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Effects of Communication and Participative Decision Making On Employees Commitment in Nigeria's Public Sector: A Pragmatic Assessment of Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of communication and participation in decision making on employees commitment in Nigeria's public sector with specific focus on Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The survey research method was used to carry out the investigation. A sample size of 400 respondents were randomly selected for the study and administered with structured questionnaire, out of which 320 was actually used for the analysis of this study. Findings arising from this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between (i) the involvement of employees in decision making at work and high level of job commitment (ii) open communication system and high level of employees' participation. The paper posited that there should be a sustained collaborative effort among stakeholders in the civil service towards promoting free communication as well as conducting periodic communication audit with a view to drawing up communication policy that would involve the participation of all employees in the decision making process in the Nigerian civil service generally and Akwa Ibom State civil service in particular.

Keywords: *Civil service, communication, decision making, employee participation, job commitment, organizational goal.*

Introduction: It is indubitable that communication plays an important role in every human society. With regard to organizational settings, the importance of communication cannot be overemphasized, as it provides employees with formation and forms the bedrock of organizational activities. To a large extent, effective communication and involvement of employees in the decision making process influence work commitment. In effect, information as a product of communication plays a central role in human relationships within and outside the organization by enhancing interaction. Researchers and scholars like Smith, Moscow and Copper (1969), Solamon (1998), McShane and VonGlinow (2003), and Bhatti and Qureshi (2007), have argued that without effective communication, directions and thoughts are lost or misunderstood. Therefore, when employees come together to work

for a common goal, they need to be properly informed and be carried along in the planning and formulating of the policies that they (employees) would be expected to implement.

Thus, effective communication and active participation of employees in decision making produces healthy and harmonious attitudes toward the organization and its management and thus improves their level of commitment and performance. In essence, in an organization where effective communication and active involvement of employees in decision making is the practice, the employees would show commitment in implementing the decisions of the organization, and feel satisfied, while it also checks the nonchalant attitude whereby employees refuse to implement a decision simply because they were not part of the decision making process. Where employees are denied the opportunity of actively participating in decision making, their attitudes towards the administration or management of the organization becomes poor and even antagonistic. This in turn produces low performance, frustration, lack of interest and lack of commitment, with the tendency that such employees are likely to seek alternative employment at the slightest opportunity (Becker, 1964).

It is therefore important that employees in the civil service (otherwise referred to as civil servants) be satisfied with the flow of communication and ways decisions are arrived at, as this will help in making the employees more committed to their jobs. This becomes imperative because both employees participation and effective organizational communication serve as a catalyst for increase job commitment and successful implementation of public policies. As Nwosu (1977:24) rightly noted;

No matter how well meaning and how well articulated the programme of any government may be, they cannot be successfully implemented without an effective civil service on whose loyalty and commitment depends on the translation into action of ministerial decisions. The strength and efficiency of the civil service is vital to the success of the government as a whole.

Indeed the performance of the civil service is crucial to the wellbeing of the populace and the society. Consequently, the need to ascertain the level of communication flow and actual involvement of the civil servants in Akwa Ibom State in decision making process spurred the interest in this study. The analysis of this study is based on the hypothetical assumptions that:

- i) The more involved employees are in decision making at work, the higher their level of job commitment.
- ii) An open and effective communication system is likely to foster employees' participation and commitment than a closed communication system.

Statement of the Problem: The civil service exists to implement government policies and programmes, and people are needed to achieve the goals and objectives of the civil service. As such, effective communication and decision making process that allow for employees' participation are necessary to ensure effective implementation of government policies and

programmes. Poor organizational communication and non-involvement of employees in decision making can lead to low job commitment. This would likely have a negative effect on the implementation of government policies and programmes, and invariably the achievement of set goals. This is because without effective communication and involvement of civil servants in vital work decisions, policy or programme implementation will be hindered. In the Akwa Ibom State civil service, decision making tends to be carried out without adequate communication and participation of employees. This consequently, leads to nonchalant or carefree attitude towards the implementation of those policies by the civil servants. Such lack of concern or indifference on the part of the civil service employees in the long run culminates into impediments to the realization of government's goals. This therefore generated the pertinent question: Does communication and participation actually affect the job commitment of employees in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service? The study also sought to answer the following specific research questions:

- i) Does effective communication and employees participation in decision making increase job commitment?
- ii) Is the poor attitude of civil servants towards implementation of government policies a result of their non-involvement in decision making?
- iii) In what ways can the job commitment of employees in Akwa Ibom State Civil service be improved?

