

**IMPLICATIONS OF EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION
MAKING FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: A SURVEY OF SELECTED LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS IN ENUGU STATE**

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ABSTRACT: *The paper is on the Implications of employee participation in decision making for the performance of local government administration in Nigeria. Three local governments in Enugu state were selected for the study. The paper is an empirical research using survey design approach with a population of 1972 drawn from Enugu East (526), Enugu North (746), and Enugu South (649) local government areas. A sample size of 331 employees was used. The instruments used for data generation was structured questionnaire and frequencies and percentages were used for analysis. The findings of the study include that employees' participation significantly increases the quality of service delivery, reduces work error, increases job satisfaction, enhances better policy implementation, and better directs employees' efforts towards organizational goals. Challenges facing employees' participation include assumed poor knowledge and skill of employees; lack of trust of employees by top management that limit their participatory space; management unwillingness to share information with junior staff; and the traditional top-down decision making approach to management.*

KEYWORDS: employees, participation, decision making, implementation, performance, local government administration

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Local Government administration was established as the third tier of government for a number of reasons as listed in the Fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These functions, among others, include Economic planning and development of the state and its area of jurisdiction; Maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; Development of agricultural and natural resources; Provision and maintenance of health services; Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, drains and other public highways. The major intention in establishing this tier of government is to provide essential services to the people at the

grassroots and bring government impact down to their level. They were to take responsibility for functions peculiar to their local environment which may be too cumbersome for state and federal governments to concern themselves with. It was also meant to enhance mass mobilization in support of government programmes in their local environments through mass participation at the grassroots. Again, this tier of government is meant to enlighten their constituencies on government activities in their areas since the rural population has more access to local government administration than to state and federal levels of government.

The process of harnessing the local input into governance through the participation of the people at the grassroots is meant to generate the views of the local masses on what their needs are and how best to address them in order to aid the efforts of state and federal governments in ensuring that programmes and projects cited at local levels truly meet the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries. This is enhanced through contributing to discussions, direct efforts, and volunteering information, which would otherwise not have been available to usually distant state and federal levels of government, on how to enhance good governance across the country and for all levels. The fulfillment of these necessary functions requires significant participation of the local people in the governance process.

Participation of the local people in governance may be perceived from three perspectives. The first is through the community political process such as town hall meetings of local associations, town unions, age grade association, development associations and other groups that articulate and transmit local opinions to formal government structures. Secondly, participation can come through the electoral process when constituents participate in the election of representatives charged with the responsibility of representing, presenting and protecting local interest in the wider formal political systems like the executive and legislative arms of government. Thirdly, it could also be through formal engagement, through employment, of the local people in the local government administrative process. This is where the local people participate in the decision and implementation processes of the third tier of government that concern them directly.

This third dimension of participation is very crucial because good decisions reached through the political process can be truncated at the point of implementation if not properly managed by those that can reasonably assume ownership of such programmes. But where the beneficiaries of such policies own the process and fully participate in their implementation process, such programmes and policies are more likely to be actualized. One of the challenges that have affected local government administration is the level of participation of the work force in the decision and implementation processes.

It need to be noted that the bulk of junior employees in the local government administration are usually recruited from the local government area and are primary stakeholders. Only a small percentage of local government employees, usually few senior staff, come from outside the local government. Consequently participation of employees in decision making and implementation is more or less akin to the

participation of the local people in those processes. Participation in decision making naturally gives rise to the ownership of the implementation process by those involved but where this is lacking in real terms, the achievement of good governance at the grassroots level will be limited. It can then be safely assumed that if the ownership level through participation is high, the successful implementation of decisions will equally be high, everything being equal.

However, it is important to note the evidence of experience that both the political and administrative structures sometimes impede sufficient participation of the local people, through employees, in the decision and Implementation processes. Whenever there is impediment in participation by employees, more often than not, they are faced with the disposition of impersonal implementation of the directives of their superiors since they were not afforded the opportunities to make inputs in the decision process where such input is necessary to enhance overall policy outcome. In such instances, decisions are often handed down to subordinate staff without encouraging them to contribute to, and own both the process and outcome through enlisting their participation in the decision making process. The result of entrusting the implementation of policies and programmes to staff that are both alienated and detached from the assignment they are required to perform is poor performance output of policy goals and objectives. The natural outcome of such impersonal disposition by those charged with policy and programme implementation is poor performance, and by extension, the failure of the administration to actualize its intended goals and objectives.

In the Local Government System across the country, there has been noticeable apathy, lethargy and non-challant attitude by a good number of employees towards their job assignments. There is a prevailing culture of lateness to work, absenteeism, frequent expression of anger and grumbling against the system, and persistent indication of low morale among employees. Consequently, a good number of employees have been unable to deliver on their jobs efficiently and effectively. This provided the justification for the debate some years back in the National Assembly and during the National constitution amendment conference, as to whether the Local government System should still be retained or scrapped. The controversy arose because its continued relevance as the third tier of the Nigerian governance system has become questionable since its expected impact is not being felt as desired.

Giving employees opportunities to participation in decision making and implementation process assures them of their recognition, empowerment, flexibility and freedom to use of their discretion in pursuing organizational goals. The recognition of their contribution in the decision process enhances their sense of ownership of both the goals and the process of achieving them as well as provides an internal motivation and drive they need to achieve organizational goals. This participatory space, if sufficiently accommodated and managed, often manifest in higher employee and organizational performance.

