

Assessing the effect of employee participation in decision making: A Case Study of Kitwe city council

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Abstract—The study aimed at assessing the effect of employee participation in decision making. The study was guided by the following objectives: to determine the types of employee participation adopted by Kitwe City council; to establish factors that influence employee participation in decision making; to assess the relationship between employee participation and decision making and; to ascertain limitations to employee participation in decision making. The study adopted a descriptive case study and 50 participants from the council were picked using random and purposively sampling.

Based on the findings it was concluded that employee participation in decision making enhances organizational performance. Employee participation in decision making is critical in enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, productivity and performance. The study revealed a employee participation in decision making, is influenced by organizational structure, organizational culture, employee skills and experience, knowledge of an employee, job design and motivation as well as employee engagement. The study further revealed that the relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational performance, the study indicated that the employee participation contribute positively to organizational performance. With regards limitations of employee participation in decision making, it was revealed that employee participation in decision making leads to conflict of interest and delaying the process of making decisions. Finally, the study recommended that management should encourage participation of members of staff in decision making to avoid conflicts and tension between management and other employees.

Index Terms—Assess, effect, employee participation, decision making, Kitwe city council

I. Introduction

Globally, it is argued that in the present scenario of high competitiveness among companies and public establishments, employee participation in decision making has become recognized as a managerial tool for improving organizational performance and enhancing competitiveness (Moshen & Sharif, 2020). It has been observed in the past years, that organizational management practice demand that employer/management would anticipate that workers will do the work that is put before them. Although this was perfectly a typical method of getting results through others in the early days of assembly line and scientific management, it is no longer accurate of today's business (Ezennaya, 2011). The trend has changed to the extent that management expects more from its employees than doing merely what is placed before them. It has also changed in that workers expect that more can be gotten from them than by simply working according to the direction of the boss.

According to Ikechukwu, (2021), “many organizations are now trying to transform from the old custom of authoritarian organizational style to a way of working which is democratic and participative”. In this sense, managements are allowing their employees to contribute opinions and some are beginning to involve

employees more in the process of making organizational decisions (Alsughayir, 2016). This is called participation or participatory management (Gresely, 2015).

According to Orok et al., (2025) workers frequently feel disenfranchised as a result of being left out of decision-making processes, which lowers their commitment and productivity. Additionally, top-down decision-making methods inhibit innovation, disregard insightful employee opinions, and promote a disengaged culture. In an attempt to address the issue of insufficient employee involvement in decision-making, some researchers, management scholars, and corporate organizations have frequently concentrated on topics like regular meetings, training and development initiatives, and recognition programs, ignoring important areas like employee engagement, consultative participation, and delegative participation. According to Nwoko and Gideon, (2017) organizational success depends on involving the workforce's entire capacity to generate new ideas and ways of working to outsmart their competitors. In Zambian Context with focus on Kitwe City council, employees must be involved if they are to understand the need for creativity and employees must be involved if they are to be committed to changing their behaviours in work, in new and improved ways. Employee involvement in decision making serves to create a sense of belonging among the workers as well as a congenial environment in which both the management and the workers voluntarily contribute to healthy industrial relations (Bwalya, 2021).

1.1 Problem statement

Nambula et al. (2021) stated that decision-making in many organizations are done by the average management team without considering the contribution of the employees at the lower levels. It sometimes becomes difficult for some decision taken by top management to be implemented, especially when it seems not to be favorable to the staffs who are mostly the implementer. Organizational productivity is about assessing and improving the efficiency and effectiveness organization through performance. Employee involvement in decision making creates a way of belonging among workers, and an enjoyable environment during which both management and employees willingly contribute to healthy relations (Noah, 2008). Lack of participation in organizational decision-making lead to poor productivity in an organization and can result to conflict between management and employees.