Objectives of the Study: The main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of communication and participation on employee commitment in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service while other specific objectives were:

- i) To determine whether effective communication and involvement in decision making can increase employees' level of job commitment.
- ii) To ascertain the extent to which noninvolvement of employees in decision making can affect their attitude towards implementation of government policies.
- iii) To make appropriate recommendations towards increasing the level of employee commitment in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Conceptual Elucidation:

Communication: According to Nwachukwu (1998) communication is the transfer of ideas from the sender to the receiver and an indispensable management tool. McShane and VonGlinow (2003) defined communication as the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. These definitions corroborate each other in the sense that understanding the transmitted information infers that the meaning, as indicated by the source, is understood or shared by the receiver(s). Again, these views by the authors about communication are very much related to decision making and employee participation, because without understanding the transmitted information, there will be no effective performance and achievement of the intended goal.

Wilson and Sperber (2005) in a contribution stated that communication in an organization can be done verbally or non-verbally. According to the authors, while verbal communication involves oral and written messages, non-verbal communication engages non-verbal cues as body movements, intonations, gesture, signals, facial expressions, symbols, attitudes, physical distance between the sender and the receiver. Basically, all forms involve the transfer of information from one party to the other and vice versa, as individuals within organizations interact using various networks and are linked by patterned communication flow. Wilson and Sperber (2005:62-63) further remarked that:

The forms of communication vary in every organization and serve different purposes. Examples include meetings, letters, minutes, face-to-face talks, circulars, reports, telephone conversations, and rumours. The complexity of modern society has made communication to attain a level of sophistication following technological development which has brought about new ways of communicating like the e-mail, internet, and mobile telephone conservation. All these forms combine to make organizational communication easy.

Writing in the same vein, Robbins (1997) stressed that since communication involves verbal and non-verbal messages, electronic mails and other computer mediated communication through the uses of words, symbols, gestures and other forms of behaviour, competent communicators in an organization have to learn the meaning that listeners take from certain words and symbols as well as the communication medium and time that is best in a particular situation. This, according to the author is best in an organization where decisions and other communiqués are verbally passed up and down the authority hierarchy; and there are considerable opportunities for messages to become distorted.

Similarly, Flippo and Edwin (1970) held that in an organization, formal communication follows the established chain of command. Communication flows from the top executives to the subordinates to operative employees. The authors maintained that it is the management that provides the channel through which communication flows upward, and that both in the downward and upward communication the management is involved to create the favourable climate for the free flow of ideas and information, as well as select the channels best suited for the transmission of intended information.

In a contribution to the subject matter, Goldhaber (1993) argued that messages exchanged within the organization are carried out over pathways called communication networks which could be formal or informal. The author stressed that when messages follow official paths dictated by the organizational hierarchy or by job functions, they are said to flow along formal channels. Such messages usually flow up, down or horizontally across the organization. According to Soola and Ayoada (1998) downward communication refers to message that flow according to the organizational lines of authority, from superiors to subordinates. The authors termed it superior-subordinate communication which

provides channels through which directives, instructions, plans and policies are rooted down to the organization members for implementation. The authors enumerated the channels used in downward communication to include: letters, memos, bulletins, boards, reports, newsletters, manuals, magazines and information handbooks. Information also flow by means of oral media of communication such as verbal directives or instructions, meetings, telephones, public address systems and customized computerized information system. The authors went further to identify the following types of downward communication:

- (a) Job instruction - directives on how to do specific jobs
- (b) Job rationale - messages about how a task relates to other organizational task
- (c) Procedures and practices - messages pertaining to organizational policies, rules, regulations and beliefs.
- (d) Feedback - messages appraising how well individuals do their job.
- (e) Introduction of goals - messages designed to motivate employees by impressing upon them the overall mission of the organization and how they relate to the organizational goals.

Upward communication on the other hand, as noted by Goldhaber (1993) refers to messages that flow from subordinates to superiors. According to the author, upward communication is usually for the purpose of asking question, providing feedbacks and making suggestions. It has the effect of improving employees' attitude. It also facilitates subordinates' involvement in the organization and thereby providing input for effective decision-making. The author described upward communication as "a method of allowing superiors to know subordinates, permitting diagnosis of misinterpretations and permitting visibility of subordinate's view of superiors" (Goldhaber, 1993:159).