However, the decision making process in the local government administration in Nigeria is generally driven by the top political class and the middle administrative cadre, leaving little or no room for participation of the lower cadres of employees that

ultimately implement those decisions. Consequently, the sense of alienation felt by the lower class that are ultimately charged with actual implementation of those decisions result in their lack of interest, and sometimes total or partial commitment in the implementation of decisions made above them. This divide between those that make decision and those that implement them eventually result in poor coordination, commitment, and general employees' performance which ultimately contribute significantly to overall poor performance of local government administrations.

According to Gollan (2000), the efficiency of any organization is predicated upon having the right caliber of employees at all levels accompanied by their effective utilization from the decision-making process to implementation of organization's programmes. Thus, alienating the lower runs of employees from the decision making process naturally results in apathy and lack of commitment to organizational goals and their consequent resort to renegeing on their responsibilities where possible, and in fact may ultimately resort to anti organizational activities. It is common knowledge that some of these junior employees print revenue receipts with which they collect various revenues from the public without making returns to the authorities. They also engage in collusion with the public to reduce taxes by undercharging taxpayers and appropriating part of such taxes for themselves. These subversive tendencies can be traced partly to their not being fully engaged in the overall governance process of the administration.

Consequently, it is important to explore the limitations imposed on the performance of employees and selected local government administrations in Nigeria by limited participation in the decision and implementation processes. It is common knowledge that employees that participate in decision making, defining organizational goals, setting targets, and determining courses of pursuing set goals usually display a higher level of commitment to achieving those goals than those who do not. In other words, employees are generally more committed to goals they took part in setting than those handed down to them without their involvement. This paper shares the view that the lack of sufficient space some local government employees face in determining organizational direction and its processes through more engaging participation is one of the crippling factors responsible for the poor performance of local government administration in Nigeria.

The questions that thus agitate the mind in this study revolve around: What is the level of employee participation in decision making in these local government administrations; What are the consequences of that level of participation on employees' performance and commitment, and the overall performance of the local government administration; and What are the challenges impeding employee participation in decision making in the local government administration? In seeking answers to the above questions, the paper identified possible factors responsible for this alienation of local government employees from full participation in the decision making and implementation processes, and proffered solutions for their enhancement as a way of guaranteeing better policy outcomes and performance of local government administration in Nigeria. It therefore assumes a positive correlation between the level

of participation in the decision and implementation processes and the level of performance output of employees, and by extension, the ultimate performance output of local government administration in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee participation

Participation according to Sagie and Aycan (2003), borders on the interaction between direct superiors and their subordinates in the process of planning and decision making. When employees are involved in this interaction from the point of deciding their work programme to how it will be pursued, even if their views are not eventually taken, it gives them a good sense of belonging and ownership of their work assignment. Luthans (2005) expressed a similar view that participation is a social process by which people become self involved in an organization and want to see it work successfully. Participation also provides opportunities for people involved in the same work environment to share information, solve problem and take decisions together either as individuals or groups (Ackers, Marchington, Wilkinson & Dundon, 2006). Apostolou (2000) suggested some modalities that can be employed in engaging employee participation to include advocating for suggestion, encouraging team work, developing focus groups, opinion surveys, and self-directed work groups.

Participation is not however limited to direct input of support to the organizational process but also include having the liberty and opportunity given to employees to express grievances and complaints in a work context to top management of an organization with a view to influencing the way things are being done (McCabe & Lewin, 2000; Richardson *et al* 2004). Banfield & Kay (2008) also view participation from the “*Pluralism perspective*” where different groups in the organization coexist in a state of partial and mutual interdependence. Participation here can be expressed in terms of conflicting perspectives which are usually resolved through institutional mechanisms such as collective bargaining and arbitration that affords employees the opportunities to express their views. Participation may also come in the form of delegated authority where subordinates are allowed greater space and freedom in controlling their job performance (Noah, 2008). Also in the view of Scully, Kirkpatrick & Locke (2005), participation can offer employees various levels of influence in the decision making process, ranging from formally established consultative committees to the development of good relations with managers or supervisors at an informal level.

However, participation is not merely being engaged physically in organizational activities, but involves power sharing in the place of deciding what need to be done and how it should be done. This perspective was expressed by Butler and Glover (2007) by describing employee participation as being typically and fundamentally power oriented through joint decision making and co-determination. In sharing organizational powers, employees experience a sense of belonging, recognition and responsibility that enables them own organizational engagement rather than serving as mere instruments that management uses to achieve their defined goals and objectives. Newstrom & Davis (2004) described this dimension of participation as encompassing involvement,

contribution and responsibility. The ultimate goal of employee participation is to provide conducive environment for employees to exercise reasonable level of freedom and autonomy in making choices relating to their work (Agwu and Odele, 2014).

The willingness of organizational leaders to relinquish some level of control to their workers to create space for their contributions usually enhances organizational performance (Brown, 2012). Where organizational managers deliberately encourage participation, employees give their best in ensuring that organizational goals are achieved. But where such space is not given, they tend to withdraw to mere job activities. According to Coleman (2004), although the management may not agree with every suggestion brought up by employees, how those ideas are received or rejected is critical to how employees perceive their level of involvement in the organization, and by extension, their job input.

Implications of Employee Participation for Their Performance

Participation of employees in decision making, planning and implementation process of organizations and institutions has significant influence on their performance because it exerts considerable influence on their perception of their relationship with their organization. This perception in turn fires up or dampens their commitment to the organization depending on whether or not they are afforded the opportunity to participate. Again, it generally motivates employees to contribute to organizational operations by releasing their creativity to achieve organizational objectives. It further helps employees understand their roles and organizational expectations in achieving organizational goals by encouraging them to accept responsibility for their group and organization's activities.

