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LEVERAGING EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND PROCEDURAL JUSTICE FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING IN SELECTED PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN JOS METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The present-day workplace is constantly evolving and constitutes a vital challenge for effective decision-making. Many public organizations struggled to create systems that effectually foster solution-oriented decisions. For instance, a new McKinsey Global Survey revealed that 80% of organizations failed to excel due to delayed and bad decision-making. To address the issues of delayed and bad decision-making issues, this study examines procedural justice's mediating role in the relationship between employee participation and decision in public organizations among selected public policy-making organizations in Plateau State. The study adopted the quantitative research method with a survey (cross-sectional) design on a sample size of 400 employees. Furthermore, the study employed multiple regression tools for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27. Results revealed employee participation is a positive and significant predictor of effective decision-making and procedural justice. Similarly, procedural justice has a positive and significant link with effective decision-making, and equally mediates the relationship between employee participation and effective decision-making. It was recommended that elements of employee participation and procedural justice be combined for effective decisions and resolutions to issues. The study makes a new contribution in establishing a partial mediating effect of procedural justice in the nexus between employee participation and decision-making in the federal public service of Jos, Plateau State.In other words, when employee participation in organizational process consists of leadership, team involvement, program engagement, and individual responsibility can be coordinated by procedural justice of fairness, respect and transparency to foster effective decision-making.

Keywords: ***Employee Participation, Procedural Justice, Decision-making, Public Organizations***

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Introduction

The present-day workplace is constantly evolving and constitutes a vital challenge for effective decision making. Decision making is an intellectual and analyzable activity; meant to solve problems and attain desired results after considering different alternatives in organizations (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2023). Decision making statistics from the McKinsey survey revealed that only 20% of choices are effective for most organizations irrespective of being routine/delegated or infrequent. Organizational decision-making has historically been under the purview of upper management, with little input from those at lower levels of the management hierarchy, even though these individuals are required to implement such decisions (Joseph & Gaba, 2020; Onoh & Ndubuisi, 2021). Both the decision and its implementation are factored to produce the best quality, effective and most functional outcomes that can address both existing and emergent problems devoid of decision dilemmas within a reasonable timeframe. To achieve such outcomes, the participation of employees in corporate management initiatives is crucial (Bendix, 2010).

Employee participation is crucial in fostering higher goal outcomes in organizations. In line with this, Leighninger (2017) viewed employee participation as the culmination of an employee's knowledge, influence, and involvement in the operations of their organizations. Additionally, Arnstein advances that people must have some degrees of control over actions that have an impact on themselves rather than being used as a rubberstamp (Bammer, 2022). Thus, effective employee participation can generate brainstorming sessions and feedback for organizational development (Gogatz & Azavedo, 2023; Heubner & Zacher, 2021). Given these, this study focuses on the employee leadership role, team involvement, and independent responsibility in gauging the concept of employee participation in organizational activities. Based on empirical evidence, employee participation is a significant predictor of effective decision making (e.g., Mambula et al., 2021; Onoh & Ndubuisi, 2021; Yusuf &Ogunnaike, 2022). In an effort to improve the contribution of employee participation, Lau (2014) found the importance of linking employee participation to procedural justice.

Procedural justice is of immense importance in quality organizational decision-making research. The central emphasis of procedural justice is treating every employee with fairness, respect, and transparency (Nivettem et al., 2022). Procedural justice is optimized when there is room for corrections and the prevention of biased, inexact, and unethical processes in organizations (Wiseman & Stillwell, 2022). Similarly, Nam et al. (2022)assert that procedural justice fosters good qualities of neutrality in employee treatment without status recognition. Paik & Packard (2024) observed that broadening procedural justice in the organization diminishes unfair treatment. Tyler and Mentovich et al. (2023) found the sufficiency of procedural justice practice as a crucial factor in decision acceptance.