With regards to horizontal or lateral communication, Goldhaber (1993) and Robbins (1997) agree that it refers to the exchange of message among people on the same organizational level of authority. Put differently, the horizontal communication is that which flows among members of the same level or equivalent personnel, such as from one manager to another manager. The authors pointed out that such communication usually relate to task or human purposes such as coordination, problem solving, conflict resolution and information sharing. The authors concluded that whether the flow of communication is upward, downward or horizontal, effective communication is very essential if various activities, processes and resources of the organization are to fulfill their objectives.

Commenting on the benefit of effective communication, McShane and VonGlinow (2003) said that, it minimizes the problem that undermines an organization's potential and in turn allows employees to make more informed decisions about cooperate action, enhanced by shared knowledge. The authors stressed that along with decision making, knowledge and participative management, effective communication coordinates work activities while shared knowledge results in better decisions. Also, effective communication in an organization is linked to improved productivity. Hence, effective communication in an organization is therefore found to be an effective instrument in the

functioning of the organization and the agent that binds all relationships in the organization.

Decision Making and Employees Participation: The concept of decision making in an organization has been conceived in various ways by different scholars. For instance, McShane and VonGlinow (2003) defined decision making as a conscious process of making choices among one or more alternatives with the intention of moving towards one desired state of affairs. These writers developed a model known as the general model of decision making. The model assumes that decision starts with identifying the problems and opportunities, developing alternative solutions, choosing the best solution, implementing the selected alternative and evaluating the solution outcomes (McShane and VonGlinow, 2003).

Similarly, Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (1989) described decision making as a complex process that begins with a recognition or awareness of problems and concludes with an assessment of the result and consequences of actions taken to solve those problems. The authors identified three models that could be used to capture the complexity and variety of decision making situations found within organizations. These are the rational model, the bounded rationality model and the political model. According to the authors, the rational model assumes that the outcomes of decision making are alternatives intentionally chosen to bring maximum benefit(s) to the organization following comprehensive problem definition, exhaustive search for alternatives and through data collection and analysis. On the other hand, bounded rationality model assumes that, decision makers desire to be rational but suffer from cognitive limitations, habits and perceptual biases, and as such, they tend to satisfy rather than maximize. Finally, the political model assumes that organizational decisions reflect the desires of individual to satisfy their own interest. In all these, decision making is done using communication both in oral and written forms.

Obikeze and Anthony (2004) conceptualized decision making as the selection of alternative courses of action among various alternatives. They further stated that the decision making process is the chain of events involved in identifying, analyzing and choosing the best alternative from many analyzed alternatives, and implementing it. In the same vein, Okoli and Onah (2002) conceived of decision making as a social process involving a choice of goals or of means of attaining some objectives, selected and produced from limited number of alternatives, for implementation and execution in order to meet the requirements of some complex problems either in the present or in the immediate or distant future.

Decision making, therefore, is one of the most important functions of management. This is because, all management actions depends on decisions already reached, as decision making precedes action. Making quality decisions makes quality organizations. The process through which decisions are reached is therefore very important. In the past, decision making was seen as the exclusive preserved of management, but this view is no longer popular nowadays. Increasingly, non-managers are getting involved in decision making.

Involving those who will implement the decision in its making process helps management make good decisions and also make the workers feel that the decisions are theirs, thereby working diligently towards its implementation. This may have informed Locke and Schweiger's (1979) definition of participation in decision making as involvement in the process of reaching decisions and in which information is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. The authors further viewed participation as the degree to which employee share information, knowledge, rewards, and power throughout the organization. This, according to the authors, implies that the employees have some level of activities to perform in the decision making process which they were previously not privileged to, such that they do not only control resources for their own job, but also have the power to influence decisions that concerns the work unit and the organization.

Hellriegel *et al.*, (1989) referred to employees' participation in decision making as participative management. The author maintained that in participative management, managers share decision making, goal setting and problem solving activities with employees. The idea is that, managers consult with subordinates and evaluate their opinion and suggestions when making decisions. As Williams and Adam (2006) explained, participation refers to arrangement that give workers some influence over organizational and work place decisions.

