

## Participatory Decision-Making and Organizational Performance in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
<p>The study examined the influence of participatory decision-making on the organizational performance in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The specific objectives of the study were to; examine the influence of employee involvement in decision-making on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, assess the influence of stakeholder engagement in decision-making on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike and investigate the influence of the quality of participatory forums on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The primary data was sourced from structured questionnaire that was issued to staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, while the secondary data was gotten from existing materials and publications. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and the population of the study comprised of all the staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. However, a sample of 341 was determined using Taro Yamane determination technique. The data was analyzed using simple percentage, frequency and 4-point rating scale and ordinary least square regression was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The findings of the study revealed that employee involvement, stakeholder engagement, and high-quality participatory forums all have a significant positive influence on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. It was recommended that management should actively involve employees at various levels in decision-making processes to enhance commitment and productivity. Also, the university should increase engagement with both internal and external stakeholders in decision-making, this will improve transparency, accountability, and resource management, which in turn boosts operational efficiency. Therefore, to maximize the benefits of participatory decision-making, the university should invest in training programs that equip employees and stakeholders with the skills to engage effectively in these processes.</p> <p><b>KEYWORDS:</b> Participatory, Decision-Making, Organizational Performance, Employee Involvement, Stakeholder Engagement</p>	<p><b>Published On:</b> <b>18 March</b></p> <p><b>Available on:</b> <a href="https://ijmir.com">https://ijmir.com</a></p>

### INTRODUCTION

Participatory decision-making (PDM) represents a paradigm shift in organizational management, emphasizing the involvement of employees at all levels in the decision-making processes. This approach contrasts with traditional hierarchical models where decisions are primarily top-down. The essence of PDM is the recognition that inclusive decision-making can harness diverse perspectives, foster a sense of ownership among employees, and ultimately drive organizational performance (Robinson & Cook, 2023). In tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the application of PDM is particularly relevant, given the complex and dynamic environment in which these institutions operate.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, face myriad challenges ranging from inadequate funding and infrastructure deficits to administrative inefficiencies and governance issues (Okeke & Emecheta, 2022). These challenges necessitate innovative approaches to management that can enhance institutional performance. Participatory

decision-making emerges as a critical strategy that can potentially address these challenges by leveraging the collective expertise and creativity of the academic and non-academic staff (Aina & Ajibola, 2021). In the Nigerian context, the adoption of PDM in tertiary institutions is influenced by several factors, including the institutional culture, leadership styles, and the regulatory environment. Nigerian tertiary institutions are characterized by a diverse workforce, comprising academic staff, administrative staff, and support staff, each with unique perspectives and contributions to the decision-making process (Ogunyemi & Akinola, 2020). The challenge lies in creating an inclusive environment that encourages active participation from all stakeholders, thereby ensuring that decisions are well-informed and broadly supported.

The impact of participatory decision-making on organizational performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be examined through several dimensions. These include the quality of academic programs, research output, administrative efficiency, and overall institutional reputation. A growing body of empirical evidence suggests that institutions that adopt participatory approaches tend to perform better on these dimensions compared to those that rely on more centralized decision-making models (Udeh & Obaji, 2023). For instance, a study by Adeyemi and Adedeji (2023), found that universities with high levels of employee involvement in decision-making processes reported higher levels of student satisfaction, research productivity, and international collaborations.

More to this, the implementation of participatory decision-making in Nigerian tertiary institutions is not without challenges. These challenges include resistance to change, lack of trust between management and employees, and the bureaucratic nature of institutional governance. Additionally, the varying levels of education and expertise among staff members can pose difficulties in achieving meaningful participation. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to build trust, enhance communication, and provide training and development opportunities that equip staff with the necessary skills for effective participation (Ajayi & Oyetola, 2022). Participatory decision-making represents a promising approach to enhancing organizational performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions, involving employees in the decision-making processes, these institutions can leverage the diverse perspectives and expertise of their workforce, leading to better-informed decisions, increased job satisfaction, and improved institutional outcomes. However, successful implementation requires addressing the inherent challenges and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration. As tertiary institutions in Nigeria continue to navigate a complex and evolving landscape, embracing participatory decision-making could be a key driver of sustainable performance and institutional excellence.

Participatory decision-making (PDM) in tertiary institutions in Nigeria shows a critical area of concern, given its potential impact on organizational performance and overall educational outcomes. Despite the theoretical benefits of PDM, including enhanced job satisfaction, increased motivation, and improved organizational performance (Okeke & Emecheta, 2022), the practical application of this approach in Nigerian tertiary institutions faces significant challenges. These challenges are reflected in the current state of these institutions, characterized by administrative inefficiencies, low employee morale, frequent industrial actions, and suboptimal academic and research outputs (Aina & Ajibola, 2021). A report by the National Universities Commission (NUC) indicated that over 60% of Nigerian universities have experienced at least one major industrial action in the past five years, primarily due to disputes related to governance and decision-making processes (NUC, 2022). These disruptions have detrimental effects on the academic calendar, research activities, and overall institutional performance. Additionally, a survey conducted by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) revealed that only 35% of academic staff feel adequately involved in decision-making processes within their institutions, leading to a significant disconnect between management and employees (ASUU, 2023).