Furthermore, it provides them with the opportunity to take part in influencing decisions that affect their work especially where they are directly responsible for implementing those decisions, bearing in mind that they usually have more experiential knowledge and current information about their specific work processes than their superiors, and as such are better placed to deploy such knowledge to their jobs if given the opportunity to contribute to decisions affecting how their jobs are performed. This opportunity to express themselves in choosing the most suitable operational option increases job satisfaction and motivate them to achieve higher performance. Again, involvement in decision making allows frontline employees who are closest to organization's clients to make experiential input in the planning and execution process.

In the area of employee commitment, Bhuiyan (2010) shared the view that employees are more likely to be committed to organizational goals if they are engaged in the decision making and goal setting processes. It also helps to resolve conflicts and reduce differences between employees and the management since both parties contributed to the final decision on the work process. Furthermore, by giving workers increased access to management information through participation, mutual trust and commitment are enhanced. Again, it strengthens the possibility of meeting organizational expectation due to better understanding of what the desired outcomes are and how they can be achieved; it enhances employees' commitment to organizational goals arising from the

sense of ownership achieved through the participatory process. This sense of ownership, according to Luthans (2005) supports organizational productivity very positively.

Some other benefits of employee participation identified by Kuye and Suleimon (2011) include quality Improvement, better information flow, acceptance of decisions through a sense of joint ownership, more effective achievement of organizational goals, development of shared norms and values leading to inter-dependence in the relationship between organisation members based on collaboration, as opposed to win-lose conflict situation. Other benefits pointed out by Moorhead and Griffin (2004) includes reduction in staff absenteeism, turnover and enhanced job satisfaction. Still other benefits identified by Preuss and Lautsch, (2002) include organizational flexibility. Again, Kemelgor (2002) is of the opinion that deep employee involvement in decision making widens and maximizes viewpoints and increased diversity of perspectives in planning and decision making. Williamson (2008) also shares the opinion that participation provides employees the opportunity to use their private information, which may not have been available to organizational management and as such lead to better decisions. Horsford (2013) also opined that encouraging employee participation gives organizational management the privilege of having a better understanding of employees' mindset with a view to initiating policies that would address staff concerns that affect their performance and the organization's overall output.

Stark (2010) also shared the view that involving employees in decision making is a key to employee engagement since there is a positive correlation between how involved employees are in the decision making in their department or team and their overall morale, motivation, and satisfaction with their jobs. From his study, organizations that have higher level of employee involvement in decision making show higher levels of employee motivation and satisfaction. Stark (2010) stressed that when employees are involved in decision making, they feel valued and significant to organizational success and consequently hike their level of effort and commitment to retain that ranking. Again, since employees are partly responsible for the decisions made, they are more readily disposed to take responsibility for its implementation and correct possible deviations in performance outcome.

Challenges to Employee Participation

However, despite all the benefits of employees' participation, there are challenges often faced in the course of driving participatory management in organizations. One of them identified by Behbahan (2012) 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, the attitude of organization's management to encouraging employee participation has often posed serious challenge where such attitude is negative. But where it is positive, participation will be greatly encouraged.

Johnson (2012) also observed that since participation is an aspect of employee 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 them make informed contributions. Sometimes, presenting several alternatives and allowing employees to choose from them may be as effective as if they thought of the alternatives themselves. Finally there is a need to visibly integrate employees' suggestions, where they are accepted, in the final decision and implementation plan to enable them know that their contributions count. This creates a sense of commitment, motivation, ownership and job satisfaction in them.

Again, 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 the 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.

Finally, Banfield and Kay (2008) further share the view that subordinates who question the views of their superiors may be mistaken as trouble makers and threats to organization's authority and as such should be, at best distanced from participation, and at worst disengaged from the organization. This stance poses strong limitations to employees' participation in the decision making process.

Employee Performance

The performance of local government administration can be evaluated by the level of success achieved in the attainment of the goals and purposes for which they were set up. This can be measured using some performance indices highlighted by Bhatti, Awan and Razaq (2014) that include Quality, flexibility, time, safety, financial performance, cost, employee satisfaction, learning, growth, environment/social performance, customer satisfaction, and delivery reliability.

According to Boyle (2000), performance measurement is a vital element in the successful operation of performance management in the public service. He defined performance management as a process for establishing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved, and an approach to managing people that increases the probability of achieving success. He specified three main levels of performance as strategic, service programme, and team/individual. Again, three perspectives on performance are also specified to include service delivery (emphasizing customer expectations and needs); financial management (emphasizing the wise and prudent use of public money and value for money); and human resource management (emphasizing the important role of employees in delivering quality services).

Performance management generally refers to the system and process through which organizations Set work goals; Determine performance standards; Evaluate performance results; Assign and evaluate work; Provide and exchange performance feedback; Determine/identify training and development needs and opportunities; Allow supervisors and those they lead gain a shared understanding of work expectations and goals; Create and sustain a workplace environment that achieve continuous improvement of staff; Help employees to adapt well to change; and Encourage creativity (Improvement and Development Agency, 2006). All these different elements in performance management are fundamentally associated with a cooperative operation between the management and other employees. It is not possible to achieve the above goals where lower level employees are not given ample opportunity to participate reasonably in the decision making and implementation process.

The different views on employee and organizational performance lay emphasis on quality and quantity of output as well as the cost implications of service delivery. These all border essentially on enlisting the participation of employees in defining organizational goals, agreeing on how they will be pursued, and evaluating performance output. In other words, the centrality of participation in this process is a major determinant of the performance of both individual employees and that of the local government administration in general.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on Peter Drucker's theory of Management by Objective (M.B.O) whose principles involve performance appraisal, motivation, strategic planning, manager performance and development, work performance and attitude, and setting of goals and standards. These principles are relevant to employee participation in decision-making and implementation as it involves setting clearly defined objective. It follows therefore that if objectives are set by top management without the input and participation of subordinates and other employees down the line, the chances of successful achievement of those objectives cannot be guaranteed.