Farnham and Pimlott (1994), writing from the industrial relations point of view, stated that the device of employee involvement is considered to be an approach aimed at developing the work commitment of employees. As viewed by the authors, the device generally denotes the processes set up by managements in organization to incorporate employees, normally individually but sometimes collectively in decisions of various kinds particularly affecting the ways in which work is done. The authors identified three types of employee participation to be financial, job involvement and employee communication and information. Of the three, job involvement is considered one of the commonest forms, because its main aim is to enable subordinate employees to contribute to the ways in which their job tasks are organized and performed. That way, it is believed that the job satisfaction of individual employee is raised and organizational effectiveness is enhanced. Basically, moving decision making downward in an organization is at the core of what employee participation is all about and it helps to motivate the employees, by involving them along with the management for serious decision making about the organization. The authors concluded that decision making and employee participation is all about bringing in employees who would execute or implement those decisions. Therefore, it is important that management recognizes the potentials of employees in this direction.

Writing in this direction, Salamon (1998) identified two types of workers participation, namely: direct and indirect method of participation. In direct method, the individual employee or work groups takes part in the decision making process, such as briefing groups; here the employees are actually involved. The indirect method on the other hand, affects the entire employees; here a trade union discusses workers complaints on issues with the employers or management with a view to settling the workers concerned. The

writer further argued that, employee participation in decision making can also vary from formal structures to informal structures, from improved communication to joint responsibility, but most importantly, it starts with communication without which there will be no participation. This is because participation involves passing information from the employer to the employees and continues beyond that to consultation where management listens to feedback before making any changes if he deems it necessary.

Employee Commitment: Employee commitment according to Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1982) is the relative strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organization, which is characterized by a belief in the goals and values of the organization, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to remain with the organization. Schaefer (2005) defined employee commitment as the degree to which an individual feels positively or negatively about various aspects of the job. Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) maintained that employee commitment is sometimes called "employee morale" and refers to the most common indicator of cooperation. Dehline and Barone (1984) stated that, employee commitment is a pleasurable feeling that results from the perception that one's job fulfils or allows for the fulfillment of one's important job values. To Hodson, Hodson, and Hodson (1984) employee commitment is a summary of attitude people express about their work. It is the result of their job task, the characteristics of the organization in which they work, and individual difference in needs and values. The author stated that, a job that contributes to the fulfillment of these needs promotes self actualization. They further identified several factors that determine the degree of employee commitment to include the nature of job task, technology and organizational characteristics, workers participation in decision making, individual differences and prior expectations.

In another perspective, Robbins (1997) stated that employee commitment is a cluster of evaluation of feelings about the job. The author identified nine areas that can hinder employee commitment to include:

- (i) Pay: Amount and fairness or equity of salary
- (ii) Promotion: Opportunities and fairness of promotion
- (iii) Supervision: Fairness and competence at managerial task by one's supervisor
- (iv) Benefits: Insurance, vocation and fringe benefits
- (v) Contingent procedure: Sense of respect, recognition and appreciation
- (vi) Operating procedure: Policies, procedures, rules and perceived red tapism
- (vii) Co-workers: perceived competence and pleasantness of one's colleagues
- (viii) Nature of work: Enjoyment of the actual task themselves
- (ix) Communication: Sharing information with the organization verbally or in writing.

Sietal (1989) believed that a job can be said to be satisfying based on the extent to which it fulfils an individual's dominant needs and its consistency with the individual's values and expectations. The scholar maintained that a number of job characteristics may be considered relevant to an individual's need fulfillment and are likely to influence employees' job commitment. These characteristics, the author said include: working

conditions, the nature of job itself, the organizational policy, pay and benefits, co-workers and supervision. Committed employees are less likely to quit their job, be absent or late for work, and steal from their employer or engage in acts of violence. Whereas, a non-committed employee could decide to put in less work effort while another may work elsewhere.

Theoretical Framework: The analysis of this study is based on two interrelated theories, namely, the human relations theory and the human resources theory. On the one hand, the human relations theory arose mainly out of studies conducted between 1920s and 1930s by Elton Mayo, who is regarded as the founding father of Human Relations Theory (Scanlon and Key, 1979). The theory looks at the organization as people who work individually or in small groups. The basic thesis of the theory according to Mayo (1945: 87) is that:

Management must deal with the whole man rather than just his skills and aptitudes, for people want to be treated as human beings with at least some recognition given to their individual needs, wants and so on. Management must help people or workers to satisfy their natural desires to belong, to feel an important part of the unit and organization of which they are members.