The quality of academic programs and research output in Nigerian tertiary institutions also reflects the need for improved decision-making processes. According to the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, only a handful of Nigerian universities are ranked among the top 1,000 globally, and none feature in the top 500 (Webometrics, 2023). This ranking is influenced by factors such as research output, citation impact, and international collaboration, all of which are areas where participatory decision-making can potentially make a significant impact. However, the current centralized decision-making models prevalent in many institutions inhibit the full realization of these benefits.

Administrative inefficiencies further compound the problem. A study by Udeh and Obaji (2023), found that over 50% of non-academic staff in Nigerian universities reported experiencing significant delays and bureaucratic hurdles in the decision-making processes, leading to inefficiencies and frustration. These inefficiencies are often attributed to a lack of inclusive and transparent decision-making frameworks, which stifles innovation and responsiveness within the administrative structures of these institutions. Moreover, the diverse workforce in Nigerian tertiary institutions, comprising individuals with varying educational backgrounds and expertise, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for participatory decision-making. While this diversity can enhance the richness of decisions made, it also requires effective mechanisms to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. Unfortunately, the absence of such mechanisms has often led to a dominance of certain groups in the decision-making processes, further exacerbating feelings of disenfranchisement among other staff members (Ogunyemi & Akinola, 2020).

The implications of these challenges are far-reaching, affecting not only the internal dynamics of tertiary institutions but also their external reputation and competitiveness. The frequent industrial actions and administrative inefficiencies have led to a decline in the attractiveness of Nigerian universities to both local and international students. This decline is reflected in enrollment statistics,

with several institutions reporting a drop in the number of international students by over 30% in the past decade (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). This trend has financial implications, as international students are a significant source of revenue for many institutions.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Participatory Decision-Making**

Participatory decision-making (PDM) is defined as a process where employees at various levels of an organization are actively involved in making decisions that affect their work and the organization. This approach contrasts with traditional top-down decision-making models by emphasizing collaboration and inclusive input from a broader range of stakeholders. According to Valverde-Moreno et al. (2021), PDM is crucial for fostering a positive organizational climate, leading to increased job performance, job satisfaction, and decreased turnover intentions. The involvement of employees in decision-making processes enhances their sense of ownership and commitment to organizational goals. Kim (2022), highlighted that PDM can lead to significant improvements in employees' task performance and personal growth by fostering a sense of job meaningfulness and involvement. From an organizational perspective, PDM can improve operational efficiency by leveraging the diverse expertise of employees. This inclusiveness can lead to more innovative solutions and more effective implementation of decisions. A study by Plückelmann et al. (2024) noted that participative decision-making practices have gained attention for their potential to create more gender-inclusive workplaces, thus enhancing overall organizational performance by ensuring that diverse viewpoints are considered.

In the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions, implementing PDM can address several challenges such as governance inefficiencies and employee dissatisfaction. Studies have shown that institutions that adopt participatory decision-making frameworks report better resource management, improved policy implementation, and higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction (Plückelmann et al., 2024). Participatory decision-making (PDM) has been recognized for its transformative potential in organizational settings, where it shifts the traditional decision-making paradigm from a top-down approach to a more inclusive, collaborative process. This shift is particularly significant in complex and dynamic environments such as tertiary institutions in Nigeria, where the engagement of diverse stakeholders can lead to more robust and sustainable outcomes.

### **Determinant of Participatory Decision-Making**

- **Employee involvement in decision-making**

Employee involvement in decision-making is a fundamental aspect of participatory decision-making (PDM), which emphasizes the inclusion of employees at all levels in the decision-making processes of an organization. This concept has garnered significant attention in organizational studies due to its profound impact on organizational performance and employee satisfaction. Participatory decision-making refers to the practice of involving employees in decisions that affect their work and the broader organizational operations. This approach is based on the premise that those who are closest to the work processes and issues at hand can contribute to more effective decision-making (Asokk et al., 2021). By fostering an inclusive environment where employees' voices are heard, organizations can enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and overall productivity.

According to Bhatti and Qureshi (2007), employee participation leads to higher job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and improved employee productivity. These positive outcomes are attributed to the sense of ownership and empowerment that employees feel when they are involved in decision-making processes. Moreover, research by Bendix (2010), indicates that organizations that implement participatory decision-making practices tend to experience lower turnover rates and higher levels of employee engagement. This is because participatory decision-making fosters a supportive and collaborative organizational culture, which can reduce the likelihood of conflicts and enhance overall organizational harmony. The relationship between employee involvement in decision-making and organizational performance is well-documented. For instance, a study by Dede (2019), on the Cross River State Board of Internal Revenue found that employee participation in decision-making significantly improved organizational productivity. This improvement was due to better decision-making quality and more efficient implementation of policies and procedures.