According to Orok et al., (2025) workers frequently feel disenfranchised as a result of being left out of decision-making processes, which lowers their commitment and productivity. Additionally, top-down decision-making methods inhibit innovation, disregard insightful employee opinions, and promote a disengaged culture. It is against this background that this study is being conducted to assess the effect of employee participation in decision making.

1.2 Objectives

1. To determine the types of employee participation adopted by Kitwe City council
2. To establish factors that influence employee participation in decision making
3. To assess the relationship between employee participation and decision making
4. To ascertain limitations to employee participation in decision making

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Many theories have been propounded to explain the relevance of participation in decision making. This study is guided by Participative Management Theory.

The participative management theory, also known as participative decision-making or employee involvement theory, was propounded by Victor H. Vroom and Philip W. Yetton in 1973. The theory states that involving employees in the decision-making process creates a sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment among them. It recognizes that individuals who are directly affected by a decision should have the opportunity to influence that decision. It emphasizes the importance of collaborative decision-making, where managers and employees work together to achieve common goals.

According to Vroom and Yetton's theory, the level of employee participation in decision making is determined by the decision's significance and the expertise and knowledge of the employees. The theory proposes a decision tree model that helps managers determine the appropriate level of employee involvement based on these factors. The model suggests different decision-making styles, ranging from autocratic (where the leader makes decisions alone) to highly participative (where the leader involves subordinates in the decision-making process). This theory relates directly to the study on employees' participation in decision-making and organizational performance. When employees have the opportunity to participate in decision making, they feel valued and empowered, leading to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. This participatory approach fosters a positive work environment, enhances communication and teamwork, and promotes a culture of innovation and creativity. Additionally, according to the theory, workers ought to participate in decision-making at all organizational levels (Mishra, 2020).

Chukwuemeka (2020) indicated that participatory management promotes decentralized decision-making in place of a conventional top-down strategy, where staff members actively participate in goal setting, policy development, and problem-solving. Participatory management increases workers' commitment to the company and sense of ownership by allowing them to participate in decision making. Higher job satisfaction, better morale, and a desire to positively impact the organization's performance are all results of this increased engagement. The theory also highlighted how employees are empowered by participative management when they are given a voice and the autonomy to decide on matters pertaining to their jobs. The performance of the company may benefit from the creativity, innovation, and sense of accountability that this autonomy fosters.

II. Literature review

Ahsanullah and Omer (2020) said a range of options through which an employee can participate in decision making can be viewed on a continuum ranging from participation in ownership of the organization by means of shareholding through involvement in day-to-day operations to the appointment of employee directors on company boards. Share options/ profit sharing offers employees a chance to own shares in the company and thus participate in financing as well as receiving all the information normally made available to shareholders. This option gives employees the chance to take a stake in their employer's business, but is scarcely relevant if one considers „participation“ in decision making. Consultation is seen as „participation“ only in the sense that employees are consulted about decisions affecting their working lives. This does not imply that employers take any notice of the employees' views. Consultation can be implemented through workforce consultative groups such as quality circles. The aim is to improve employee dialogue, but in most cases, they improve working methods, quality standards and productivity. Where operational matters are concerned, consultations lead to participation in decision making (Ibid).

In the study by Salami (2023) it has been observed that presently, organizations have recognized the needs of employee involvement in achieving organizational objectives. Majority of organizations that employ participative management approach have recorded dramatic breakthrough in the area of operational cost, high profit margin and work productivity.

Baye (2015) notes that most managers are not enthusiastic about sharing strategic decisions with employee representatives, partly because they do not want to alert their competitors of important strategic moves (for example, a major investment or significant takeover) and partly because they often have to face up to some unpleasant decisions about redundancies and redeployments among existing staff.

1. Research Methodology

This study adopted a case study design. The study also used a mixed approach. The mixed method approached has been preferred in order to take advantage of the differences between the two methods. Qualitative approach attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural settings.