For Elton Mayo, organizational effectiveness and efficiency depend upon the equality of relationship among the people working in the organization. This is concerned mostly with ways of improving the morale of workers, not necessarily with monetary incentives but with praise and other informal relationships such as better leadership, efficient communication, participation in decision making and team work among other strategies.

The human relations theory is important in view of the fact that while employee participation in decision making is concerned with employees having a share in reaching managerial decisions in organization, the theory emphasizes the creation of supportive relationships and participative management. In view of this, effective managers strive to communicate in a way that encourages workers to identify with the goals, policies and programmes of the organization. As stated by Schaefer and Paul (2005), human relations approach to industrial relations is an alternative way of considering bureaucratic dynamics which emphasizes the role of the people, communication and participation within a bureaucracy.

On the other hand the human resources theory as put forward by Miles (1965) posited that if employee potentials are recognized and integrated through effective utilization, the organization would benefit tremendously as those potentials would be tapped in the decision making process. As a result, such decisions would represent both management and employees' views. This would encourage employees to be willing to implement those decisions, since they were part of it. The human resource theory thus emphasizes the crucial role that every employee can play to promote organizational effectiveness. It also recognizes the potentials of employees in an organization, as well as the fact that their potentials can be utilized in decision making to improve employee commitment,

performance satisfaction and morale. As noted by Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) the human resource theory reflects the willingness to see employees as having valuable knowledge that can serve as a resource for the organization's success since organizations that treat people as their most important asset are also the most valuable.

Holistically, both the human relations theory and the human resource theory stresses that employee participation in decision making process would lead to improved decision and self-control which in turn would engender voluntary task performance by employees. However, though these two theories are equally relevant to this work, the theoretical base of this study will be mainly anchored on the human resource theory. The reason being that the human resource theory particularly emphasizes the role that every employee can play to promote organizational effectiveness; it recognizes the potentials of employees in an organization, and also the fact that their potentials can be utilized in decision making to improve employee commitment, performance satisfaction and morale. Moreover, the human resource theory lend credence to the fact that effective communication and active participation of employees in decision making produces healthy and harmonious attitudes towards organizational goal attainment and improves the level of employee commitment and performance.

Description of the Study Area: The Akwa-Ibom State civil service came into existence as a result of the creation of Akwa Ibom State as Nigeria's 21 State, with its capital in Uyo, from the erstwhile Cross Rivers State on 23 September 1987. The State occupies the South-East corner of Nigeria's territorial expands. It lies between latitude $4^{\circ}31'$ and $5^{\circ}33'$ North and longitude $7^{\circ}35'$ and $8^{\circ}25'$ East. The State is bounded on the East by Cross Rivers State, on the North by Rivers state, West by Abia State and on the South by the Atlantic Ocean. The State occupies a total landmass of 7245.935 square kilometers with the population of about four million people (NPC, 2006).

The Akwa Ibom State civil service is part of the executive branch of the state government. The Akwa Ibom State Civil service staff strength stands at 16,643 and spread across nineteen (19) ministries and extra ministerial departments which include: Ministries of Agriculture, Environment and Mineral Resources, Economic Development and Project Planning, Education, Finance, Health, Information Social Re-orientation, Commerce and Industry, Youth and Sports, Justice, Rural development, Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Lands and Housing, Science and Technology, Transport, Women Affairs, as well as departments of Budgets, Special Services, Political and Legislative Affairs and Establishments (AKSG, 2015).

Methodology: By virtue of its empirical nature, the survey research method was used to carry out this investigation, as data were obtained from a representative sample. A survey aimed at generating primary data pertaining to the effects of communication and participation on employees' commitment in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service was carried out through the administration of copies of the questionnaire on the sample of the study selected through the multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, the simple random

sampling method was used to select ten ministries/departments from the nineteen ministries and extra-ministerial departments making up the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The following ministries/extra ministerial departments were selected using lottery method: Ministry of Education, Lands and Housing, Agriculture, Justice, Health, Finance, Information and Social Re-orientation, Commerce and Industry, departments of Budgets and Special Services.