- **Stakeholder Engagement in Decision-Making**

Stakeholder engagement in decision-making is a critical component of participatory decision-making (PDM) that emphasizes the active involvement of various stakeholders in the decision-making processes of an organization. Stakeholders, in this context, include anyone with an interest or stake in the organization, such as employees, students, faculty, administrative staff, and external partners.

Stakeholder engagement refers to the systematic efforts by an organization to involve relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes to achieve agreed outcomes. This engagement is essential for ensuring that the decisions made reflect the diverse interests and perspectives within the organization, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes (Boesso & Kumar, 2008). According to Freeman (1984), effective stakeholder engagement can lead to better decision quality, increased transparency, and enhanced trust between the organization and its stakeholders. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders,

which is crucial for the successful implementation of decisions. Stakeholder engagement in decision-making has a significant impact on organizational performance. Studies have shown that organizations that actively engage stakeholders in their decision-making processes tend to perform better across various metrics. For instance, research by Silvius and Schipper (2019), indicates that organizations with high levels of stakeholder engagement report better project outcomes and higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction. Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes can help organizations address potential conflicts and align diverse interests towards common goals. Additionally, engagement can lead to more innovative solutions and improved problem-solving capabilities. When stakeholders are involved in decision-making, they bring diverse perspectives and ideas that can enhance the quality of decisions. This diversity of thought can lead to more creative and effective solutions to organizational challenges (Reed et al., 2018).

- **Quality of Participatory Forums as a Determinant of Participatory Decision-Making**

The quality of participatory forums contributes in the effectiveness of participatory decision-making (PDM) within organizations. High-quality forums are essential for ensuring that the process of participation is meaningful, inclusive, and capable of producing actionable outcomes. These forums, which can include meetings, committees, workshops, and digital platforms, provide structured spaces where stakeholders can share their views, contribute ideas, and engage in dialogue that influences decision-making. Participatory forums are structured platforms designed to facilitate stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes. These forums vary in formality and structure, ranging from formal meetings and committees to informal focus groups and digital platforms. The quality of these forums is determined by their ability to foster open communication, ensure inclusivity, and produce tangible outcomes (Hrivnák et al., 2021).

Ekenberg et al. (2015), argued that well-designed participatory forums are essential for creating environments where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and considered. These forums should be inclusive, allowing for the participation of all relevant stakeholders, and should be structured to facilitate productive discussions and decision-making. Hrivnák et al. (2021), highlighted that the quality of participatory forums can significantly influence the outcomes of PDM processes. High-quality forums are characterized by clear objectives, transparent processes, and the effective use of facilitation techniques to manage discussions and ensure that all voices are heard. These forums also need to provide adequate information to participants, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the discussions. The quality of participatory forums directly impacts organizational performance by enhancing the quality of decisions made through PDM processes. High-quality forums ensure that decisions are based on comprehensive and diverse inputs, leading to more robust and innovative solutions. According to Ekenberg et al. (2015), organizations that invest in high-quality participatory forums tend to experience higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction and improved decision-making outcomes. Furthermore, the inclusivity and effectiveness of these forums can foster a sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders, which is crucial for the successful implementation of decisions. Hrivnák et al. (2021), noted that participatory forums that effectively engage stakeholders can lead to better alignment of organizational goals with stakeholder needs and expectations, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance.

### **Organizational Performance**

Organizational performance refers to how effectively an organization achieves its goals and objectives, encompassing both financial and non-financial outcomes. This concept has been extensively studied by scholars and practitioners alike, given its critical importance to the sustainability and success of organizations. Organizational performance is broadly defined as the degree to which an organization meets its set objectives through efficient use of resources and effective execution of its strategies (Tabesh & Vera, 2020). It includes various dimensions such as financial performance, operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Performance measurement is a systematic process to evaluate these dimensions, ensuring that the organization aligns its resources and processes to enhance productivity and achieve strategic goals (Adam et al., 2018).

Camilleri (2021), emphasizes the importance of both normative and descriptive approaches in analyzing organizational performance. Normative approaches involve benchmarking performance against standards or best practices, while descriptive approaches focus on understanding the processes and factors that contribute to performance outcomes. Bhat et al. (2021), discuss the role of decision-making styles in influencing organizational performance. They highlight that both rational and intuitive decision-making processes can enhance performance by ensuring that decisions are well-informed and contextually relevant. Rational decision-making involves systematic analysis and critical evaluation of information, whereas intuitive decision-making leverages experience and subconscious processing of information.

Several factors influence organizational performance, including leadership styles, organizational culture, and strategic management practices. According to Dhir et al. (2021), strategic thinking is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage and achieving long-term success. Effective strategic thinking involves the ability to synthesize information, innovate, and adapt to changing environments. Ethics in corporate governance and human resource management also play significant roles in determining organizational performance. Parmar et al. (2023), found that organizations prioritizing ethical practices tend to experience enhanced reputation,

increased customer loyalty, and improved employee engagement and productivity. These ethical practices contribute to creating a positive organizational culture that supports sustainable performance.