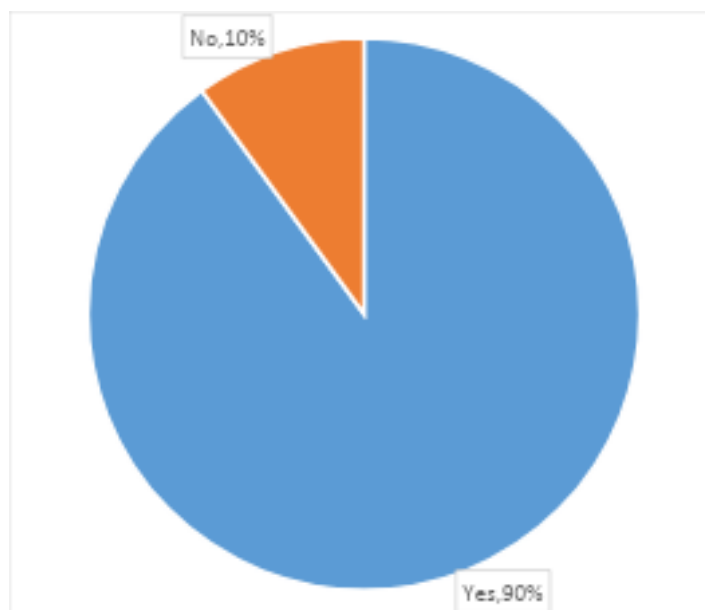
This study utilized a combination of purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques to select respondents from the Kitwe City Council, ensuring both representativeness and depth of data. Simple random sampling was employed to select members of the council's staff from various departments involved in motivation, minimizing bias and enhancing generalizability.

The target population includes management staff and employees from Chilanga council. The staff from the Human resources department were considered for this study. A sample size of 50 respondents was picked which comprised local government employees at Chilanga Town Council. And questionnaires were used as tools for data collection.

Collected data were analyzed Using SPSS. Data preparation is the process in which data is converted to the numerical format which is machine-readable to be used in specific analyzing programs such as Excel Microsoft and SPSS.

