IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING ON PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES: A CASE OF BAKERIES IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of employee participation in decision-making on organisational performance in bakery industries in Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 374 managers of bakeries in Kwara State, from which a sample size of 193 managers was determined using the Taro Yamane formula and selected through a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a Likert scale. The data obtained were analysed using one-sample t-test statistics to test the stated hypotheses. The findings revealed that communication and feedback significantly influence employees' innovation and creativity in bakery industries in Kwara State. Specifically, communication and feedback recorded a mean score of 3.74 (SD = 0.66) while employees' innovation and creativity recorded a mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.60), with t-values of 13.67 and 18.92 respectively at $p < 0.05$. Similarly, delegation of authority recorded a mean score of 3.68 (SD = 0.70) while employees' productivity and efficiency recorded a mean of 3.91 (SD = 0.58), with corresponding t-values of 11.90 and 19.27 at $p < 0.05$. The two hypotheses tested were rejected, indicating significant impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State, and significant impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State. The study concluded that effective communication and feedback mechanisms significantly improve employees' innovation and creativity, and delegation of authority also has a significant positive impact on employees' productivity and efficiency. Based on these findings, it was recommended that bakery industries in Kwara State should establish effective communication and feedback systems that allow employees to freely express ideas, suggestions, and concerns, and bakery owners and managers should adopt a more decentralised management approach by delegating appropriate authority to employees at different operational levels.

Keywords: Employee participation, decision-making, communication and feedback, innovation, creativity.

Introduction

Employee participation in decision making refers to a management approach in which employees are involved in the process of making important organisational decisions. This approach recognises that employees have valuable insights, knowledge, and expertise that can be leveraged to improve decision-making and enhance the overall effectiveness of the organisation. In the opinion of Kim (2017), employee participation in decision making can take many forms, which are consultation, whereby managers seek input from employees before making a decision, but the final decision remains with the manager; joint decision-making in which managers and employees work together to make decisions collaboratively; and delegation, that is, managers delegate decision-making authority to employees who have the necessary skills and knowledge to make decisions independently.

In addition, Kim (2017) sees participation in decision making as participative management. That is, a management style that encourages employees to be involved in decision making, problem solving, and goal setting. It involves creating a culture of collaboration and communication between management and employees, with the goal of increasing employee engagement and commitment to the organisation. Furthermore, it is employee involvement programme. These are formal programmes that aim to involve employees in decision making processes such as quality circles, suggestion schemes, and team-based problem solving, which are designed to increase employee engagement and motivation by giving them a voice in how the organisation operates (Fernández-Muñoz et al., 2018).

Van Dyne and LePine (2018) describe employee participation as employee voice. This refers to the ability of employees to express their opinions and ideas about work-related issues. Employee voice can be formal or informal, and can take many different forms, including direct communication with management, suggestion boxes, and employee surveys. The goal of employee voice is to create a culture of openness and transparency, where employees feel comfortable expressing their opinions and concerns. Employee participation in decision making, according to Kim (2017) is important to achievement of organisation goals, small and medium enterprises inclusive.

Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) refer to businesses that are relatively small in size and have limited resources compared to large-scale businesses. The definition of SMEs may vary depending on the country and industry, but generally, they are characterized by their smaller workforce, lower revenue, and asset value than large corporations. SMEs play a crucial role in economic development by creating employment opportunities, stimulating innovation, and contributing to the GDP of a country. They are also seen as a source of entrepreneurial talent and innovation, often leading to the development of new products and services.

Generally, SMEs are classified based on criteria such as number of employees, annual revenue, and assets. In the United States, for example, the Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a small business as one with fewer than 500 employees and annual revenue of less than $7.5 million for non-manufacturing industries, and fewer than 1,500 employees and annual revenue of less than $38.5 million for manufacturing industries.

In Nigeria, the definition of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has evolved over time and has been defined by different government agencies and organisations. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) defines small enterprises as those with less than 10 employees and assets of less than ₦5 million, while medium enterprises are those with between 10 and 49 employees and assets between ₦5 million and ₦500 million (Nigerian National Policy on MSMEs, 2021).

