

## **EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Employee participation is widely regarded as a key factor in enhancing organizational commitment, yet its impact varies significantly between public and private universities. This study investigates the relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment in public and private universities in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria. The primary objective is to assess how different levels of employee involvement influence their commitment to the organization. The theoretical framework is grounded in the Social Exchange Theory which offers a comprehensive framework to understand the dynamics of employee participation and organizational commitment. This study adopts a comparative research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. With a sample size of 353, data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with academic university staff from selected public and private universities. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample, and the data were analyzed using statistical tools, including chi-square tests. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between employee participation and organizational commitment in both public and private universities. However, the extent of participation and its impact on commitment varied between the two sectors. In private universities, higher levels of participatory practices were observed, leading to greater organizational commitment compared to their public counterparts. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of fostering participatory practices to enhance employee commitment. It recommends that public universities adopt more inclusive decision-making processes to boost employee morale and commitment.*

**Keywords:** Academic Staff, Employee Participation, Organizational Commitment, Public Universities, Private Universities

### **Introduction**

The concept of employee participation has its roots in early management theories and practices, evolving significantly over the past century. The advent of industrial democracy in the early 20th century marked the beginning of formal recognition of employee participation in decision-making processes. The Hawthorne Studies (1924-1932) conducted by Elton Mayo and his colleagues at the Western Electric Company highlighted the importance of social relations and employee involvement in enhancing productivity and job satisfaction (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). These studies laid the groundwork for future research on employee participation and its impact on organizational outcomes. In the context of higher education, the concept of employee participation began gaining prominence in the mid-20th century, influenced by broader social and political movements advocating for democratic governance and worker rights. In the 1960s and 1970s, the wave of democratization and the push for greater accountability and transparency in public

institutions led to increased interest in participatory management practices in universities (Clark, 1998). This period saw the emergence of faculty senates, staff councils, and other participatory bodies aimed at involving academic and non-academic staff in decision-making processes.

The concept of employee participation in universities has evolved significantly, mirroring broader shifts in workplace management philosophies and responding to changing societal and organizational needs. Universities, both public and private, are facing a dynamic and competitive landscape. To thrive in this environment, attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff is essential in the 21st century. They are tasked with producing high-quality graduates, conducting impactful research, and adapting to a rapidly changing global environment. In this context, employee participation, or the involvement of faculty and staff in decision-making processes, has emerged as a critical factor in fostering a thriving academic environment (Wainaina et al., 2014). Ojokuku & Sajuyigbe (2014) demonstrate that increased participation in decision-making leads to higher levels of commitment among academic staff. Recent studies highlight the positive impact of employee participation on faculty and staff commitment. A 2020 study by Wainaina et al. (2014) in Kenya demonstrates a significant correlation between participation in decision-making and organizational commitment among academic staff. Similarly, research by Kane-Urrabazo (2006) emphasizes the importance of employee voice in fostering a sense of belonging and purpose within organizations.

Traditionally, universities, particularly public institutions, operated under a hierarchical model with centralized decision-making by administrators (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2010). This model was characterized by a top-down approach where key decisions regarding university policy, budget allocation, and strategic planning were made by a small group of senior administrators. Faculty members, primarily focused on research and teaching, typically had limited involvement in broader university governance. This separation of roles ensured a clear delineation of responsibilities but often led to a disconnect between the faculty and the administrative body, which could hinder innovation and responsiveness to changing academic and societal demands.

The late 20th century witnessed a growing call for increased democratization within universities. Student movements in the 1960s and 1970s, driven by broader societal demands for civil rights and participatory democracy, demanded greater participation in university decision-making (Marginson, 2016). These movements highlighted issues of equity, representation, and transparency, advocating for more inclusive governance structures that would give students and faculty a voice in shaping university policies and practices. The influence of these movements extended to faculty, who began to seek greater involvement in governance and decision-making processes. The demand for democratization in universities reflected a broader societal shift towards participatory governance and a recognition of the importance of diverse perspectives in decision-making. As a result, many universities began to experiment with more inclusive governance structures, such as faculty senates, advisory committees, and joint decision-making bodies that included representatives from faculty, staff, and students.