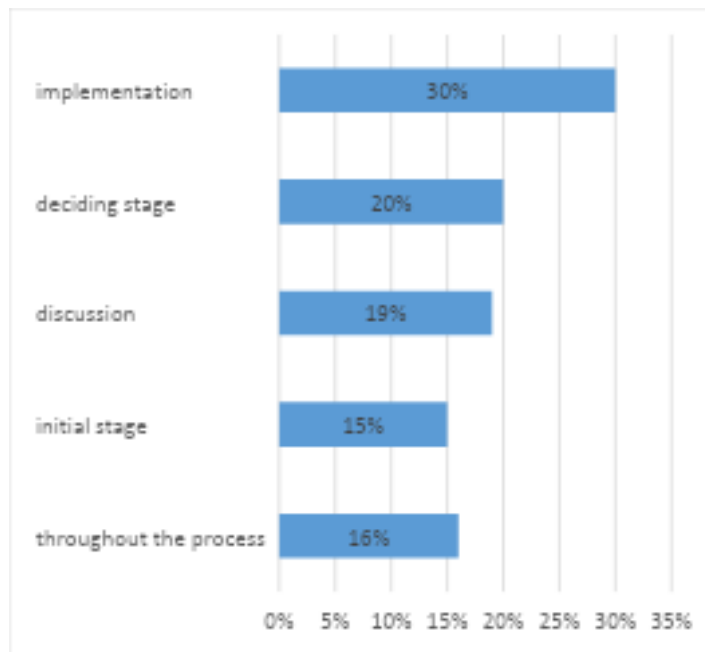
2. Results

b) Figure 1: Staff being involved in decision making



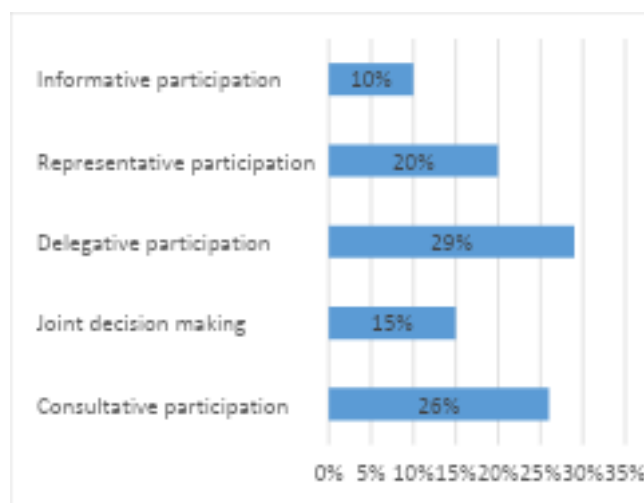
Concerning whether employees are involved in decision making 90% indicated that they are involved while 10% stated that they are not involved.

b) Figure 2: Staff being involved in decision making



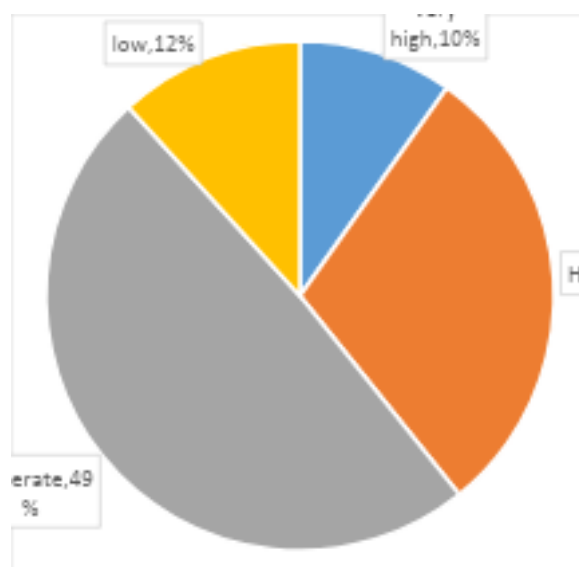
Regarding the stage at which employees are involved in decision making, 30% stated that they are involved at implementation stage, 20% indicated that it is at deciding stage, 19% said during discussion while 15% mentioned initial stage and the rest representing 16% said they are involved at all stages throughout the process.

c) Figure 3: Nature of employee participation decision making with the greatest impact on an organization



Regarding the nature or type of employees participation in decision making, 26% stated that they use consultative participation, 15% indicated that they use, Joint decision making, 29% said they use Delegative participation, 20% mentioned Representative participation and the rest representing 10% said they use Informative participation.

d) Figure 4: Level of employee participation in decision making

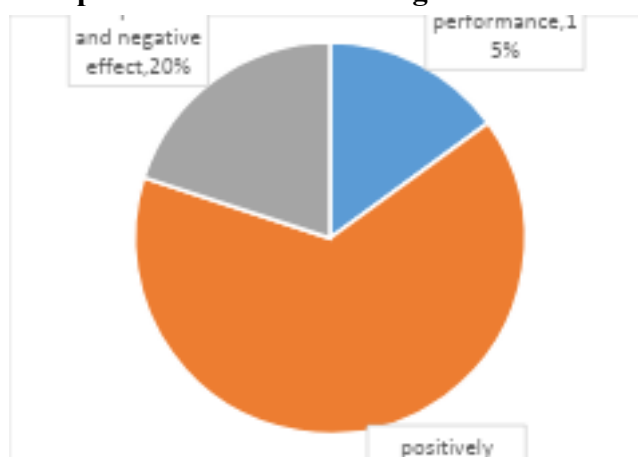


With regards the level of employee participation in decision making, 49% indicated that the level of participation is moderate, 29% stated that it is high while 12% said it is low and the rest representing 10% said the level of participation is very high.

e) Figure 5: Factors that influence employee participation in decision making



There are number of factors that influence employee participation in decision making, 17% said organizational structure influences employee participation, 13% said it is influenced by organizational culture, 17% mentioned leadership style, 15% indicated that communication channels are key to employee participation, 16% mentioned employee skills and experience, 13% said knowledge of an employee, while 5% mentioned job design and the rest 4% said employee participation is influenced by motivation and engagement.