There are limited studies that link employee participation to decision making (e.g., Maree, 2016; Monanu et al., 2020). These studies made consistent findings that there is an insignificant statistical relationship between employee participation and decision making. Furthermore, the studies did not consider the possibility of introducing procedural justice into the relationship. Consequently, this study examines the mediating role of procedural justice in the relationship between employee participation and decision in public organizations among selected public policy making organizations in Plateau State.Public organizations play a vital role in providing essential services to citizens, and their effectiveness is crucial for societal well-being. The motivation behind this study is the potential to provide valuable insights into how public organizations in Jos Metropolis can improve their effectivenessby making better, fair, transparent and inclusive decisions with relevant policy implications.Additionally, the study fills the lack of methodological framework in Chekole (2021) by separating the concept

ofemployee participation from decision making to form independent and dependent variables respectively.

Conceptual Framework

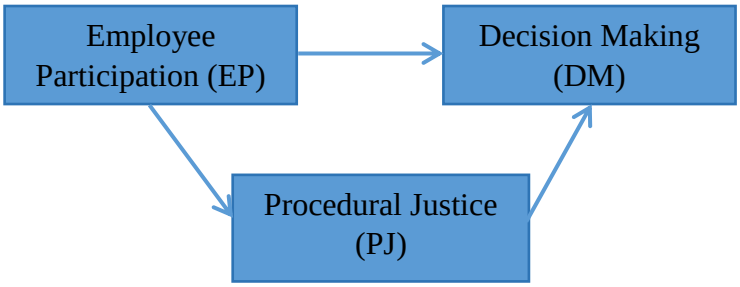


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Despite the potential benefits of effective decision making in organizational success, many public organizations still struggleto create systems that effectually foster solution-oriented decisions. Whether strategic, tactical or operational level assessment, effective decision making in modern time is better when being faster, agile, ethical, comprehensive and accurate (Saputra et al., 2022; Truog & Manh, 2021). These may not be completely tenable with public organizations' decision making in Nigeria due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and red tapism (Bot et al., 2022). Decision making not conforming to present day-to-day pace of challenges could have huge consequential implications on the organizations concern and even beyond depending on the purpose of such organization, especially the public ones. For example, a new McKinsey Global Survey revealed that 80% of organizations failed to excel due to delayed and bad ineffective decision making (De-Smet et al., 2024).Based on the aforesaid, the following hypotheses have been advanced.

H_{o1}: Employee participation does not significantly affect decision making of public organizations in the Jos metropolis.

Ho_2: Employee participation does not significantly affect procedural justice of public organizations in the Jos metropolis.

Ho_3: Procedural justice does not significantly affect decision making of public organizations in Jos metropolis.

Ho_4: Procedural justice does not play a mediating role in the relationship between employee participation and decision making of public organizations in the Jos metropolis.

Theoretical Framework

The study integrated employee engagement and stakeholder theories to explain relationships among the variables. Employee engagement theory (developed by Kahn in 1990) also known as theemployee voice theory assumes that when employees are given a voice in decision making, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organization (Hall, 2006). It is based on the idea that employees want to be involved in organizational process and also make decisions that affect them, which can lead to improved performance and well – being. Accordingly, employee engagement theory is seen as "an individual's positive attitude, characterized by meaningfulness, safety, and availability, regarding work role in an organization. The theory defines three key elements of employee engagement namely; psychological connection to work, physical connection to work, and emotional connection to work (Kahn, 1990). Nevertheless, employee engagement theory is applicably limited for

focusing mainly on the perspective of employee connections to their organizations without providing ethical structure for employees to function.

On other hand, the introduction of stakeholder theory (developed by Freeman in 1984) chiefly anchors the relationships among employee participation, procedural justice, and decision making as they pertain to the public service. For Schaltegger et al., (2019), stakeholder theory affiliates business ethics and organizational management profoundly. Given this submission, it is ethical for a business to establish in its management systems the means to satisfy those who make the business of the organization succeed, both directly and indirectly. First among them is the employees who require rightful participation in the organizational process, while acknowledging their voice to be heard during decision making.