### **Determinant of Organizational Performance**

- **Operational Efficiency**

Operational efficiency refers to the ability of an organization to deliver its products or services in the most cost-effective manner without compromising on quality. It involves optimizing processes, reducing waste, and making the best use of available resources. Operational efficiency is a critical determinant of organizational performance, as it directly impacts profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction (McKinsey, 2023).

According to McKinsey (2023), operational efficiency can be significantly enhanced through the adoption of agile methodologies, which streamline processes and foster better collaboration among teams. This approach not only speeds up decision-making but also improves the quality of outcomes by ensuring that all team members are aligned and focused on the organization's strategic goals. Another perspective is offered by Tabesh and Vera (2020), who argue that the use of advanced technologies and automation can greatly enhance operational efficiency. By automating routine tasks and optimizing workflows, organizations can reduce errors, save time, and lower operational costs. This, in turn, leads to better overall performance, as resources can be reallocated to more strategic activities that drive growth and innovation. A study by Alosani et al. (2020) found that firms with high levels of operational efficiency reported significant improvements in their financial performance and customer satisfaction. These firms were able to deliver products and services faster and at a lower cost, which enhanced their competitive advantage in the market.

### **Relationship between Participatory Decision-Making and Organizational Performance**

Participatory decision-making (PDM) involves engaging employees and other stakeholders in the decision-making processes within an organization. This approach is based on the idea that including diverse perspectives can lead to better, more informed decisions that are widely supported and effectively implemented. PDM is particularly relevant in the context of modern organizations, which are increasingly adopting flatter, more horizontal structures to enhance flexibility and responsiveness (Kim, 2022).

According to Harman (2023), PDM not only enhances organizational efficiency and productivity but also provides opportunities for individual growth and self-actualization. By involving employees in decision-making, organizations can foster a sense of ownership and commitment, which positively impacts their performance and satisfaction. Kim (2022) highlights that PDM contributes to better task performance and personal growth among employees. The study demonstrated that PDM improves perceived job meaningfulness and involvement, leading to higher levels of task performance and personal growth. This shows the importance of creating an inclusive decision-making environment to achieve organizational success. A study by McKinsey (2023), found that organizations with strong PDM practices reported significant improvements in various performance metrics, including productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction. The study highlighted that involving employees in decision-making processes leads to more innovative solutions and better implementation of strategies. Additionally, research by Alosani et al. (2020), demonstrated that Nigerian firms practicing PDM experienced higher levels of operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. These firms were able to make quicker, more effective decisions by leveraging the collective knowledge and expertise of their stakeholders.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Stakeholder Theory**

Stakeholder Theory was propounded by R. Edward Freeman in his seminal 1984 book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. The theory argues that organizations should consider the interests and well-being of all their stakeholders in their decision-making processes, not just shareholders. Stakeholders include anyone affected by the organization's actions, such as employees, customers, suppliers, community members, and even the environment. Freeman's theory challenged the traditional shareholder-centric view of corporate governance, which posited that a company's primary responsibility was to maximize shareholder wealth. Instead, Stakeholder Theory advocates for a more inclusive approach, where the needs and interests of various stakeholders are balanced to achieve long-term success and sustainability. This approach is based on the premise that addressing the needs of all stakeholders leads to more ethical decision-making and better overall outcomes for the organization and society.

Arguments about Stakeholder Theory revolve around its practical implementation and the potential conflicts of interest that may arise when balancing diverse stakeholder needs. Critics argue that it is challenging to prioritize and manage competing interests, and that focusing on stakeholders may dilute the primary goal of profitability. However, proponents contend that by fostering strong relationships with stakeholders, organizations can achieve a competitive advantage, enhance their reputation, and ensure long-term sustainability (Freeman, 1984). The theory provides a robust framework for understanding the importance of involving various stakeholders in organizational decisions, by engaging employees, customers, suppliers, and the community in decision-making processes, organizations can create more comprehensive and inclusive strategies. This participatory approach aligns with the

principles of Stakeholder Theory, as it ensures that the interests and inputs of all relevant parties are considered, leading to better decision-making and improved organizational performance. In the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions, adopting participatory decision-making practices based on Stakeholder Theory can help address governance challenges, enhance transparency, and improve operational efficiency, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.

### **Theory of Participative Management**

The Theory of Participative Management was notably advanced by management theorist Rensis Likert in the mid-20th century. This theory posits that involving employees in decision-making processes leads to higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. It is based on the idea that employees who feel valued and involved in the decision-making process are more committed to their work and the organization's goals. Participative Management emphasizes collaboration and shared decision-making between management and employees. It involves practices such as delegation of authority, open communication, and the creation of participative forums where employees can contribute their ideas and feedback. This approach contrasts with traditional top-down management styles, where decisions are made by a select few at the top and imposed on the rest of the organization.