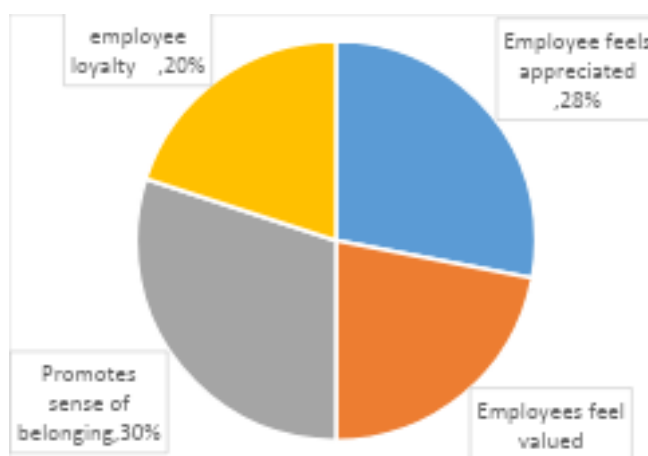
f) Figure 6: Employees' participation in decision making in and its effect on organizational performance

Concerning how employee participation in decision making influence organizational performance, 65% indicated that it positively affect performance while 20% said it has a negative effect and the rest 15% said it has both negative and positive effect. According to the respondents, it is clearly shown that employee participation indeed influence performance positively and this shows that the relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational performance is positive.

g) Figure 7: Effect of employee participation in decision making on organizations

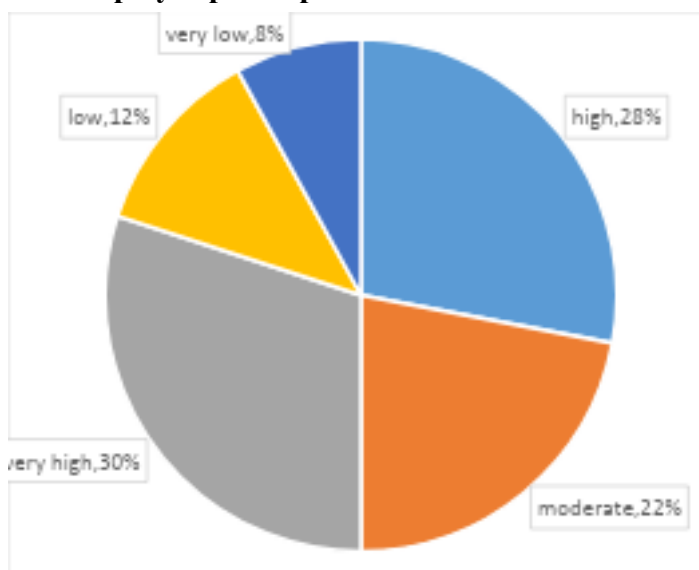
The study indicated that there are a number of effects that come with employee participation in decision making and 18% stated that it motivates employee to work even harder, 17% indicated that it prevents tension between management and other staff, 15% indicated that employee participation in decision making promotes good working culture, 16% said it enhances self-confidence among employees, 13% said employee participation in decision making enhances employee satisfaction, 11% said employee participation in decision making promotes employee productivity while 10% said despite the positive effects, it also delays the process of decision making.

h) Figure 8: Means in which employee participation in decision making influencing employee motivation



Concerning how employee participation in decision making influencing employee motivation, 30% indicated that employee participation in decision making enhances the sense of belonging, 22% said employees feel valued, 28% indicated that employees feel appreciated while 20% said it promotes employee loyalty.