Also in their contribution Pride, Fraedrich, and Ferrell (2000:242) postulate that

Management by Objective is a motivation process in which managers and their subordinates collaborate in setting goals. The primary purpose of Management by Objective is to clarify the roles that the subordinates are expected to play in reaching the organization's goals; it allows subordinates to participate in goal setting and in performance evaluation, thus increasing their motivation.

Elkins (2002: 78) further opines that Management by Objective "rests on the process of agreement, consultation, compromise, support and contract that go on between a superior and a subordinate." It is therefore imperative from the views of these authorities that employee participation is a crucial element in performance management and without enlisting their participation, organizational and individual performance is bound to be compromised.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is an empirical research using survey design approach that examined the perception of employees on how they felt the level of their participation in decision making affect their performance in their local government administrations. The population of the study was taken from three local government authorities in Enugu urban made up of Enugu East (526), Enugu North (746), and Enugu South (649) giving a total population of 1972 employees. A sample size of 331 employees was taken from the population using the Taro Yamane proportional sampling formula for determining sample size and its allocation. The sample size was distributed to the three local government areas as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1.

S/N	Local government	Senior staff	Junior staff	Population	Sample size	Percentage
1	Enugu East	125	401	526	91	27
2.	Enugu north	266	480	746	128	39
3	Enugu south	243	406	649	112	34
	Total	634	1287	1921	331	100

Population and sample distribution

The research instruments used for data collection were questionnaire. Interviews were used to corroborate the responses received through the questionnaire where necessary. The sampling technique used was a combination of purposive, stratified and simple random sampling. This combinations helped to ensure that those that have informed knowledge of the subject matter were reached; that the opinion of different categories of employees were harnessed; and that members of uniform population were given equal chance of being sampled. Returned questionnaire were 294 out of the 331 distributed. Frequency tables, percentage and bar charts were used for data presentation and analysis.

FINDINGS

In summarizing the findings of this study, a number of issues are hereby highlighted. First, employee participation at the management and supervisory level were high while participation at lower level was poor.

Secondly, an overwhelming percentage of respondents believe that participation significantly increases the quality of service delivery, reduces work error, increases job satisfaction, enhances better policy implementation, and better directs employees' efforts towards organizational goals. All these have been attributed to putting all hands on deck as a team with common understanding of organization's goals and how to achieve them. Participation was thus seen as a tool that affords employees' enough space to contribute their best to organizational planning and programme implementation.

Thirdly, on the challenges facing employees' participation, denial of participation due to assumed poor knowledge and skill of employees was not considered a significant factor by respondents. However, lack of trust of employees by top management in allowing them sufficient participatory space was very significant and as such a very strong factor in limiting employees' participation. Again, management unwillingness to share information with junior staff through participation in decision making was quite significant. Finally, the contribution of the traditional top-down decision making approach to management alienated employees from meaningful participation.

DISCUSSIONS

The data generated from the study were presented in frequencies and percentages as shown in the tables. The discussion of the findings were presented qualitatively and quantitatively to covering the four main thrust of the study raised in the introduction. Percentages were approximated to whole numbers for convenience.

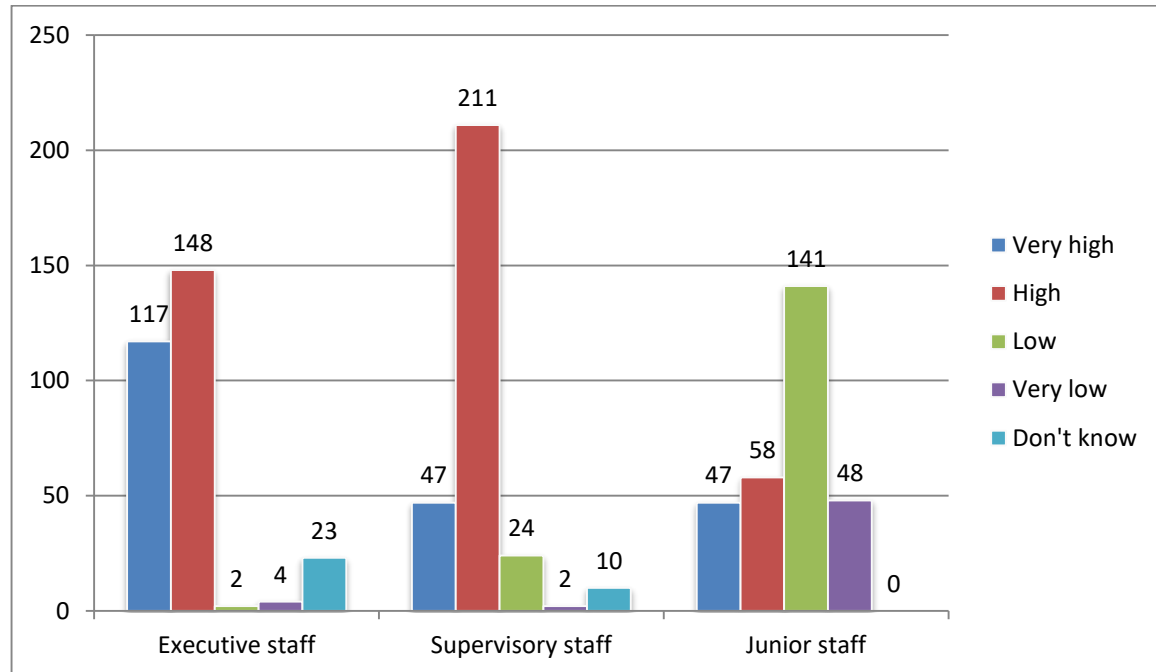
Extent of employees' participation in decision making

Table 2 below presented the extent of participation in decision making by the different categories of employees of the surveyed local government administrations.

