

INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING AND EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

Chux-Nyeche Gloria Chinyere (Ph.D), Eke, Cynthia Chidinma (Ph.D) & Erien-Naikachep Maurice Ikuru (Ph.D)

Email: *glochux911@gmail.com*

Department of Office and Information Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between inclusive decision-making and employee job performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to empirically unravel how inclusive decision-making interacts with employee job performance in terms of work quality and innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The explanatory cross-sectional research design was adopted. A sample of 348 respondents was drawn from a population of 2659 senior staff of six Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria using Taro Yamene formula. In furtherance of the sampling process, A combination of Bowley's formula and random sampling techniques were employed. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by the project supervisors and another expert in Office and Information Management. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The administration of the instrument was done using Google form shared using email and social media contacts. Out of 348 copies of the questionnaire administered, 208 copies were retrieved. The primary data obtained from the field were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the bivariate analysis. The analysis of data revealed that inclusive decision-making has significant positive relationship with employee job performance in terms of work quality, and innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. It was concluded that inclusive decision-making optimizes employee job performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. It was recommended amongst others that Vice Chancellors and other administrative heads should endeavour to be more inclusive and transparent in their decision making and communication efforts.

Keywords: Inclusive decision-making, employee performance, work quality, innovativeness.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Employees constitute one of the major resources of an institution and their performance determines the success or failure of the institution. The job performance of teaching and non-teaching staff of Federal Universities is of great importance to management. Employee job performance refers to how staff carry out their functions and their ability to get work done. The Oxford Dictionary of English Language cited in Armstrong (2016) defines employee job performance as the act of performing; applying or executing anything organized or promised by an employee; it can also be viewed as the output of an employee. This work conceptualizes employee job performance as the process or extent to which an employee executes tasks innovatively and is able to achieve quality result.

Employee job performance in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria encompasses various factors related to both teaching and non-teaching staff, impacting overall institutional effectiveness (Tafamel & Akrawah, 2019). For teaching staff, job performance is often evaluated based on work quality, which includes the delivery of lectures, research output, student engagement, and contribution to academic publications. High-performing lecturers not only impart knowledge effectively but also engage in innovative research that advances knowledge in their fields. For non-teaching staff, performance is assessed through the efficiency and accuracy of administrative tasks,

such as record-keeping, financial management, and student services (Yasmin, 2017). Innovativeness is crucial for both groups, as it involves adopting new methods or technologies to enhance work processes. For instance, lecturers may integrate technology into teaching, while non-teaching staff may streamline administrative procedures using digital tools. However, challenges such as limited resources and training opportunities can sometimes hinder both teaching and non-teaching staff from fully optimizing their performance and innovative potential. This study measures employee job performance in terms of work quality and innovativeness.

Work quality refers to the standard and consistency of output an employee produces, reflecting the accuracy, thoroughness, and effort put into completing tasks. According to Amabile (2016), work quality in academic settings is often measured through the effectiveness of teaching, research output, and the contributions an employee makes to the university's mission. In Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria, teaching staff are expected to maintain high work quality by delivering comprehensive, up-to-date lectures, engaging in impactful research, and publishing in reputable journals. For non-teaching staff, work quality encompasses the efficient management of administrative duties, student services, and record-keeping. Otamiri *et al.* (2019) highlight that consistent high-quality work in both teaching and administrative roles ensures the smooth functioning of work systems and institutional success. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and infrastructural limitations can hinder staff from maintaining consistently high-quality output, especially in a context where Federal Universities often face these constraints.