I) Figure 12: Extent to which employee participation in decision influences employee motivation



Concerning the extent to which employee participation in decision influences employee motivation, 30% indicated that it influences employee motivation to very high extent, 22% said the extent is moderate, 28% indicated that the extent is high, 12% said it is to low extent and the rest 8% said to a very low extent.

J) Figure 15: Limitations associated with employee participation in decision



A number of limitations linked to employee participation in decision making were highlighted by respondents and 15% mentioned lack of training, 12% said due to power dynamics, 15% stated that fear of conflicts is one of the limitations of allowing participation of employees in decision making, 19% said it is linked to time consuming because participation of employees delays the process while 13% said it is due to conflict opinion. Others said lack of trust and resistance to change as stated by 11% and 15% respectively.

3. Discussion of findings

Employee participation in decision making can be classified in terms of three properties.

These are formal-informal, direct-indirect and amount of influence but the approaches used by organizations are different owing to various factors at play. In this study it has been established that the common methods or approaches used by organization in promoting employee participation in decision making include consultative participation, Joint decision making, Delegative participation, Representative participation and Informative participation.

According to the study by Ahsanullah and Omer (2020) through consultation, management seeks the advice of employees, takes cognizance of their feelings and interests before a decision is made. According to Mosoge (2019) Consultation refers to the mode in which managers secure employee participation. Thus, consultation allows exchange of ideas and different points of view to take place between management and employees, and among employees themselves. Consultation is directly related to participation. Through it, people in the organization are able to reach technically correct decisions.

Mohamed (2019) added that ways of participation in decision making include departmental meeting, General meeting, work council meeting, Delegation meeting, and Workers association (trade union) were the mostly used ways of employee participation in decision making by SRMPSC respectively. He further added that method of participating in decision making that had the most impact in employees' level of participation was administrative participation where the majority of the respondents suggested that this involves a greater degree of sharing by the workers in the authority and responsibility of management functions. Thus, this form of management allows the workers greater autonomy in the exercise of Administrative and supervisory powers in respect of welfare measures and safety, preparation of schedules of working hours and holidays, and so on. The way they preferred

as their way of participation in decision making as it would give them the autonomy to make decisions on their own hence making use of their skills and experiences to contribute to the organization's objectives.

There are number of factors that influence employee participation in decision making, and among the factors identified in this study include organizational structure which defines how communication flows in an organization, other factor is organizational culture which explains how things are run, leadership style also cardinal others are communication channels, employee skills and experience, knowledge of an employee, job design and motivation as well as employee engagement among others. The above factors are believed to be key in determining how employees participate in decision making.

These conditions as stated by Davis (1981) cited in Keith (2020) are as follows: 1) there must be adequate time to participate before action required for participation is hardly appropriate in emergency situations. 2) The subject of participation must be relevant to the employee environment; otherwise employees will look upon it merely as busy work. 3) The participants should have the ability such as intelligence and knowledge to participate. For example, it is unreasonable to ask security men in a product manufacturing organization to participate in mapping out marketing plans for their products. 4) The participants must be able, mutually, to communicate (to talk each other's language) in order to be able to exchange ideas. 5) There should be no feeling of threat to either party. If workers think their status will be adversely affected they will not participate. Similarly, if managers feel that authority is threatened, they will not allow participation. 6) The potential benefit of participation should be greater than its cost.

Participation should not be done at the expense of the organization's work. 7) Participation can take place within the area of job freedom. Job freedom for an individual or a department is its area of discretion after all restraints have been applied. Restraints in this context include the framework within which the group makes decisions and such decision cannot violate policy. If these conditions as stated by Keith (2020) are followed rigidly and blindly, that is, all of them must obtain in one company before one concludes that participation is not necessary. It is sufficient that some of them must exist in the organization before participation can be practiced (Sigh, 2017).

Concerning the relationship between employee participation and decision making in an organization, the study indicated that the employee participation contribute positively to organizational performance. It has been revealed that employee participation in decision making improves decision quality as indicated by 21%, it enhances employee engagement, it Enhances creativity among employees and leads to better implementation of decisions.