At the second sampling stage, the simple random sampling method was again applied in selecting 400 civil servants from the aforementioned ten (10) ministries and departments for administration of questionnaire on the basis of 40 questionnaire to each one of the ten ministries and extra-ministerial departments. In addition to the primary data, secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journal articles, and other published materials as well as internet sources. In order to validate or invalidate the assumptions and plausibly address the research questions, respondents' opinions to three (3) relevant statements in the questionnaire were analyzed. However, the undecided responses were discarded in our analysis since they conveyed neither positive nor negative opinion. The following responses were generated from the questionnaire and utilized in the analysis of the study:

Statement 3: The involvement of employees in decision making engenders a high level of job commitment in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Table-1: Responses to statement 3

SA	A	D	SD	Total
234	62	12	6	314

The above data shows that a combined total of 296 or 94.3% of the respondents agreed that involvement of employees in decision making actually engenders a high level of job commitment on in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, whereas 18 or 5.7% disagreed.

Statement 4: Effective communication increases employees' commitment in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Table-2: Responses to statement 4

SA	A	D	SD	Total
152	118	22	16	308

From the above responses a combined total of 270 respondents representing 81.7% were positive in their opinion that effective communication increases employees' commitment in Akwa Ibom State civil service whereas 38 representing 12.3% were of the negative opinion.

Statement 5: Open communication enhances a high level of level of employees' participation and job commitment in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Table-3: Responses to statement 5

SA	A	D	SD	Total
115	121	42	26	304

Analysis of responses to statement 5 indicates that a total of 236 or 77.6% of the respondents answered in affirmative while 68 or 22.4 % disagreed to the statement.

Statement 6: Poor attitude of civil servants towards implementation of government policies result from their non-involvement in decision making.

Table 4: Responses to statement 7

SA	A	D	SD	Total
148	130	19	15	312

The frequency of responses to statement 7 indicates that a significant number of 278 or 89.1% responded in support of the statement whereas an insignificant number of 34 or 10.9% were against, thus proving that the poor attitude of civil servants towards implementation of government policies result from their non-involvement in decision making.

Discussion: The Imperative of Communication to Employees Job Commitment:

Findings arising from this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the involvement of employees' in decision making at work and high level of job commitment; that there is a relationship between an open and effective communication system and high level of employee participation. Communication, to a large extent, contributes to employee's participation and thus, enhances commitment to an organization due to the fact that personnel are fully informed of their expected roles and tasks. Equally, the encouragement of upward communication to complement downward communication from managers encourages feedback as well as self-appraisal from staff. The upward communication also enhances employee's ability to present their ideas and contribute to decision making. The study result also proved that ineffective communication will decrease employee commitment whereas effective communication motivates personnel to participate in the organization, helps the employee to understand organizational goals, and leads to success of the organization. In Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, there is downward communication as against upward communication, whereas employees have greater opportunity to participate in decision making process if given the opportunity of upward communication.

Flippo and Edwin (1970) affirmed that upward communication is very necessary in order to promote good human relations as it is through this means that management monitors the feelings of employees and take appropriate action to correct what would otherwise lead to costly labour management disputes. The authors further stated that the employees who believe that management maintains an open door policy tend to have a feeling of belonging and being appreciated. Similarly Hodson *et al.* (1984) opined that when workers have an opportunity to participate in the day-to-day decisions influencing their work life, they experience greater self-actualization. The idea therefore is that there is a tendency for alienation when employees are blocked from participation in decision making and when communication link is closed.

Likewise, Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) postulated that people are more motivated to work hard towards a goal that they have helped developed. Hence there is a significance relationship between open communication system and high level of employee commitment. In the same vein, McShane and VonGlinow (2003) averred that effective communication and participation minimize the problem that undermines an organization's potentials and in turn allow employees' to make more informed decisions about corporate action, enhanced by shared knowledge, coordinates work activities while shared knowledge results in better decisions. This explains the positive effect of communication and participation on employee commitment in Akwa-Ibom State civil service. Moreover, the findings of this study and the opinions of other scholars support both the human relations theory and the human resources theory which emphasis the role that every employee can play to promote organizational effectiveness.