Innovativeness, on the other hand, relates to an employee's ability to introduce new ideas, methods, or processes that improve their work and the institution's performance. Roman and Munuera (2015) assert that innovativeness in academic settings involves the integration of modern teaching tools, novel research methods, and administrative efficiencies to enhance productivity. In Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria, teaching staff demonstrate innovativeness through adopting technology for blended learning, engaging in interdisciplinary research, and developing curricula that meet global standards. For non-teaching staff, Kante and Wilson (2018) argue that innovativeness is reflected in the automation of administrative processes, adoption of digital record-keeping, and improving student services using technology. Such innovation enhances efficiency and allows the universities to compete more effectively both locally and internationally. However, as Otamiri *et al.* (2019) point out, limitations in ICT infrastructure and training often restrict the extent to which both teaching and non-teaching staff can be truly innovative in their roles. Despite these constraints, fostering a culture of innovation and providing necessary resources would significantly enhance employee job performance across the board. While training and other motivational tools can help in enhancing employee job performance, it is important not to overlook the place of administrative transparency in optimizing employee work quality and innovativeness in a work environment such as Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Being open in sharing of information, decisions, and policies within an organization and ensuring that employees are fully informed and aware of the processes affecting them increases performance. In the context of Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria, transparency plays a crucial role in enhancing employee job performance. When university management communicates decisions and policies clearly and involves employees in these processes, it fosters trust and accountability (Kante & Wilson, 2018). This openness reduces uncertainty, increases job satisfaction, and motivates both teaching and non-teaching staff to perform better, as they feel more engaged and aligned with institutional goals (Otamiri *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, lack of transparency can lead to distrust, low morale, and decreased productivity. Students and staff also expect reasonable level of transparency in the communication of administrative decisions.

Worthy of mention in this study is "Information integrity" which involves maintaining the consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of information content (data or message) over its entire life cycle. Data or messages must not be changed in transit, and steps must be taken to ensure that data cannot be altered by unauthorized people (for example, in a breach of

confidentiality). The Business Dictionary cited in Otamiri and Wali (2022) defines information integrity as the assurance that the data being accessed or read has neither been tampered with, nor been altered or damaged through a system error, since the time of the last authorized access. Information Integrity can be defined as the dependability and trustworthiness of information. More specifically, it is the accuracy, consistency and reliability of the information content, processes and systems. According to Keith and Jeffrey (2017), information assurance and quality assurance are intertwined with the idea of information integrity. From the above revelation, information integrity is the extent to which information content shared is genuine and free from alteration in a university. In addition to integrity, transparency also requires information access. Information access refers to a situation where members of an organization and other authorized stakeholders have accurate and timely information for decision-making and operations. It is a situation where information contents and work updates are equitably disseminated without delay. As citadels of learning, universities need real time information update function smartly and it is the function of administrative heads and their assistants to ensure that letters, memos, circulars, and emails get to designated offices. It is a situation where communication efforts in Federal Universities are devoid of information hoarding tendencies and unnecessary delays.

THE PROBLEM

The issue of poor work quality and lack of innovativeness among staff in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria has become increasingly concerning, with evidence pointing to a lack of openness as a significant underlying factor. Roman and Munuera (2015) assert that transparency in decision-making and communication is critical for fostering trust and engagement among employees, yet many administrative heads in these institutions operate with limited openness. They do not practice inclusiveness in decision making. This creates an environment where staff are left out of key decisions, resulting in low morale and reduced accountability. According to Kante and Wilson (2018), the absence of clear communication from management leads to employee dissatisfaction, which manifests in substandard work quality and a lack of enthusiasm for adopting innovative methods. Moreover, Otamiri *et al.* (2019) opined that without transparency, employees often feel disconnected from institutional goals, leading to reluctance to contribute creatively or embrace new technologies. Consequently, the lack of openness from administrative leaders directly hampers the overall job performance of both teaching and non-teaching staff, limiting the universities' potential for academic and operational excellence.

As part of the issues that triggered this study, the researchers have observed that, there is an apparent dearth of empirical studies around the relationship between inclusive decision making and employee job performance within the context of Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. For instance, Olokundun *et al.* (2018) examined the relationship between work transparency and innovation accountability in a selected organizations in Nigeria. Similarly, a study carried out by Orishede and Bello (2019) focused on relationship between organizational justice and employee performance in Nigerian business organizations. Atkins and Mahmud (2021) examined how to achieve informational justice through equity of access, implementation, and interaction. Tantua (2022) investigated the relationship between workplace transparency and employee commitment in oil and gas companies in Rivers State. Huo *et al.* (2023) explored the impact of justice on information sharing and innovation performance using the Social Exchange Theory perspective. Although most of these studies bothered on information justice, transparency, organizational justice, and employee performance, none of them addressed the puzzle around inclusive decision making and employee performance in Federal Universities. This research effort sought to achieve this by focusing on how inclusive decision making interacts with employee job performance in terms of work quality and innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The Conceptual Framework depicting the relationship between inclusive decision making and employee job performance in federal universities in South - South Nigeria is shown in Fig. 1 overleaf:

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

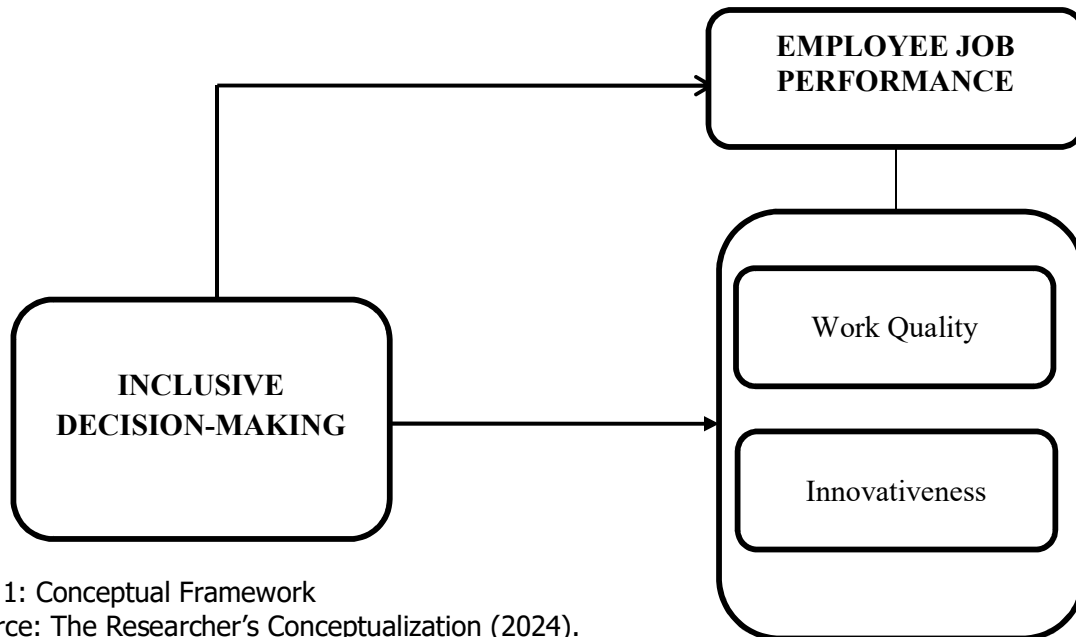


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: The Researcher's Conceptualization (2024).

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to unravel how inclusive decision-making interacts with employee job performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to:

1. ascertain how inclusive decision-making correlates with employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria;
2. determine how inclusive decision-making correlates with employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

From the above objectives, the research hypotheses below were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁: Inclusive decision-making does not significantly correlate with employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₂: Inclusive decision-making does not significantly correlate with employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory suggests that social behaviour or human relationships are the outcome of the exchange process (Blau, 1964 cited in Otamiri *et al.*, 2019). The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. According to this theory, developed by sociologist George Homans, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship. Most relationships are made up of a certain amount of give-and-take, but this does not mean that they are always equal. Social exchange suggests that it is the valuing of the benefits, openness, and costs of each relationship that determine whether or not we choose to continue a social association. This theory sees transparency and mutual benefits as the soul of all human relations (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Coyle-Shapiro and Shore (2007) identified the following assumptions of the theory:

1. When interacting with others, individuals seek to maximize profits for themselves while minimizing costs. Because it is not possible to know the actual rewards and costs involved

in interacting with another before interactions occur, individuals guide their behavior through their expectations for rewards and costs.

2. Individuals are rational beings and, within the limitations of the information that they possess, they calculate rewards and costs and consider alternatives before acting.