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) defines small enterprises as those with less than 100 employees and assets of less than ₦50 million, while medium enterprises are those with between 100 and 199 employees and assets between ₦50 million and ₦500 million (SMEDAN Act, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of employee participation in decision-making, many bakeries in Kwara State operate with weak participatory structures that are limiting employee contribution to organisational development. One specific problem is the ineffective communication and feedback system within bakery enterprises. In many cases, communication is largely top-down, with limited opportunities for employees to share ideas or provide feedback that could enhance innovation and creativity. This restricts employees' creative potential and reduces their contribution to organisational improvement. This challenge is supported by Ibrahim et al. (2026), who found that communication significantly influences innovative behaviour in bakery industries in Nigeria, noting that poor communication structures reduce employees' creativity and idea-sharing capacity in SME settings. Similarly, Adacha and Agoyi (2024) reported that workplace communication and interaction significantly influence employee creativity in Nigerian service SMEs, indicating that weak feedback systems may hinder innovation in small business environments.

Another problem relates to the low level of delegation of authority in bakeries, where decision-making is often centralised in the hands of owners and managers. This limits employees' autonomy and reduces their ability to make operational decisions, which negatively affect productivity and efficiency. When employees are not empowered to take responsibility or make decisions within their roles, organisational performance tends to suffer. This issue is supported by Shola and Johnson (2024), who found that delegation of authority has a significant positive effect on employee productivity and organisational performance in SMEs, implying that inadequate delegation reduces efficiency in business operations. Also, Samuel et al. (2024) established that employee participation in decision-making significantly enhances performance in Nigerian SMEs, further confirming that empowerment and shared decision structures improve productivity outcomes. However, no study had been carried out in Kwara State to find out the impact of employee participation in decision-making on performance of SMEs, especially in bakeries. Thus, this study sets to fill the gap.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine impact of employee participation in decision making on performance of small and medium scale enterprises. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State; and
2. determine impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State.

H_{01}: There is no significant impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State.

Literature Review

Concept of Employee Participation in Decision Making

Decision making is an essential process in any organisation, and it involves choosing between various options or alternatives (Kahneman, 2017). The process of decision making involves identifying the problem, generating possible solutions, evaluating the alternatives, and selecting the best course of action. According to Tversky and Kahneman (2018), effective decision making is crucial for organisational success as it helps to achieve goals and objectives while minimizing risks and maximizing opportunities. However, decision making is often a complex process that requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders and the consideration of numerous factors.

There are various approaches to decision making in organisations, including the rational decision-making model, the bounded rationality model, and the political model (Thaler, & Sunstein, 2018). The rational decision-making model involves identifying the problem, gathering information, identifying possible solutions, evaluating the alternatives, and selecting the best course of action. The bounded rationality model recognises that decision makers are limited in their ability to process information and often make decisions based on incomplete information. The political model recognises that decision making in organisations involves negotiations and power struggles between various stakeholders.

To facilitate effective decision making in organisations, as asserted by Grant (2021), it is essential to establish clear decision-making processes and procedures. This includes identifying decision-making roles and responsibilities, establishing criteria for evaluating alternatives, and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. It is also essential to ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and open to feedback. This can help to build trust among stakeholders and ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the organisation (Gino, 2018). Furthermore, organisations can improve their decision-making processes by investing in data analytics and decision support systems. These technologies can help decision makers to process large amounts of data quickly and efficiently and provide insights that can inform decision making.

Therefore, decision making is a critical process in any organisation. Effective decision making requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, the consideration of numerous factors, and a clear decision-making process. Organisations that invest in improving their decision-making processes are likely to be more successful in achieving their goals and objectives (Aronson, 2021).

According to Heath and Heath (2021), employee participation in organisational decision-making refers to the involvement of employees in the process of making important decisions that affect the direction and goals of the organisation. This concept recognises that employees have valuable insights, ideas, and expertise that can be leveraged to improve the quality of decisions and outcomes. The idea of employee participation is based on the belief that employees are the most important asset of an organisation, and that involving them in decision-making processes can enhance their motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. By giving employees a voice and involving them in the decision-making process, organisations can tap into the collective intelligence of their workforce and improve the quality of decisions.

Employee participation can take many different forms, ranging from informal discussions and feedback sessions to more formal mechanisms such as employee representation on management committees or boards. Some common examples of employee participation include suggestion schemes, focus groups, quality circles, and employee surveys (Bazerman, & Tenbrunsel, 2019). Benefits of employee participation in decision-making include improved morale, increased job satisfaction, greater commitment to the organisation, enhanced trust and loyalty, and higher levels of motivation and engagement. It can also lead to better decision-making, more effective problem-solving, and greater innovation and creativity. According to Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2019), there are different studies on employee participation in decision making in organisations.