Table 2

S/N	Category of staff	Very High	High	Don't Know	Low	Very Low	Total
1.	Executive staff	117 40%	148 50%	23 8%	2 1%	4 1%	294
2.	Supervisory staff	47 16%	211 72%	10 3%	24 8%	2 1%	294
3.	Junior staff	47 16%	58 20%	0 0%	141 48%	48 16%	292

Extent of employees participate in decision making

Figure 1

Extent of employees participate in decision making

Figure 1 above contains responses to the question on the extent of employees participate in decision making. 117 respondents affirm that Executive staff of the local government representing 40% participation very highly in decision making while 148 respondents representing 50 % opined that this class of employees participate highly in decision making. Only 2 respondents or 1% said it is low while 4 respondents representing 1% felt participation is very low. 23 respondents or 8% don't know. In summary 265 (117+148) respondents representing 90% (40%+50%) affirm that employee at the executive level of local government administration participate significantly in decision making while 6 respondents representing 2% feel otherwise.

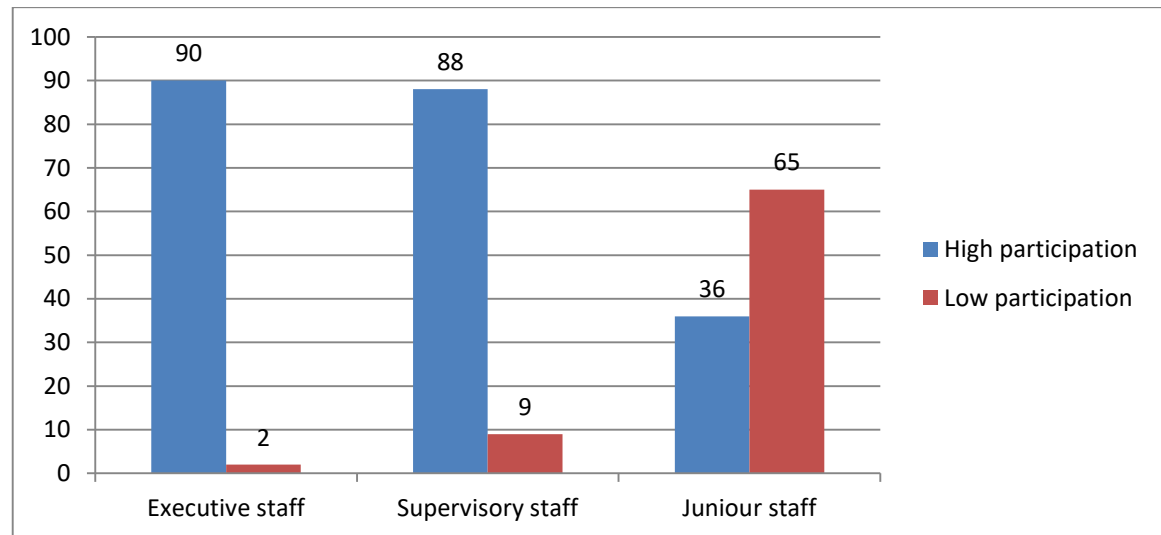
Again, 47 respondents representing 16% is of the view that participation at the supervisory level is very high while 211 respondents or 72% believes it is high. On the other hand 24 respondents representing 8% felt that participation in decision making at the supervisory level is low while 2 respondents representing 1% believes participation at this level is very low. 10 respondents or 3% percent don't know. In summary, 258 (47+211) respondents representing 88% (16%+72%) believes that employee participation at the supervisory level is significant while 12 respondents representing 9% feel otherwise.

At the level of junior staff 47 respondents representing 16% feel participation is very high while 58 respondents representing 20% said it is high. On the other hand 141 respondents representing 48% said participation is low while 48 respondents representing 16% said participation at the level of junior employees is very low. In summary, while 105 (47+58) respondents representing 36% (16%+20%) felt that

participation of junior employees were significant, 189 (141+48) respondents representing 64% (48%+16%) feel otherwise.

