining the right key performance indicators (KPIs) and the mandate to establish critical success factors (CSFs) in relation to their job responsibilities. Employees are the most likely to meet or exceed performance goals when they are empowered with the authority to make decisions and solve problems related to the results for which they are accountable. The performance goals of an organization represent a shared responsibility among all its employees each of whom has a stake in the organization's success.

The Agency Theory

The agency theory assumes that a relationship exists when one or more individuals (called principals) hire others (called agents) in order to delegate responsibilities to 'them. The rights and responsibilities of the principals and agents are specified in their mutually agreed-upon employment relationship. Agency theory assumes that individuals are fully rational and have well-defined preferences and beliefs that conform to the axioms of expected utility theory. Furthermore, each individual is presumed to be motivated solely by self-interest. This self-interest can be described in a utility function that contains two arguments: wealth (monetary and non-monetary incentives) and leisure. Incentives are extrinsic motivators where pay,

bonuses or career perspectives are linked to performance. Incentives that are not contingent on performance generally do not satisfy this criterion; thus, the agency theory suggests that incentives play fundamental role in motivation and the control of performance because individuals have utility for increase in wealth. Employees are agents for the achievement of performance in organizations. They can be motivated by way of giving them opportunities to participate in decision making so that the performance indicators can continue to improve. This can be a kind of incentive offered workers.

EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

The researcher used the following empirical studies to beef up the study:

In a study on the effect of leader's participative behaviours on employee effectiveness perception and performance, Mehrabi, Safaei and Kazemi (2013) used a descriptive survey approach to handle the study. The population of the study was 105 employees of Kohdasht municipality. 83 employees were chosen as sample members. A self-administered questionnaire was developed to gather data with 5-point likert scale. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to obtain reliability ratio of 0.91 (91%). The questionnaire was also corrected and modified by some Management Professors and after conducting a primary sampling, final version of the questionnaire was developed, hence the validity was confirmed through face and content validity. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data hence regression test and Pearson correlation test were used. The researchers found out that there were significant relationships between leader's participative behaviour and employee's performance.

In a study on the relationship between participation among academic staff in the School of Business, University of Nairobi, Mundi (2011) conducted the study on the positivism approach to research. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all non-management members of academic staff at the School of Business, University of Nairobi. A structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to all selected respondents. The study comprised of two major variables namely participation in decision making which was the independent variable and job satisfaction, which was the dependent variable. A five-point scale was used to collect data and analysis was based on averages, percentages, correlation coefficient and linear regression. The findings indicated that a significant strong positive correlation was found to exist between job satisfaction and participation in decision making ($P=0.888$). The findings indicated also a positively strong correlation between participation in decision making and satisfaction in relation to general working conditions ($P=0.640$); pay and promotion potential ($P=0.703$); use of skills and abilities ($P=0.895$); job design ($P=0.750$); and job feedback ($P=0.632$). The findings indicated that the level of job satisfaction for

workers at the SOB increased proportionately with an increase in their level of participation in decision making.

GAP IN LITERATURE

The researcher has observed that though there are articles and other empirical studies in most African and other international journals on evaluation of employee involvement in decision making and firm's performance in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, many things are still need to be done on this area of study because of the fact that some literature work reviewed only covered related topics and not this topic in particular. For example, employee involvement in decision making and firms' performance. Based on the above research gap exist and there is need for this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research design:** In this study, survey research design was used, so as to collect primary data through questionnaire.
- **Population of the study:** The population of this study is therefore made up of the entire staff of Nigeria Bottling Company and 7up Bottling Company all in Owerri, Imo State. Nigeria Bottling Company Owerri, Imo State has a total of 129 staff and 7up Bottling Company has a total population of 71 staff making a total of 200 people as population of the study (**Source:** Nigeria Bottling Company and 7up Bottling Company Owerri, Imo State, 2018). From this population, sample was selected.
- **Sample size determinations:** Sampling involves taking a portion out of the entire population. Our study involves using only the total population (which is 200) for study. The sample size is mathematically derived using the Taro Yamane's formula as thus:

$$n = \frac{n}{1+n(e)^2}$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \text{sample size} \\ e &= \text{margin of error} = 5\% \text{ or } 0.05 \\ n &= \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{200}{1+200(0.0025)} \\ n &= \frac{200}{1+0.5} \\ n &= \frac{200}{1.5} \\ n &= 133.33 \end{aligned}$$

∴ 133 people were sampled

- **Sampling design and procedure:** The sampling procedure used in the course of this research is the probability sample method. The sample random sampling technique was adopted from the non probability method which entails random selection of staff.
- **Method/instrument for data collection:** In this study, the researcher used both primary and secondary methods. The primary method includes the questionnaire.
 - a) **Primary data:** The questionnaire is the major instrument of primary data in this study.
 - b) **Secondary data:** Furthermore, the secondary data was used to get information from existing research materials like textbooks, journals, online/internet sources and other periodicals etc.
- **Validity and reliability of instrument:** Content validity was used to validate the instrument. More so, the researcher used the test retest reliability method.
- **Data analysis technique:** The data collected in this study were analyzed using simple percentage.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this fourth chapter of the work, the researcher presented in tables, the data gathered by way of questionnaire administration, analyzed same using percentages and interpreted the results. The hypotheses for the research were also tested. Out of the 133 copies of the questionnaire distributed by the researcher, only 120 copies were properly filled and returned.

Ho1: Employee involvement in decision making significantly affect customer attraction.

Table 1: Responses on if Employee involvement in decision making significantly affect customer attraction.

Options	No of Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	43	35.8
Agree	35	29.2
Disagree	32	26.7
Strongly Disagree	7	5.8
Undecided	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey (2022).

The Table 1 indicates that 35.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that employee involvement in decision making positively affect customer attraction, whereas 29.2% of the respondents agreed. Also, 26.7% of the respondents disagreed while 5.8% of the respondents strong disagreed. However, 2.5% of the respondents were undecided.

Ho2: There is significant relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation.

Table 2: Responses on if there is significant relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation.

Options	No of Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	39	32.5
Agree	29	24.2
Disagree	28	23.3
Strongly Disagree	10	8.3
Undecided	14	11.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey (2022).

Table 2 indicates that 32.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is significant relationship between employee involvement in decision making and product innovation. Whereas 24.2% of the respondents agreed 23.3% of the respondents disagreed while 8.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. Also, 11.7% of the respondents were undecided.

CONCLUSION

Decision-making is a veritable tool that is used to achieve organizational objectives, especially when employees are allowed to participate in management decision. The tendency to perceive employee as incompetent in making decisions towards solving problems has assumed a high proportion over years. One may ask the reasons why management encourages subordinate participation in decision making and whether their participation has any far reaching effect on the employee's productivity.

We therefore conclude that high performance of Nigeria Bottling Company and 7up Bottling Company and the other Nigerian organizations is dependent on how employees are involved in organizational decision making. This is because when the employees are not involved in decision making, it could lead to employee absenteeism, organizational disharmony and high job turnover rate. If the organization must achieve its growth and sustainable development, all stakeholders mu be carried along.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend here that:

1. Organizations should incorporate in their policies effective participative management mechanism to aid decision making.
2. Organizational workers at all levels should be involved in decision making so as to contribute their quota for organizational growth and development.

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