Supporters of Participative Management argue that it leads to numerous benefits, including improved organizational performance, enhanced innovation, and reduced turnover rates. They believe that when employees are given a voice in decisions, they are more likely to buy into and effectively implement those decisions, leading to better outcomes. Additionally, participative management can foster a positive organizational culture, characterized by trust, respect, and collaboration. It has been argued that participative management can be time-consuming and may lead to conflicts or indecision, especially in large organizations with diverse employee interests. They also point out that not all employees may want to participate in decision-making, preferring instead to focus on their specific job roles. The theory provides a foundational understanding of why involving employees and stakeholders in decision processes can be beneficial. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, applying participative management principles can lead to enhanced operational efficiency, better governance, and higher levels of employee and student satisfaction. By creating an environment where all voices are heard and valued, these institutions can improve decision-making quality, foster innovation, and achieve better educational and organizational outcomes (Likert, 1961).

This work is pinned on the theory of Participative Management, advanced by Rensis Likert in the mid-20th century, serves as a robust framework for examining the influence of participatory decision-making on organizational performance. This theory posits that involving employees in decision-making processes enhances motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Participative Management emphasizes collaboration and shared decision-making between management and employees, incorporating practices such as delegation of authority, open communication, and participative forums. These practices contrast with traditional top-down management styles, fostering a positive organizational culture characterized by trust, respect, and collaboration. Though it has been argued that participative management can be time-consuming and may lead to conflicts or indecision. However, the theory underlines the benefits of involving employees in decisions, leading to improved organizational performance, enhanced innovation, and reduced turnover rates. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, applying participative management principles can enhance operational efficiency, governance, and satisfaction among employees and students.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design, and use of primary data which involves the use of first hand or raw data and information sourced through administration of questionnaire electronically to the employees of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of the academic staff, administrative staff, and other employees who are integral to the university's operations. Specifically, the university employs approximately 2,305 staff members across its various departments and administrative units (Times Higher Education, 2023). The study adopted the Taro Yamen formula to determine the sample size. A sample size of approximately 341 staff members was deemed suitable for this study. A 16-item researcher developed titled "participatory decision-making and organizational performance in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike" The variables of the study were measured using a 5-Point Likert Scale Descriptive Index of SA (Strongly Agree, 5); A (Agree, 4); D (Disagree, 3); SD (Strongly Disagree, 2) and U (Undecided, 1). Section A contained demographic information of the subjects while section B contained 16 self-report items in relation to employee involvement in decision-making, stakeholder engagement in decision-making and as well as the quality of participatory forums. A criterion means of 3.0 was established to determine acceptance or rejection of the items. Any mean above 3.0 showed acceptance while that below 3.0 indicated rejection. The instrument was subjected to face-to-face validity by three (3) experts from the Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management, College of Management Sciences while the reliability was tested using Cronbach Alpha analysis and the reliability was 0.70%. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis model.

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## Model Specification

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EIDM + \beta_2 SEDM + \beta_3 QPF + e_i \dots\dots\dots (i)$$

Where:

EIDM = employee involvement in decision-making

SEDM = stakeholder engagement in decision-making

QPF = quality of participatory forums

OE = Operational efficiency

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$\beta_1$  and  $\beta_3$  = Parameters

$e_i$  = Error term

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	65	19.9
30 – 39	110	33.6
40 – 49	95	29.1
50 – 59	45	13.8
60 and Above	12	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	195	59.6
Female	132	40.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	202	61.8
Single	125	38.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>		
ND/NCE	65	19.9
B.Sc./HND	140	42.8
M.Sc./MBA	90	27.5
PhD	32	9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position in the University</b>		
Assistant Lecturer	70	21.4
Lecturer II	120	36.7
Senior Lecturer	85	26.0
Non-Academic Staff	52	15.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

**Age bracket:** From the result above, the data shows that the majority of respondents fall within the age range of 30-39 years, accounting for 33.6% (110 respondents). The second-largest group is within the 40-49 years range, representing 29.1% (95 respondents). Respondents aged between 20-29 years make up 19.9% (65 respondents), while those in the 50-59 age group account for 13.8% (45 respondents). A smaller portion of the respondents, 3.7% (12 respondents), are 60 years and above. This distribution indicates that the workforce is predominantly younger and middle-aged, with the highest concentration in the 30-39 and 40-49 age brackets.

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**Gender:** From the Table 1 distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. Out of the 327 respondents, 195 (59.6%) were male, while 132 (40.4%) were female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were male, representing a larger portion of the staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

**Marital status:** From the result, out of the respondents, 202 (61.8%) are married, while 125 (38.2%) are single. This indicates that a majority of the staff members who participated in the study are married, making up nearly two-thirds of the respondents, while a little over one-third are single.

**Educational level:** Table 1 revealed that most of the respondents constituting 40 (42.8%), hold a Bachelor's degree. This is followed by 90 respondents (27.5%) who have a Master's degree. Additionally, 65 respondents (19.9%) possess OND/HND qualifications, while 32 respondents (9.8%) have obtained a PhD.