Adopting this theory as the major theoretical framework for this study is based on the fact that the theory is related to employee job performance resulting from transparency. Another point that made this theory appropriate to be adopted as the theoretical foundation of this study is the fact that it explains and predicts that the level of information justice (transparency) perceived by employees determines their disposition towards work and their capacity to achieve quality result and remain innovative.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Inclusive decision making

Inclusive decision making refers to the consideration of the concerns and perspectives of organizational members. It is a display of integrity and openness in communication to the extent that authorized stakeholders have timely access to necessary update and information in an institution. Inclusive decision making is more of being transparent in the activities of an organization. Transparency, which is an aspect of inclusive decision making is defined by Bacon (2013) as the process which data on existing conditions, choices and activities is made available, noticeable and reasonable. A transparent organization implies an openness of the association framework through clear procedures and systems and simple access to workers' data for moral mindfulness in the association through data sharing, which at last guarantees responsibility for the execution of the people and association taking care of assets (Roman & Munuera, 2015). Workplace transparency is open communication between leadership and employees at work. Leadership commits to openly sharing expectations, mistakes, setbacks, feedback, revenue, and other metrics. In return, employees commit to asking questions and sharing feedback, challenges, and ideas.

The Concept of Employee Job Performance

Ijaya (2019) defines employee job performance as the values and overall benefits that an organization derives from an employee in a specific period of time. On the other hand, Ahmed (2014) defined performance as a means of attaining goals and objectives within a job. He also indicated that job performance is a set of complex and intricate activities that refers how to a job gets done and not the outcomes of the acts used to perform a job. Christantus (2017) defined job performance as the completion of activities by employees in a prescribed measurable standard as set by management while utilizing resources in a dynamic environment. Employee performance is therefore the yield which is spawned by the indicators of a job within a given period of time (Wirawan, 2009) both in quality and quantity in consonance with the responsibilities. Two indicators of employ job performance include work quality and innovativeness.

Work Quality: Clearly defining quality of work remains a challenge and the terms job quality, quality of work, and employment quality are often used interchangeably. Quality in this sense refers to an appeal to promote rising standards. Thus, measures of job quality, quality of work or quality of employment should not simply provide researchers with an existing overview of the employment situation, but also allow for an evaluation of the conditions uncovered. While conceptualizations vary within the social sciences, psychologists tend to focus on non-economic work factors such as intrinsically meaningful or challenging work, and in particular on the "goodness" of work when considering job quality (Gerrard, 2020). Conceptually, it represents the extent to which work done by an employee meets prescribed standards of the supervisor or organization. Without employees' involvement and support it is not possible to achieve success of any effort of improving productivity and quality.

Innovativeness: The innovativeness of an employee refers to an employee's propensity to innovate which can be conceived as complex behaviour consisting of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with the aim of enhancing task accomplishment and meeting set goals in novel ways (Kante & Wilson, 2018). Individuals, alone or in groups, undertake innovative activities from the intention to derive anticipated benefits from innovative change. Creativity is central to innovativeness, but the concepts are not synonymous. Innovation can be seen as a successful and intentional implementation of creativity, which is more subjective and context specific by its nature (Miron *et al.*, 2014). Creativity as such may be limited to idea generation alone but by definition innovation produces benefits for the people involved in the innovative process (Anderson *et al.*, 2013).

METHOD

The explanatory cross-sectional research design was adopted. A sample of 348 respondents was drawn from a population of 2659 senior staff of six Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria using Taro Yamene formula. In furtherance of the sampling process, A combination of Bowley's formula and random sampling techniques were employed. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by the project supervisors and another expert in Office and Information Management. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The administration of the instrument was done using Google form shared using email and social media contacts. Out of 348 copies of the questionnaire administered, 208 copies were retrieved. The primary data obtained from the field were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the bivariate analysis. The decision guiding the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses was stated thus: The null hypothesis will be rejected if the significance value (p value) is below the alpha level of 0.05 level of significance, if otherwise, the null hypothesis will be rejected. In determining the strength of relationship, the correlation values were used based on the following interpretation scheme: (a) No Relationship = 0, (b) Low/Weak Relationship = 0.1-0.3 (c) Moderate or Relatively Strong Relationship = 0.4-0.6, (d) High/Strong Relationship = 0.7-0.9, (e) Perfect Relationship = 1.