Therefore, Mahajan et al. (2023) drew a clear imperative between maximizing dividends for shareholders (e.g., employees) and satisfying the needs of stakeholders (like community, customers, suppliers, etc.). They further assert that stakeholder theory encourages organizations to acknowledge and consider their employees, who exist internally to the organization;promotes understanding and managing their needs, wants, and demands; and thus represents a holistic and responsible framework that goes beyond the focus of employees in decision-making processes; which, in turn, enables organizations to be strategic, maximize their value creation, and safeguard their long-term success and sustainability. The best way to achieve this is to ensure public organizations make employees part and parcel of the work process (participation), treat everyone's interest fairly (procedural justice), and take everyone's opinions seriously (decision making). This adequately justifies why the application of stakeholder theory underpins this study.

Methodology

This study adopted the quantitative research method in carrying out its investigation (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach is based on a cross-sectional descriptive survey, which allowed for data collection at a particular point in time in a predetermined and structural way. It also described specific characteristics of the study variables and generated data that allows for associations between two or more variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The justification for adopting the quantitative survey method design is based on the argument that the approach provides a suitable understanding from the results of the hypotheses to be tested (Creswell, 2014). More so, the organizational unit of analysis will be used so that respondents can provide information on behalf of their workplace. Additionally, the non-contrived setting will be used in order not to interrupt normal work activities during data collection.

The population for this study is made up of 2,779 public sector staff (both junior and senior staff) in 2 public sectors within Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. The sample size of the study is 400 determined using the prescribed formula of Yamane (1967) for determining sample size. The justification for using the Taro Yamane's formula to determine the sample size is that it allows inferences and conclusions drawn from the survey to be applied to the complete population from which the sample was drawn (Uakarn, et al., 2021). A stratified sampling technique was used in reaching out to survey the sample of the study. Furthermore, data were collected through a 5-Likert structuredscale with common method bias effectively controlled using both the procedural and statistical means (Tehseen et al., 2017). Variables of the questionnaire were operationalized while their measurements were adapted from previously validated scales. In this regard, decision-making was adapted from Lizarraga et al. (2009); employee participation scale was modified from Jian et al.'s (2020)employee engagement scale while procedural justice was adapted from Ledimo (2015).

Additionally, the questionnaire instrument was subjected to expert scrutiny until a content validity index (CVI) of above 0.7 was achieved (Zamanzadeh, 2015), whereas a pilot study of 40 public service employees was carried out to establish Cronbach's values of 0.70 (decision-making), 0.80 (employee participation), and 0.80 for procedural justice.Thestudy employed multiple linear regressions to perform data analysis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Above all, ethical issues (especially anonymity and informed consent) were taken into consideration both during the formation of the instrument and questionnaire administration.

Results and Discussion

Response rate indicates that out of 400 (100%) copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents during the survey, 83.8% were found valid for analysis. Also, the results of respondents' demographics revealed that more male (58.5%) participated in the survey than female (41.5%). Also, the age bracket of 36-45 participated in the survey the most 32.2%, followed by 30-35 years (28.4%). Furthermore, most (48.4%) of the participants have worked for 11 years and above in the civil service. Moreover, most (53.1%) of the respondents have attained tertiary level which cut across Certificate program, Diplomas, HND/B.Sc., and Postgraduate degrees, followed by professional qualifications.Consequently, to proceed with multiple regression analysis, the data was checked to satisfy 8 prerequisite conditions.

Table 1: Regression Coefficients of Direct Relationships

Relationship	Beta	Test Statistics	Sig.	Decision
Ho1: EP← DM	0.661	16.084	0.001	Reject
Ho2: EP← PJ	0.804	24.925	0.001	Reject
Ho3: PJ← DM	0.657	15.912	0.001	Reject

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2: Regression Results of Indirect Relationships