**Positions:** From the result, the largest group of respondents are Lecturers II, comprising 120 respondents (36.7%). This is followed by Senior Lecturers, who make up 26.0% (85 respondents). Assistant Lecturers account for 21.4% (70 respondents), while Non-Academic Staff represent the 52 respondents (15.9%).

### DATA PRESENTATION

**Table 2: Analysis of Employee Involvement in Decision-Making and its Influence on Operational Efficiency**

No.	Questionnaire Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Acceptance
1	Employee involvement in decision-making increases their commitment to work	120 (38.2%)	140 (44.6%)	30 (9.6%)	24 (7.6%)	3.13	0.92	Accepted
2	Participatory decision-making enhances employee productivity	115 (36.6%)	130 (41.4%)	45 (14.3%)	24 (7.6%)	3.07	0.89	Accepted
3	Decision-making involvement helps improve operational efficiency	110 (35.0%)	125 (39.8%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	3.01	0.93	Accepted
4	Employees who participate in decision-making tend to have higher job satisfaction	95 (30.3%)	140 (44.6%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	2.96	0.93	Accepted
5	Employee involvement leads to faster decision implementation	90 (28.7%)	135 (43.0%)	60 (19.1%)	29 (9.2%)	2.91	0.91	Accepted
6	Involving employees in decision-making reduces operational bottlenecks	100 (31.8%)	125 (39.8%)	50 (15.9%)	39 (12.4%)	2.91	0.98	Accepted
7	Employee participation in decision-making minimizes operational errors	85 (27.1%)	130 (41.4%)	60 (19.1%)	39 (12.4%)	2.83	0.96	Accepted
8	Employee involvement in decision-making fosters innovative solutions	80 (25.5%)	145 (46.2%)	50 (15.9%)	39 (12.4%)	2.85	0.95	Accepted
9	Involving employees in decisions enhances communication flow within the university	105 (33.4%)	125 (39.8%)	50 (15.9%)	34 (10.8%)	2.96	0.95	Accepted
10	Employee decision-making involvement promotes a culture of collaboration	100 (31.8%)	130 (41.4%)	55 (17.5%)	29 (9.2%)	2.96	0.91	Accepted
Grand Mean						2.96		

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 2 provides an analysis of 10 questionnaire items designed to assess how employee involvement in decision-making influences operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The results indicate that all the items had mean values



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above 2.50, with the grand mean for all the items being 2.96, showing that the respondents generally agreed that employee involvement in decision-making positively influences operational efficiency. The highest-rated item was “Employee involvement in decision-making increases their commitment to work” (Mean = 3.13), suggesting that participation in decisions enhances commitment. Other highly rated items include “Participatory decision-making enhances employee productivity” (Mean = 3.07) and “Decision-making involvement helps improve operational efficiency” (Mean = 3.01).

Overall, the data suggests that respondents perceive employee involvement in decision-making as beneficial to operational efficiency, with all questionnaire items being accepted based on the set criteria.

**Table 3: Analysis of Stakeholder Engagement in Decision-Making and its Influence on Operational Efficiency**

No.	Questionnaire Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Acceptance
1	Stakeholder engagement in decision-making improves organizational transparency	110 (35.0%)	135 (43.0%)	45 (14.3%)	24 (7.6%)	3.06	0.89	Accepted
2	Stakeholders' involvement enhances resource management efficiency	105 (33.4%)	130 (41.4%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	2.99	0.93	Accepted
3	Engagement of stakeholders helps align the organization with its strategic objectives	120 (38.2%)	125 (39.8%)	40 (12.7%)	29 (9.2%)	3.07	0.95	Accepted
4	Involving stakeholders in decisions increases accountability within the university	115 (36.6%)	125 (39.8%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	3.04	0.94	Accepted
5	Stakeholder participation helps identify and address potential operational challenges early	100 (31.8%)	140 (44.6%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	2.99	0.92	Accepted
6	Effective stakeholder engagement reduces conflicts in operational processes	95 (30.3%)	135 (43.0%)	50 (15.9%)	34 (10.8%)	2.93	0.96	Accepted
7	Stakeholder involvement promotes collaboration across different university departments	105 (33.4%)	120 (38.2%)	55 (17.5%)	34 (10.8%)	2.94	0.97	Accepted
8	Stakeholder engagement in decision-making increases trust in leadership	115 (36.6%)	130 (41.4%)	40 (12.7%)	29 (9.2%)	3.05	0.93	Accepted
9	Engaging stakeholders ensures decisions are aligned with stakeholder needs and expectations	100 (31.8%)	135 (43.0%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	2.97	0.91	Accepted
10	Stakeholder involvement in decision-making enhances operational efficiency at the university	110 (35.0%)	125 (39.8%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	3.00	0.94	Accepted
Grand Mean						3.00		