Furthermore, among the effects that organizational performance has on an organization are it motivates employee to work even harder, it prevents tension between management and other staff, employee participation in decision making promotes good working culture, it enhances self-confidence among employees, enhances employee satisfaction, promotes employee productivity. The study has clearly shown that employee participation has positive relationship with organizational performance since it enhances productivity which is key to enhanced performance.

The study by Muindi (2019) examined the relationship between participation in decision making and job satisfaction among academic staff in public University of Nairobi. The findings indicate that a significantly strong positive correlation was found to exist between job satisfaction and participation in decision making ($\rho=0.888$).

Dede (2019) examined employee participation in decision making and organizational productivity in River State Board of Internal Revenue, Calabar. The result showed that employees participate in the decision making of the

organization becomes easy and creates a good working environment, increase workers' commitment and satisfaction on decisions taken and also increase employees moral since they feel recognized and part of team players in the organization and direct consequences of all these increase productivities within the organization.

Furthermore Nwanah et al. (2019) studied participatory decision making and organizational goal attainment. The study found out that employee participation in decision making significantly improves job performance ($X^2_{cal} = 2.554 > X^2_{0.5} = 0.6763$); employee participation in decision, making relates to employee motivation ($F_c \text{ test} = 21.56 > f_{t1} = 2.01$); the policy of employee participation in decision-making is significant in organizational goal attainment ($X^2_{Cal} = 1.887 > X^2_{0.5} = 0.6763$).

Umar (2019) examined the relationship between employees' participation in decision making on organizational performance and the study revealed that involving employee in decision-making is very vital and important in achieving the highest peak in performance of an organization.

A number of limitations linked to employee participation in decision making were highlighted by respondents and among these are lack of training, power dynamics, fear of conflicts, employee participation indecision making is linked to time consuming because participation of employees delays the process.

Other limitations are to conflict opinion, lack of trust and resistance to change.

McGregor (2018) stated that the usual fear is that if employees are given an opportunity to influence decisions affecting them, they will soon want to participate in matters which should be none of their concern. However, he was quick to counter this argument, he added that management who express this fear most acutely tend to have a very narrow conception with the growth of employees and their increasing ability to undertake responsibility, there will of course be an expectation that employees will become involved in an increasing range of decision making activities. Participative management is not a magic cure for all that ails an organization has. Managers should carefully weigh the pros and cons before implementing this style of management.

Based on the findings most employers fear that when employee are given to much liberty to participate in decision making, they may end up having more power that can lead to conflicts in an organization.

III. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed at assessing the effect of employee participation in decision making based on the findings it was concluded that employee participation in decision making enhances organizational performance. Employee participation in decision making is critical in enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, productivity and performance. The study revealed a number of factors that influence employee participation in decision making, and among the factors identified in this study include organizational structure which defines how communication flows in an organization, other factor is organizational culture which explains how things are run, leadership style also cardinal others are communication channels, employee skills and experience, knowledge of an employee, job design and motivation as well as employee engagement among others

Concerning the relationship between employee participation in decision making and organizational performance, the study indicated that the employee participation contribute positively to organizational performance. It has been revealed that employee participation in decision making improves decision quality, it enhances employee engagement, it Enhances creativity among employees and leads to better implementation of decisions. However, despite the benefits that come with employee participation in decision making, there are limitations that come with employee participation in decision making and the common limitations are conflict

of interest and delaying the process of making decisions and fear that if employees are given an opportunity to influence decisions affecting them, they will soon want to participate in matters which should be none of their concern.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

Management should encourage participation of members of staff in decision making to avoid conflicts and tension between management and other employees

The council should consider adopting delegative and participatory approaches in enhancing employee participation in decision making because these approaches proved to be more effective

There is need for the council to promote employee participation in decision making as it helps in reduce conflicts and promoting employee satisfaction, employ participation is believed to help bridge the gap between employees and management.

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