Nighat and Muhammad (2017) conducted a study on employee participation in decision making in the banking sector of Pakistan. The study aimed to explore the relationship between employee participation in decision making and job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job performance. The study used a quantitative research design and collected data from 200 employees working in various banks in Pakistan through a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic information, employee participation in decision making, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. The results of the study showed a positive relationship between employee participation in decision making and job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job performance. The findings suggest that when employees are given a say in decision making, they feel more satisfied with their jobs, have a greater commitment to the organisation, and perform better. The study also found that the level of employee participation in decision making varies across different banks in Pakistan, with some banks offering more opportunities for employee participation than others. This highlights the importance of organisational culture and leadership in promoting employee participation in decision making. Overall, the study suggests that organisations should consider involving employees in decision making processes to enhance job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job performance.

Li and Wang (2018) investigated the relationship between employee participation in decision making and job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and turnover intentions. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 157 employees working in various organisations in China. The results of the study showed that employee participation in decision making was positively related to job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Furthermore, the study found that job satisfaction and organisational commitment mediated the relationship between employee participation in decision making and turnover intentions. Overall, Min Li's research suggests that employee participation in decision making can have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which in turn can reduce turnover intentions in the workplace. This highlights the importance of creating a participatory work culture that values employee input and involvement in decision making processes.

Zahid and Shahzad (2019) conducted a study on employee participation in decision-making, which focused on exploring the impact of employee participation on organisational performance in the Pakistani banking industry. The study used a quantitative research design, and data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employees of various banks. The study found that employee participation in decision-making had a positive impact on organisational performance, specifically in terms of improving employee motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organisation. Additionally, the study found that the level of employee participation in decision-making varied among different banks, with some banks offering more opportunities for employee involvement than others. The study concluded that promoting employee participation in decision-making can have a positive impact on organisational performance and recommended that organisations should strive to increase employee involvement in decision-making processes. The authors also suggested that further research could be conducted to explore the impact of employee participation on other aspects of organisational performance, such as innovation and productivity.

Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are an essential component of any economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, poverty reduction, and economic growth. According to Grant (2021), SMEs play a crucial role in the development of both developed and developing countries, and their performance is critical to the success of the economy.

Performance of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) can be assessed using various indicators such as sales growth, profit margins, market share, operational efficiency, and employee productivity. In line with this, SME performance is widely understood to depend on several critical factors, including access to finance, availability of skilled labour, market access, and government policy environment. Empirical studies have consistently shown that these indicators jointly determine the survival and growth of SMEs in both developing and developed economies. Access to finance remains one of the most significant constraints facing SMEs. Many SMEs operate with limited internal capital, which restricts their ability to invest in technology, expand production capacity, and improve productivity. Beck and Demirgüç-Kunt (2020) established that financial constraints remain a major barrier to SME growth, particularly in developing economies where credit markets are less efficient. Similarly, Kira and He (2021) found that limited access to finance significantly reduces SME investment capacity and growth performance. However, the emergence of microfinance institutions, commercial banks, and venture capital funding has improved financing opportunities for SMEs in recent years, although access remains uneven across sectors and regions.

Another critical determinant of SME performance is the availability of skilled labour. SMEs often face challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, which affects their ability to adopt new technologies and improve productivity. According to Adeola and Evans (2021), skill shortages significantly reduce operational efficiency and innovation capacity in SMEs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, Olawale and Garwe (2022) reported that human capital constraints remain a major impediment to SME competitiveness and growth performance. Market access is also a key factor influencing SME performance. Many SMEs struggle to penetrate larger and more competitive markets due to limited resources, weak distribution channels, and inadequate market information. However, digital technologies and e-commerce platforms have expanded market opportunities for SMEs, enabling them to reach wider customer bases beyond local boundaries. Ayyagari et al. (2021) found that improved market access significantly enhances SME sales growth and profitability by expanding customer reach and competitive advantage.

Government policies equally play a crucial role in shaping SME performance. Supportive policies such as tax incentives, simplified business registration processes, and access to public procurement opportunities can significantly enhance SME growth. Conversely, bureaucratic bottlenecks and unfavorable regulatory environments can hinder SME expansion. In a study by Siregar and Rahmawati (2022), government support policies were found to have a significant positive effect on SME sustainability and performance outcomes.