In order to corroborate or refute the results from the opinion survey, statistical data and direct observation were also employed. Five ministries namely Education, Health, Justice, Agriculture, Lands and Housing were selected for the purpose of direct observation. The researcher found out that staff suggestion schemes and joint consultative meetings are not common in the ministries of Education and Health. This is not the case in the ministries of Justice and Agriculture where suggestion scheme and joint consultative committee are common components of the management strategies. However, ministry of Lands and Housing seems to tread on a different path where there are no suggestion schemes and joint consultative committees are not regular features in the ministry. This indicates that in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service staff suggestion schemes and joint consultative meetings are not regarded as an important factor in 80% of the ministries. In terms of the frequency of staff management meetings and management staff representative meetings, it was found that ministries of Education, Agriculture, Lands and Housing have 50%, 30% and 15% respectively. While ministries of Health and Justice trailed with 4% and 1% due largely to the fact that the two ministries rarely have such meetings. The respondents mostly those of ministry of Health further affirmed that decision making and consultation in the ministry is mostly based on technical competence, while some meetings are held if there is a critical issue to be addressed and at the instance of the commissioner. It was further revealed from the study that there is a low level participation of employee in decision making in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service as staff suggestion scheme is not regarded as a major operational component by majority of the ministries. This accounts for the poor attitude of civil servants towards implementation of government policies that they were not part of its formulation.

In the area of communication, staff briefing is a regular feature in the ministries of Education and Agriculture. However, it is an infrequent thing in the ministries of Health, Justice, Lands and Housing. There appear to be a general awareness of the essence of human capital development for effective and efficient service delivery. This is buttressed by the fact that in all ministries studied, speak up programmes, seminars and conferences are variously used to exposed the workers to the rudiments of modern administration. The need

to pass information was also noticed through the high frequency of usage of newsletters and bulletins by ministries of Education and Justice. However, same could not be said of the ministries of Agriculture, Health and Lands and Housing. In these three ministries, it was found in the study that they seldom make use of newsletters and bulletins. It was also observed that generally the passage of information in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service was in low capacity and in dire need of improvement.

Conclusion: The major concern of this study was to investigate the effects of communication and participation on employees' commitment in the Nigeria, taking Akwa Ibom State Civil Service as a case study. From the analysis of data, there was overwhelming evidence that there is significant relationship between the involvement of employees in decision making at work and high level of job commitment, and that there is significant relationship between open and effective communication system and high level of employee participation and commitment. Responses from the research participants indicated that if they are given adequate and concrete information about their organization, there will be higher levels of participation and employee commitment in the organization. However, data collected revealed that in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, instructions are routed to subordinates more through their immediate supervisors, followed by heads of departments which implies that the communication strategies adopted is up-down thereby hindering the participation of employees.

Effective communication and active participation of employees in decision making produces healthy and harmonious attitudes toward the organization and its management and improves their level of commitment and performance. Unfortunately, in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, decision making tends to be carried out without adequate communication and participation of employees. This situation consequently leads to carefree attitude towards the implementation of public policies by the civil servants.

Conclusively, communication and participation are obviously very important elements in an organization. It affects all management processes such as planning, organizing, motivation, and controlling. This study has proven that both communication and participation increases employees' job commitment, thereby facilitating the attainment of organizational goals. There is therefore a supportive relationship between the variables of communication, participation, and employee commitment.

Recommendations: Flowing from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced:

- i) There should be sustained collaborative effort among stakeholders in the Nigerian Civil Service towards promoting free communication by providing safe internet culture with effective snap channels, as they are not limited by geographic location as long as staff have intermittent internet access and computer, messages can be easily targeted to a geographical dispersed workforce. The snap channels can help ensure message consistency and give every employee a 'voice' regardless of their physical location; the snap channels also provide an effective means to listen to

staff, to involve staff, and it is an important drive of engagement and gathering feedback. This would give greater room for feedback which will challenge the staff to participate and be committed to the goals of the Civil Service.

- ii) Participation in decision making requires more channels of communication because the more open the channels of communication, the more the staff will participate in managing the organization. So the management should develop genuine interest in what their staffs do and show respect to expressed opinions.
- iii) A routine and regular participatory management meeting should be convened with special sessions that allow and encourage staff input included even as staff input in the process of decision making should be considered paramount to the management in the Civil Service.
- iv) There is the need to conduct periodic communication audit and communication training with a view to drawing up effective and comprehensive communication policy that would involve the participation of all employees in the State Civil Service.
- v) The national and state government should improve on the supply of electric power, since information and global communication technologies depend much on this.

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