Summary

Figure 2



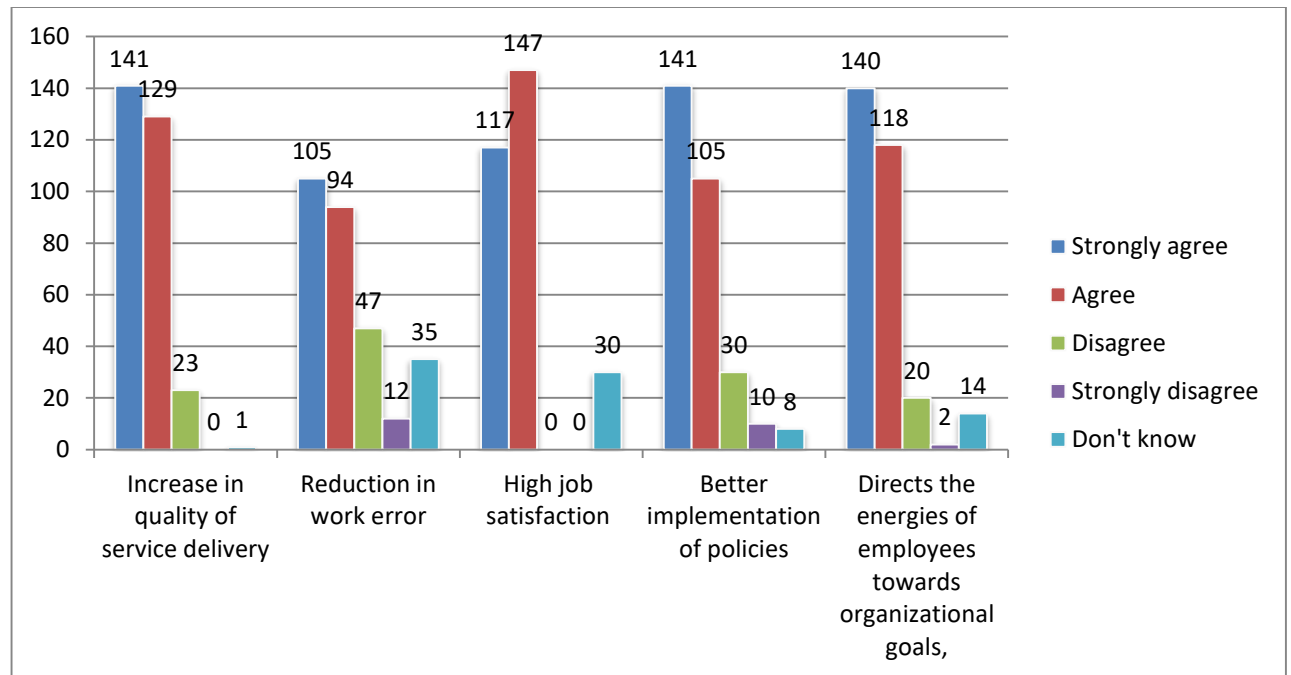
Participation of different categories of employees in the surveyed local governments.

In discussing the findings in this section, the paper limited the performance indicators examined in this study to: quality of service delivery; reduction in work error; job satisfaction; level of policy implementation; and the extent to which employees' energies are directed towards organizational goals.

Table 3

S/N	Response options	Very high	High	Don't Know	Low	Very low	Total
1.	Increase in quality of service delivery	141 48%	129 44%	1 0%	23 8%	0 0%	294
2.	Reduction in work error	105 36%	94 32%	35 12%	47 16%	12 4%	294
3.	Job satisfaction	117 40%	147 50%	30 10%	0 0%	0 0%	294
4.	Better implementation of policies	141 48%	105 36%	8 3%	30 10%	10 3%	294
5.	Employees Participation	140 48%	118 40%	14 4%	20 7%	2 1%	294

Implications of employee participation in decision making for their performance

Figure 3

Effect of employees' participation in decision making

The table above shows that 141 respondents representing 48% felt that employees' participation have very high effect on increasing the quality of service delivery while 129 respondents representing 44% felt is just has a high effect. Again, 23 respondents representing 8% felt that it has low effect while no respondent felt it has no effect at all. Only 1 respondent has no opinion. In summary, 270 (141+129) respondents representing 92% (48%+44%) believes that employees' participation is significant in increasing the quality of service delivery contrary to the opinion of 23 respondents who felt it only does so marginally. From the findings from the opinion of the respondents, employees' participation in decision making significantly affects quality of service delivery.

On whether employees' participation leads to reduction in work error, 105 respondents representing 36% felt it does so very highly while 94 respondents representing 32% believes it highly reduces work error. 47 respondents representing 16% are of the opinion that employees' participation reduces work error only marginally while only 13 respondents representing 4% feels it does not reduce work error. 35 respondents representing 12% percent had no opinion as to whether employees' participation reduces work error or not. In summary, 199 (105+94) respondents representing 68% (36%+32%) felt that employees' participation is a strong factor in reducing work error while 60 respondents representing 20% felt otherwise. It therefore follows that participation reduces work error.

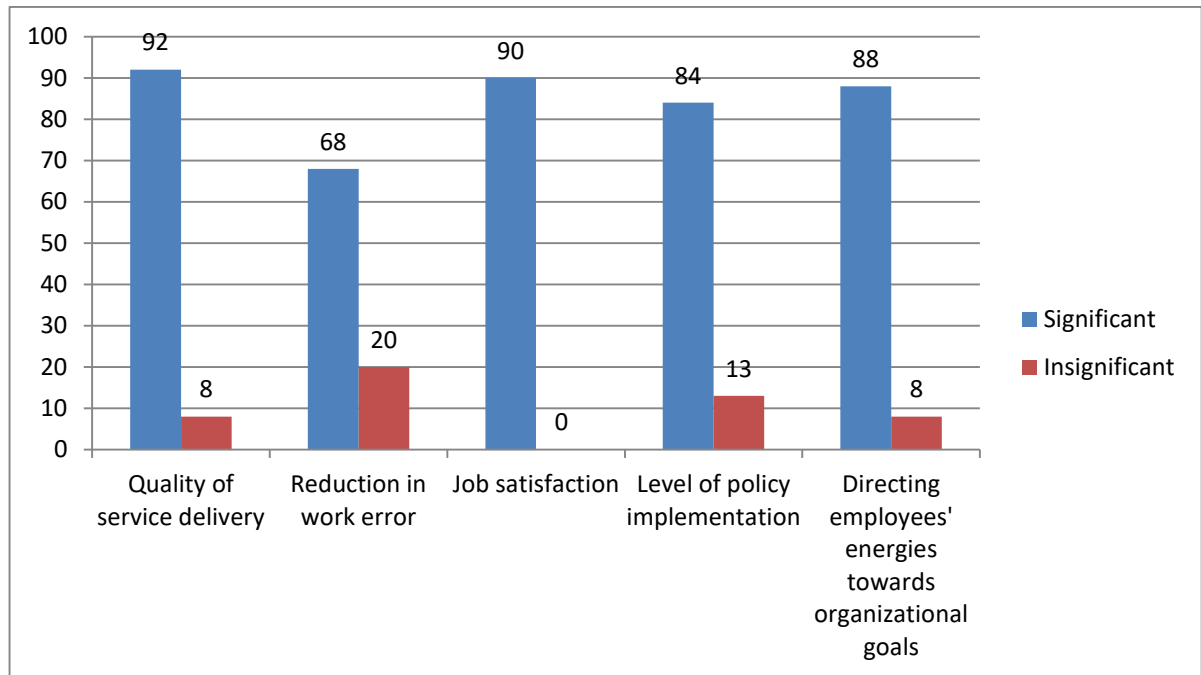
Opinion on the extent to which employees' participation leads to job satisfaction shows 117 respondents representing 40% believing it has a very high effect while 147 respondents representing 50% felt it has high effect. No respondent disagree that participation has effect on job satisfaction while 30 respondents representing 10% have no opinion. In other words 264 (117+147) respondents representing 90% (40%+50%) was of the view that employees' participation positively affects job satisfaction. The remaining 10% had no contrary opinion.