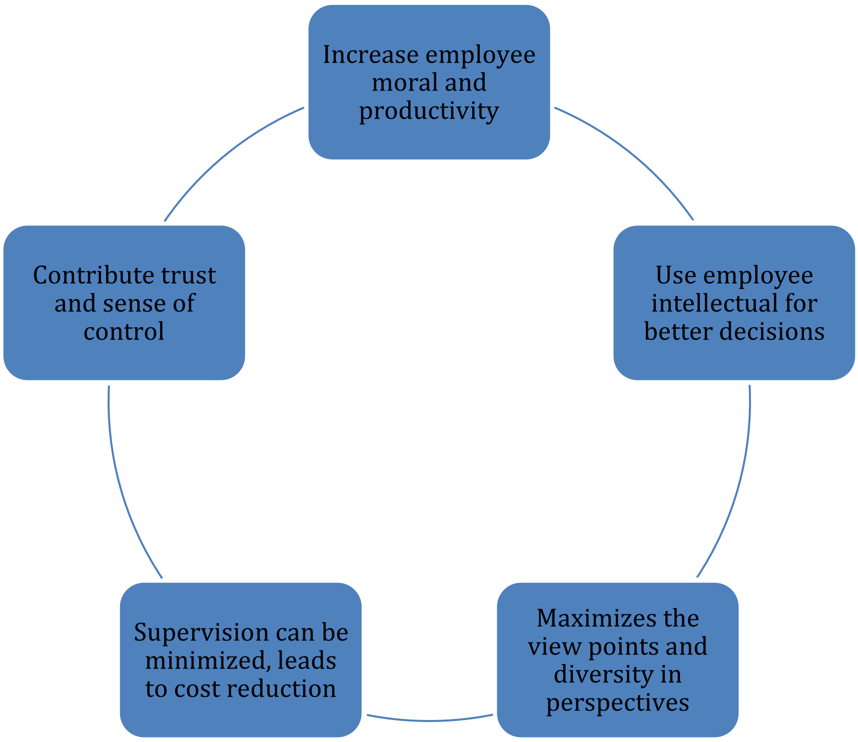

Figure 1: Advantages of Employee Participation in Decision Making

From the foregoing, the performance of SMEs is critical to the success of the economy. Access to finance, skilled labor, market access, and favorable government policies are essential for the growth and development of SMEs. As SMEs continue to play a vital role in economic growth and development, it is crucial for stakeholders to work together to address the challenges facing SMEs and create an enabling environment for their growth and success. The benefits of employee participation in decision making can include increased employee motivation and job satisfaction, improved decision-making quality, greater organisational agility and adaptability, and stronger relationships between employees and employers.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive design of survey type with quantitative data analysis. There are 374 bakeries in Kwara State as of April 1, 2026; which is an 3.88% increase from 2023 (Smartscraper, 2026). Out of this number of bakeries, 367 bakeries, which is 98.13% of all Bakeries in Kwara State, are single-owner operations, while the remaining 7, which is 1.87%, are part of larger brands. The top three cities with the most bakeries are Ilorin with 257 bakeries, Offa with 32 bakeries, Lafiagi with 4 bakeries. The population for this study consists of 374 managers of registered bakeries in Kwara State. The study adopted random sampling technique to select 193 managers of bakeries based on Taro Yamane formular for sample size (n) = N/1 + N(e)^2

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was administered to the managers of the selected bakeries as respondents. The Out of 193 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 150 copies were duly filled and returned. This gave a 77.7% return rate. Inferential statistics of sample t-test was used to test the two hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion of Findings

H_{01}: There is no significant impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State.

Table 1: T-test analysis of impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity

Variable	N	$\underline{x}$	S.D	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Communication and feedback	150	3.74	0.66	13.67			
					149	0.000	Reject Ho
Innovation and creativity	150	3.88	0.60	18.92			

at 0.05 alpha level (2-tailed)

Table 1 presents the descriptive and inferential statistics on the impact of communication and feedback on employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State. The descriptive results indicate that communication and feedback has a mean score of 3.74 with a standard deviation of 0.66. Similarly, innovation and creativity recorded a higher mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.60.