Model	Beta	Test Statistics	P-Value	Decision
(Constant)		18.761	0.001	
Ho4: EP← DM	0.375	5.607	0.001	Significant
PJ← DM	0.354	5.296	0.001	Significant

a. Dependent variable: Decision Making

Interpretation and Discussion

Hypothesis one (Ho1) results indicate a positive and significant (β=0.661, p 0.001< 0.05) relationship between employee participationand decision-making.The significance of the result is supported by t-value of 16.084which greater than 1.96 at two-tailed as advanced by Hair et al. (2020).This implies that when there is a collaboration where everyone's idea is valued, it will result in effective resolutions that address problems. This result is consistent with existing findings that employee participation aids good decision making which affects organizational performance/productivity positively (Chimaobi & Chikamnele, 2020; Mambula et al., 2021). Similarly, Yusuf and Ogunnaike's (2022) study found that employee participation supports work qualitydecisionsfor the achievement of set targets. The finding also aligns with the main emphasis of employee engagement theory that everyone needs to be heard in terms of voicing out pertinent concerns which may affect work and life quality (Hall,

2006). Likewise, the finding is emphasized by the stakeholder theory of salience where interests of diverse employees can be prioritized in accordance with power, legitimacy, and urgency of influence on an organization (Mahajan, 2023).

Hypothesis two (Ho2) results established a positive and significant (β=0.804, p 0.001< 0.05) relationship exists between employee participation and procedural justice in the public service of Nigeria, Plateau State. When the workplace values the initiative of every employee, making everyone feel vigorous arising from open communication, the public service employees will be confident that policies/procedures are applied consistently and transparently to every staff. When employees participate in the organizational process satisfactorily, it brings about a situation of neutrality and ethics in the workplace. This finding conforms to existing ones that found employee participation a significant predictor of procedural justice among working adults, subordinates and supervisors (Kumar & Jahari, 2016; Lau, 2014 Muhammad, 2004). A positive link between participation and procedural justice can be reflected in stakeholder satisfaction.

Hypothesis three (Ho3) results revealed that procedural justicehas a positive and significant (β=0.657, p 0.001< 0.05) effect on decision making.When public organizations operate a fair employee treatment policy and employees are treated equally, such organizations will end up making accurate and problem-solving decisions. The finding lines up with the outcome of Wang and Nayir (2010) who found that procedural justice helps managers to make effective decisions through encouragement initiatives and information sharing. Likewise, the adequacy of procedural justice practice enhances decision acceptance (Tyler & Mentovich, 2023). This also reflects internal stakeholder satisfaction when people who make the organization to succeed feel satisfied (Freeman, 1984).

Moreover, the results of test of hypothesis four indicated that procedural justice is a partial mediator of the relationship between employee participation and decision-making in the public service. This is because the effect of EPonDM significantly decreased from 0.661 in Table 1 to 0.375 in Table 2 after controlling for PJ.A partial mediator explains that though procedural justice is very important in the relationship, employee participation (in terms of leadership, team involvement, program engagement and individual responsibility) also drives positive decision-making. This implies that when there is a wide consultation approach in the workplace, every procedure is therefore based on ethics, dignity and transparency, and this brings about right and effective decisions responsible for organizational success and eventually bundled into national policy of importance. The finding collaborates well with the tenets of employee engagement theory and stakeholder theory.

Conclusion, Limitation and Recommendations

The study concludes that employee participation fosters a sense of fairness and justice, which in turn enhances decision quality and acceptance. This indicates that as federal public service in Plateau state prioritize fair organizational processes, they can leverage on the benefits of employee participation. This ensures combining the critical elements of employee participation (recognize employee values, skills and initiatives through individual responsibility, team involvement, program engagement and leadership) and procedural justice (impartiality) in pursuing result-oriented decisions and resolutions to issues.

This study has made unique contributions to knowledge by primarily validating a partial mediation effect of procedural justice in the relation between employee participation and decision-making in the selected federal public service of Plateau State. Consequently, the partial mediation effect has strengthened the theoretical frameworks of employee engagement

theory and stakeholders adopted in the study. As per the contribution of the study to policy, the findings highlight the significance of employee involvement in developing better national strategies for delivering quality decisions. While the findings were found to strengthen the concepts of federal public service administration on participative, fair and result-oriented procedures, it practically contributes that employee participation (for organizational procedure) can be isolated from decision-making as against common usage to form independent and dependent variables. The study is constrained for being conducted among two federal institutions inPlateau State, whereas other organizations within and outside the state may possess diverse characteristics that may affect empirical results contrarily.

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