RESULTS

Ho₁: Inclusive decision making does not significantly correlate with employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 1: Correlation between Inclusive decision making and Employee Work Quality

		Correlations	
		Inclusive decision making	Employee Work Quality
Inclusive decision making	Pearson Correlation	1	.825**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	208	208
Employee Work Quality	Pearson Correlation	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

** . Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 1 above yields an r value of 0.825 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating Inclusive decision making and employee work quality. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that Inclusive decision making does not significantly correlate with employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria is rejected. This implies that there is a significant correlation between inclusive decision-making and employee work quality in Federal Universities in Nigeria. The correlation value of 0.825 indicates that Inclusive decision making has

a significant strong positive correlation with employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The import of this result is that Inclusive decision making enhances employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Ho₂: Inclusive decision making does not significantly correlate with employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2: Correlation between Inclusive decision making and Employee Innovativeness

		Correlations	
		Inclusive decision making	Employee Innovativeness
Inclusive decision making	Pearson Correlation	1	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	208	208
Employee Innovativeness	Pearson Correlation	.327**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

** . Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 2 above shows r value of 0.327 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating Inclusive decision making and employee innovativeness. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that Inclusive decision making does not significantly correlate with employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria is rejected. This implies that is a significant correlation between Inclusive decision making and employee innovativeness in Federal Universities, Nigeria. The correlation value of 0.327 indicates that information transparency has a significant weak positive correlation with employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The import of this result is that Inclusive decision making enhances employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South to a low extent.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Inclusive decision making and Employee Work Quality

The results of the test of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between Inclusive decision making and employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. This finding implies that Inclusive decision making in information handling optimizes the job performance of staff in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria by building trust and quick access to necessary information which optimizes their performance. This finding agrees with the findings of Taib and Mutalib (2019) that procedural transparency increases employee job performance and minimizes workplace deviant behaviour in multimedia organizations in Malaysia. Similarly, the study conducted by Au and Leung (2016) revealed that transparency in decision-making processes and communication fosters trust and confidence among employees.

Inclusive decision making and Employee Innovativeness

The results of the test of hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between Inclusive decision making and employee innovativeness in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Faruk and Van (2016) who found that transparency or openness helps prevent conflicts and increases staff creativity by ensuring that information is communicated openly and clearly to all stakeholders. When employees have access to accurate and timely information, they are less likely to feel excluded or marginalized, reducing the likelihood of conflicts and misunderstandings within the organization. This fosters a positive work environment characterized by mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. Similarly, the work of Nurak and Riana (2017) holds that when information is readily available and accessible to employees, they are better able to communicate with their colleagues, share creative ideas, and

work together effectively to achieve common goals. This can lead to smoother workflows, increased productivity, and stronger teamwork within the institution. The improvement in communication and collaboration can result to increased employee engagement and participation. Also, Inclusive decision making encourages employee engagement and participation in organizational processes and initiatives. Once employees feel that their voices are heard and their opinions are valued, they are more likely to actively participate in decision-making processes, provide feedback, and contribute to the success of the institution, leading to higher levels of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Bacon, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and findings, it was concluded that Inclusive decision making is a key element to employee job performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. Inclusive decision making enhances employee work quality in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria by fostering trust and clarity, which motivates staff to perform their tasks with greater diligence and accountability. It also encourages innovativeness by creating an open environment where employees feel empowered to share ideas, take initiative, and adopt new methods or technologies to improve their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Administrative heads should leverage technology platforms and digital repositories to centralize and organize information in a user-friendly manner. This will make it easier for employees to find and access the information they need to perform their roles effectively. Administrative heads could also invest in training and support to help employees navigate and utilize information systems and technology tools efficiently.
2. Management of this universities should adopt Inclusive decision making in order to foster creativity /innovativeness and to also increase employee job performance..

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