The t-test results further show that both variables are statistically significant when compared with the test value of 3.00. Communication and feedback produced a t-value of 13.67, while innovation and creativity yielded a higher t-value of 18.92, both with p-values less than 0.05. This indicates that the observed differences in means are statistically meaningful and not due to chance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, implying that communication and feedback significantly influence employees' innovation and creativity in bakeries in Kwara State.

H_{01}: There is no significant impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State.

Table 2: T-test analysis of impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State

Variable	N	$\underline{x}$	S.D	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Delegation of authority	150	3.68	0.70	11.90			
					149	0.000	Reject Ho
Employees' productivity and efficiency	150	3.91	0.58	19.27			

at 0.05 alpha level (2-tailed)

Table 2 presents both the descriptive and inferential statistics on the impact of delegation of authority on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State. The descriptive results show that delegation of authority has a mean score of 3.68 with a standard deviation of 0.70. Employees' productivity and efficiency recorded a higher mean score of 3.91 with a standard deviation of 0.58. The relatively low standard deviation values for both variables indicate that respondents' opinions are fairly consistent.

The t-test results further reveal that both variables are statistically significant when compared with the benchmark mean of 3.00. Delegation of authority produced a t-value of 11.90, while employees' productivity and efficiency yielded a higher t-value of 19.27, both with 149 degrees of freedom and p-values less than 0.05. This indicates that the observed mean differences are not due to chance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, implying that delegation of authority has significant impact on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakeries in Kwara State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that communication and feedback significantly influence employees' innovation and creativity in bakery industries in Kwara State. This implies that when employees are given opportunities to express ideas and receive constructive feedback, their ability to generate new ideas and contribute creatively to organisational processes is enhanced. This finding is consistent with the position of Adacha and Agoyi (2024), who reported that effective workplace communication significantly enhances employee creativity in Nigerian service SMEs. It also aligns with Liang et al. (2022), who established that communication visibility and employee voice strongly predict innovative behaviour, emphasising that open communication systems foster creativity and idea generation in organisations.

Similarly, the study found that delegation of authority has a significant impact on employees' productivity and efficiency in bakery industries in Kwara State. This suggests that when employees are empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for their tasks, their productivity and work efficiency improve significantly. This finding supports the study of Shola and Johnson (2024), which revealed that delegation of authority positively influences employee productivity and organisational performance in SMEs. It also corroborates Samuel et al. (2024), who found that employee participation in decision-making enhances performance outcomes by improving employee commitment, efficiency, and work output in Nigerian SMEs.

Therefore, the findings of this study are in agreement with existing literature, which consistently emphasises that participatory management practices such as effective communication, feedback, and delegation of authority are critical determinants of employee creativity, productivity, and organisational efficiency. This reinforces the view that SMEs, particularly bakery industries, can improve performance by adopting inclusive management approaches that empower employees and encourage active participation in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that employee participation in decision-making plays a significant role in enhancing the performance of bakery industries in Kwara State. Specifically, effective communication and feedback mechanisms were found to significantly improve employees' innovation and creativity, while delegation of authority was shown to have a significant positive impact on employees' productivity and efficiency. These findings indicate that when employees are actively involved in organisational processes through open communication and empowerment, they tend to perform better and contribute more effectively to organisational goals. Therefore, participatory management practices are essential for improving both employee outcomes and overall performance in bakery SMEs in Kwara State.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the impact of employee participation in decision-making on the performance of bakery SMEs in Kwara State, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. It extends existing literature by specifically demonstrating that communication and feedback significantly enhance employees' innovation and creativity, while delegation of authority improves productivity and efficiency within small-scale bakery enterprises. Furthermore, it bridges the gap in literature by focusing on operational-level constructs of participation, communication, feedback, and delegation, thereby offering a more detailed understanding of how decision-making processes influence employee performance in developing economy SMEs.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that

1. Management of bakery industries in Kwara State should establish effective communication and feedback systems that allow employees to freely express ideas, suggestions, and concerns. This will enhance employees' innovation and creativity, thereby improving overall organisational performance. Regular meetings, suggestion platforms, and open-door communication policies should be encouraged to strengthen employee voice in decision-making processes.

2. Bakery owners and managers should adopt a more decentralised management approach by delegating appropriate authority to employees at different operational levels. Empowering employees to make routine decisions will improve their productivity and efficiency, as it enhances their sense of responsibility, commitment, and ownership of organisational goals. Training programmes should also be introduced to equip employees with the necessary skills to effectively handle delegated responsibilities.

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