As to whether employee participation leads to better implementation of policies, 141 respondents representing 48% felt it has very high effect while 105 respondents representing 36% felt it has high effect. On the other hand, 30 respondents representing 10% felt employees' participation has no significant effect on achieving policy objectives while 10 respondents representing 3% felt it has no effect at all. 8 respondents representing 3% had no opinion. In summary, 246 (141+105) respondents representing 84% (48%+36%) were of strong view that policies will be better implemented if employees' were given enough participatory space. 40 respondents representing 13% felt the effect is insignificant.

Finally, on whether employee participation makes any different in directing the energies of employees towards organizational goals, 140 respondents representing 48% were of the opinion that it has very high effect while 118 respondents representing 40% felt it has a high effect. On the other hand, 20 respondents representing 7% believed the effect is low while 2 respondents representing 1% believed it has no effect. 14 respondent representing 4% had no opinion. In summary, 258 (140+118) respondents representing 88% (48%+40%) felt that employees' participation significantly affects the direction of employees' efforts in achieving organizations' goals while 22 respondents representing 8% felt it does not.

Summary

Figure 4 below shows the summary of how significant respondents consider employees' participation on the different performance indicators used in the study.



Summary of implications of employee participation in decision making

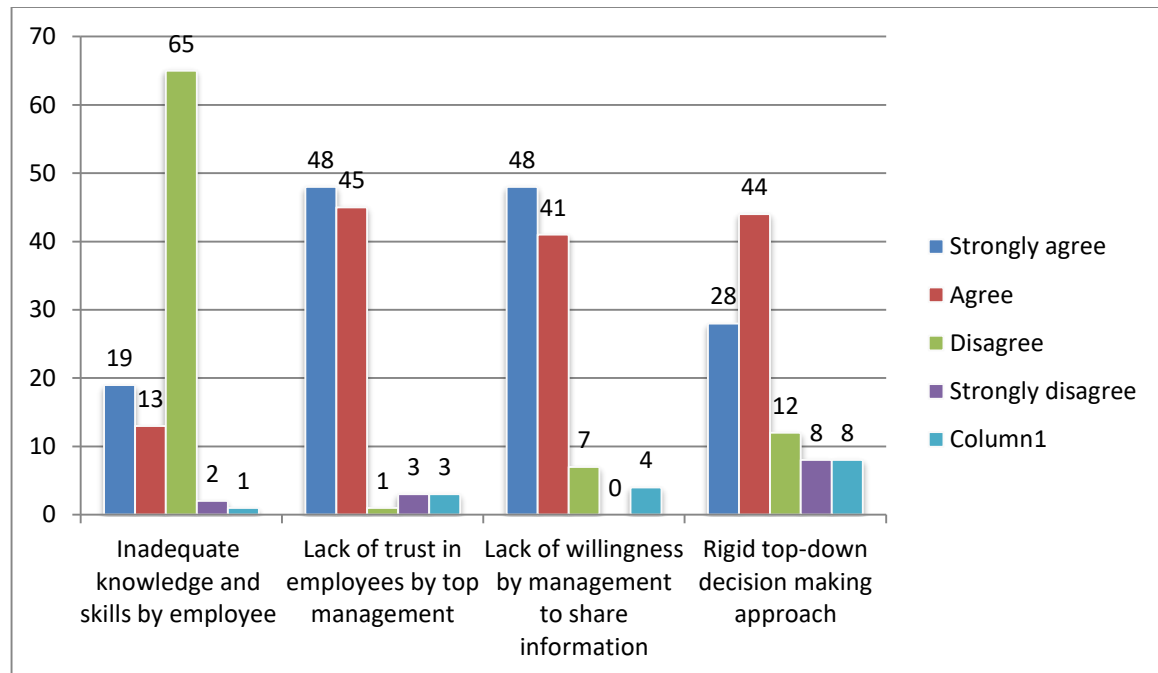
Challenges facing employees' participation in decision making

Table 4.3 presented data on the challenges facing employees' participation in decision making. In examining the strength of the possible challenges facing employees' participation, five response options were offered to respondents to choose from. They include the claim of inadequate knowledge and skills by employees to enable them participate; lack of trust on employees by top management; lack of willingness by management to share information; and rigid top-down decision making approach. These options were abbreviated in the table below. While data presentation separated all the response scaling, the analysis bulked the positive and the negative responses in the discussion.