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 3 presents the analysis of 10 questionnaire items designed to assess the influence of stakeholder engagement in decision-making on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The results indicate that all 10 items had

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mean values above the acceptance threshold of 2.50, with the overall grand mean being 3.00. The item with the highest mean was "Engagement of stakeholders helps align the organization with its strategic objectives" (Mean = 3.07), indicating that the respondents strongly agreed that stakeholder involvement is critical in ensuring that the organization stays aligned with its goals. Similarly, items related to transparency, accountability, and resource management also received high mean scores (3.06, 3.04, and 2.99, respectively), reflecting strong agreement among respondents that stakeholder engagement enhances these aspects of the university's operational efficiency. Overall, the data suggests that respondents perceive stakeholder engagement in decision-making as a positive factor that contributes significantly to operational efficiency at the university.

**Table 4: Analysis of the Quality of Participatory Forums and its Effect on Operational Efficiency**

No.	Questionnaire Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Acceptance
1	Quality participatory forums encourage transparent communication	120 (38.2%)	125 (39.8%)	40 (12.7%)	29 (9.2%)	3.07	0.94	Accepted
2	Effective forums enhance decision clarity and reduce misunderstandings	110 (35.0%)	130 (41.4%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	3.02	0.93	Accepted
3	Well-organized forums ensure more inclusive participation from diverse stakeholders	115 (36.6%)	125 (39.8%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	3.04	0.95	Accepted
4	Quality forums help identify operational inefficiencies early	105 (33.4%)	130 (41.4%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	2.99	0.93	Accepted
5	Participatory forums enhance trust between employees and leadership	100 (31.8%)	140 (44.6%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	2.99	0.91	Accepted
6	Effective participatory forums promote faster implementation of decisions	115 (36.6%)	120 (38.2%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	3.02	0.96	Accepted
7	High-quality forums reduce confusion and delays in operational processes	105 (33.4%)	125 (39.8%)	55 (17.5%)	29 (9.2%)	2.97	0.95	Accepted
8	The quality of participatory forums leads to better strategic decision-making outcomes	110 (35.0%)	120 (38.2%)	55 (17.5%)	29 (9.2%)	2.99	0.96	Accepted
9	Quality forums ensure that feedback is properly incorporated into decision-making processes	105 (33.4%)	130 (41.4%)	50 (15.9%)	29 (9.2%)	2.98	0.94	Accepted
10	Participatory forums foster collaboration across various university departments	115 (36.6%)	125 (39.8%)	45 (14.3%)	29 (9.2%)	3.03	0.94	Accepted
Grand Mean						3.01		

### Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 presents the analysis of 10 questionnaire items that assess the influence of the quality of participatory forums on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The results show that all items had a mean score above the acceptance threshold, with an overall grand mean of 3.01, suggesting that respondents generally agreed that the quality of participatory forums positively affects operational efficiency. The highest-rated item was "Quality participatory forums encourage transparent communication" (Mean = 3.07), indicating strong agreement that transparency in communication is enhanced by the quality of forums. Other items, such as "Effective forums enhance decision clarity and reduce misunderstandings" (Mean = 3.02) and "Participatory forums foster collaboration across various university departments" (Mean = 3.03), were also highly rated,

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highlighting the importance of clarity, collaboration, and communication in participatory forums. Overall, the data suggests that respondents perceive the quality of participatory forums as crucial for improving operational efficiency at the university. This includes better decision-making, reducing operational delays, and fostering collaboration.

### Test of Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis one

H<sub>01</sub>: Employee involvement in decision-making does not have a significant influence on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

**Table 5: Simple Regression Analysis of Employee Involvement in Decision-Making and its Influence on Operational Efficiency**

To test the hypothesis "H<sub>01</sub>: Employee involvement in decision-making does not have a significant influence on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike", a simple regression analysis was performed using employee involvement in decision-making as the independent variable and operational efficiency as the dependent variable. Below are the results of the Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients tables, which are based on standard SPSS outputs.

#### MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.675	0.456	0.453	0.512

The Model Summary table shows that the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.675, indicating a strong positive correlation between employee involvement in decision-making and operational efficiency. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.456 indicates that 45.6% of the variance in operational efficiency can be explained by employee involvement in decision-making. The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.453 shows a minor adjustment after accounting for the degrees of freedom. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.512) provides an estimate of the standard deviation of the residuals.

#### ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	52.321	1	52.321	199.86	0.000
Residual	62.479	312	0.200		
Total	114.800	313			

The ANOVA table evaluates the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic is 199.86 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the standard significance level of 0.05. This result indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, and we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) that employee involvement in decision-making does not have a significant influence on operational efficiency. The model significantly explains the variation in operational efficiency.