Table 4

S/N	Response options	Very Strong	Strong	Don't Know	Weak	Very weak	Total	Mean
1.	Inadequate Knowledge	55 19%	40 13%	4 1%	190 65%	5 2%	294	2.5
2.	Lack of trust	141 48%	131 45%	8 3%	4 1%	10 3%	294	3.3
3.	Lack of willingness	141 48%	120 41%	11 4%	20 7%	2 0%	294	3.3
4.	Rigid top-down	82 28%	129 44%	23 8%	35 12%	25 8%	294	2.8

Challenges facing employee participation

Figure 5.

Challenges facing employee participation

On the issue of not allowing employees to participate in decision making because they are considered not to have adequate knowledge and skills needed for that function, 90 respondents (55+40) representing 32% (19%+13%) felt that this factor is a very strongly reason while 195 respondents (190+5) representing 67% (65%+2%) felt that it is not a strong factor. 4 respondents or 1% do not have any opinion.

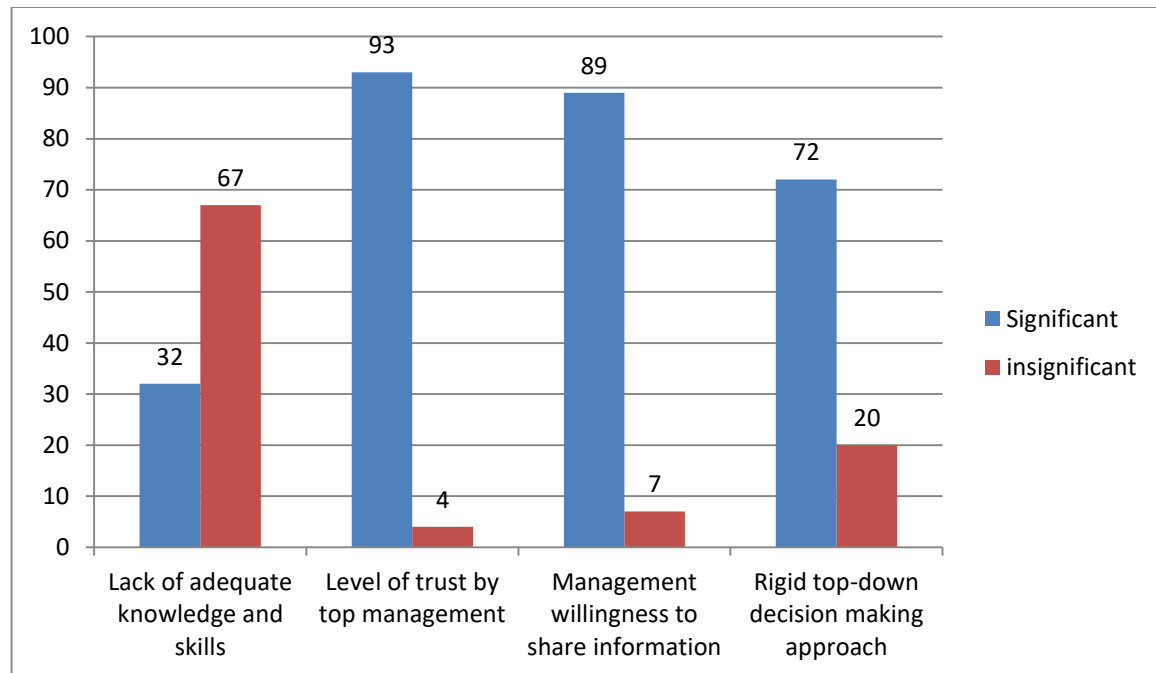
As to whether the level of trust top management has in employees contributes to poor participation, 272 (141+131) respondents representing 93% (48%+45%) believes it is a strong factor in discouraging participation. On the other hand, 14 (4+10) respondents representing 4% (1%+3%) felt it is not. 8 respondents representing 3% had no opinion to volunteer.

The issue of management willingness to share information recorded 261 (141+120) respondents representing 89% (48%+41%) strong agreement that it has significant influence on participation. On the other hand 22 (20+2) respondents representing 7% (7%+0%) felt it has no reasonable effect, while 11 respondents or 4% do not know.

On rigid top-down decision making approach, 211 (82+129) respondents representing 72% (28%+44%) believes that this approach strongly affect participation while 60 (35+25) respondents representing 20% (12%+8%) disagree. 23 respondents representing 8% do not have any opinion.

Summary

Figure 6 below shows the and how significantly respondents consider those challenges.



Summary of the challenges facing employees' participation in decision making

Implications to research and practice

From the foregoing findings and discussions, local government administrations in Nigeria need to enhance the knowledge and skill base of her employees through training and retraining to reduce the limitations placed on their participation by limited knowledge and skills. This prepares them to be thoroughly equipped to play their participatory roles in organizational planning and programme implementation at all levels.

Lack of trust of employees by top management that limit their participatory opportunities and management unwillingness to share information with junior staff can be addressed by adopting modern management principles that encourages participatory management, performance management and management by objectives. All these principles encourage participation, shared organizational goals and objectives and ways of achieving them.

The local government administration needs to institutionalize the culture of employee participation, commitment to employee involvement in decision making, broad-based decision making structure that accommodates the junior cadre, and openness in the operations of local government administrations.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, employees' participation at all levels has significant implications for the performance of both employees and organizations for the good reasons of ensuring that all employees fully contribute their quota in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. However, employees' participation faces a number of challenges which were also highlighted in the study.

Future Research

Future research need to focus on how best to persuade top managers to open up to the junior cadre by allowing them more participatory space in managing their work responsibilities without being apprehensive of them.

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