#### COEFFICIENTS

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Std. Error	t Beta	Sig.
Constant	1.200	0.140		8.571
Employee Involvement	0.620	0.044	0.675	14.137

The Coefficients table provides the details of the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 1.200, which represents the predicted operational efficiency when employee involvement is zero. The B coefficient for employee involvement in decision-making is 0.620, indicating that for each unit increase in employee involvement, operational efficiency is expected to increase by 0.620 units. The t-value of 14.137 and the p-value of 0.000 show that employee involvement significantly contributes to the model. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) and conclude that employee involvement in decision-making has a significant positive influence on operational efficiency.

#### Hypothesis Two

H<sub>02</sub>: Stakeholder engagement in decision-making does not significantly influence operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

**Table 6: Simple Regression Analysis of Stakeholder Engagement in Decision-Making and its Influence on Operational Efficiency**

**MODEL SUMMARY**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.701	0.491	0.488	0.498

The Model Summary table shows that the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.701, indicating a strong positive relationship between stakeholder engagement in decision-making and operational efficiency. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.491 implies that 49.1% of the variance in operational efficiency can be explained by stakeholder engagement. The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.488 confirms this, adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.498) reflects the standard deviation of the residuals, providing insight into the accuracy of the model's predictions.

**ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	56.350	1	56.350	227.20	0.000
Residual	58.450	312	0.187		
Total	114.800	313			

The ANOVA table assesses the statistical significance of the regression model. The F-statistic is 227.20 with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the model is statistically significant, and we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) that stakeholder engagement in decision-making does not significantly influence operational efficiency. The model significantly explains the variability in operational efficiency.

**COEFFICIENTS**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Std. Error	t Beta	Sig.
Constant	1.150	0.137		8.394
Stakeholder Engagement	0.670	0.044	0.701	15.073

The Coefficients table provides details for the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 1.150, which represents the predicted operational efficiency when stakeholder engagement is zero. The B coefficient for stakeholder engagement is 0.670, indicating that for each unit increase in stakeholder engagement, operational efficiency increases by 0.670 units. The t-value of 15.073 and the p-value of 0.000 suggest that stakeholder engagement significantly influences operational efficiency. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) and conclude that stakeholder engagement in decision-making significantly influences operational efficiency.

**Hypothesis Three**

H<sub>03</sub>: The quality of participatory forums does not significantly influence operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

**Table 7: Simple Regression Analysis of the Quality of Participatory Forums and its Influence on Operational Efficiency**

**MODEL SUMMARY**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.642	0.412	0.409	0.531

The Model Summary table shows that the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.642, indicating a strong positive relationship between the quality of participatory forums and operational efficiency. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.412 indicates that 41.2% of the variance in operational efficiency can be explained by the quality of participatory forums. The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.409 further confirms that the model holds, even after accounting for the number of predictors in the model. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.531) shows the average deviation of the observed operational efficiency values from the model-predicted values.

**ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	47.266	1	47.266	167.56	0.000
Residual	67.534	312	0.216		
Total	114.800	313			

The ANOVA table assesses the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic is 167.56 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the model is statistically significant. This means we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>) that the quality of

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participatory forums does not significantly influence operational efficiency. The significant F-statistic implies that the model provides a good fit for explaining the variance in operational efficiency.

### COEFFICIENTS

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Std. Error	t Beta	Sig.
Constant	1.290	0.149		8.659
Quality of Participatory Forums	0.580	0.045	0.642	12.944

The Coefficients table provides the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 1.290, which indicates the predicted operational efficiency when the quality of participatory forums is zero. The B coefficient for the quality of participatory forums is 0.580, meaning that for each unit increase in the quality of participatory forums, operational efficiency increases by 0.580 units. The t-value of 12.944 and the p-value of 0.000 indicate that the quality of participatory forums significantly contributes to operational efficiency. As the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) and conclude that the quality of participatory forums significantly influences operational efficiency.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of participatory decision-making in enhancing organizational performance has been widely acknowledged in both theoretical and empirical studies. Participatory decision-making refers to the active involvement of employees and stakeholders in organizational decisions, fostering a more inclusive and democratic environment. In the context of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, this study set out to examine how participatory decision-making, specifically through employee involvement, stakeholder engagement, and the quality of participatory forums, influences operational efficiency. This study demonstrates that participatory decision-making—through employee involvement, stakeholder engagement, and high-quality participatory forums—has a significant positive influence on operational efficiency at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The findings suggest that when organizations create platforms that foster participation, they not only enhance decision-making processes but also optimize the efficiency of their operations. The rejection of all three null hypotheses confirms that participatory decision-making is a critical factor in achieving operational efficiency.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The management of the university should actively involve employees at various levels in decision-making processes to enhance commitment and productivity, as the study showed a significant positive effect on operational efficiency.
- The university should increase engagement with both internal and external stakeholders in decision-making. This will improve transparency, accountability, and resource management, which in turn boosts operational efficiency.
- The university should ensure that participatory forums are well-structured, transparent, and inclusive. Effective forums promote clear communication and collaboration, which were found to significantly influence operational efficiency.
- Establish feedback channels that allow employees and stakeholders to continuously contribute ideas and insights. This will ensure ongoing participation and further optimize decision-making processes.

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