The rise of management theories emphasizing employee empowerment and knowledge sharing further led to a rethinking of traditional university structures (Boxenbaum et al., 2019). Concepts such as participative management, total quality management (TQM), and transformational leadership gained prominence, advocating for greater employee involvement in decision-making processes. These theories posited that empowering employees, fostering open communication, and promoting collaborative problem-solving could enhance organizational effectiveness and innovation. In the context of universities, these management philosophies translated into initiatives aimed at increasing faculty and staff participation in governance. This shift was also driven by the recognition that faculty, as the primary drivers of academic and research excellence, possess valuable insights and expertise that can significantly contribute to the strategic direction of the institution. Participatory practices such as faculty representation on governing boards, collaborative policy development, and inclusive decision-making processes became more prevalent, reflecting a move towards more democratic and responsive organizational structures.

The concept of organizational commitment also emerged during this period, with early studies by Meyer and Allen (1991) exploring the factors that lead employees to identify with and invest their energy in their organization. Organizational commitment is understood as a psychological state that characterizes an employee's relationship with their organization and has significant implications for their decision to remain

with or leave the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) identified three components of organizational commitment: affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization), and normative commitment (a feeling of obligation to remain with the organization). In the context of universities, organizational commitment translates to faculty and staff feeling connected to the institution's mission and goals. This sense of connection and commitment is crucial for fostering a motivated and engaged workforce, which is essential for achieving academic excellence and institutional success. Factors such as participative governance, inclusive decision-making, and a supportive organizational culture can significantly enhance organizational commitment by fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among faculty and staff.

In recent years, the focus on employee participation and organizational commitment has continued to evolve, driven by the need for universities to adapt to a rapidly changing academic landscape. The increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary research, global collaboration, and technological innovation has underscored the importance of flexible and responsive governance structures that can effectively harness the diverse talents and perspectives of faculty and staff. Moreover, the challenges posed by financial constraints, increased competition for resources, and the need for accountability and transparency have further highlighted the importance of fostering a committed and engaged workforce. As a result, universities are increasingly adopting practices such as shared governance, collaborative decision-making, and inclusive leadership to enhance employee participation and organizational commitment.

Public universities have historically operated under the influence of government regulations and budgetary constraints, which have significantly shaped their governance structures and employee participation models. The centralized, hierarchical nature of public universities often led to a top-down approach in decision-making, where senior administrators and government officials held significant power over institutional policies and resource allocation. This structure posed challenges to the implementation of widespread participation models for faculty and staff. Despite these challenges, public universities have developed mechanisms to incorporate faculty input into governance. Faculty senates and committees became important avenues for faculty participation, providing a formal structure for academic staff to influence university policies, curriculum development, and other critical areas (Neave & Pinson, 1998). These bodies typically operate within the framework set by university administration and government regulations, balancing the need for faculty involvement with the requirements of public accountability and oversight.

The evolution of employee participation in public universities has been gradual, often influenced by broader societal and political changes. For instance, the democratization movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which called for greater transparency and inclusivity in various sectors, also impacted public universities. These movements led to increased pressure for more participatory governance structures, resulting in reforms that allowed for greater faculty and staff involvement in decision-making processes. However, the extent and effectiveness of these reforms varied widely across different regions and institutions, depending on local political, economic, and cultural contexts.

In contrast to their public counterparts, private universities have historically enjoyed greater operational autonomy, allowing them more flexibility in adopting participative structures. This autonomy stems from their funding sources, which typically include tuition fees, private donations, and endowments, as opposed to direct government funding. As a result, private universities have been able to experiment with and implement innovative governance models more readily. One significant development in private universities has been the adoption of shared governance models. In these models, faculty play a more substantial role in university decision-making, contributing to policies, strategic planning, and administrative decisions (Gumport, 2000). Shared governance structures often include faculty representation on governing boards, collaborative committees, and advisory councils that work alongside administrative leaders to shape the direction of the institution.

The flexibility afforded to private universities has facilitated a more dynamic and responsive approach to governance, allowing these institutions to adapt quickly to changing educational needs and market conditions. This adaptability has often led to higher levels of employee participation and organizational commitment, as faculty and staff feel more empowered and engaged in the institution's mission and goals.

The collaborative nature of shared governance models also fosters a sense of community and shared purpose, further enhancing organizational commitment among employees.

In Nigeria, the history of employee participation in universities has been shaped by the country's colonial legacy, post-independence developments, and ongoing socio-economic challenges. During the colonial era, universities were established with highly centralized and hierarchical administrative structures, leaving little room for employee participation (Ajayi et al., 1996). However, the post-independence period brought significant changes. The establishment of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1962 and subsequent educational reforms aimed at expanding access to higher education also emphasized the need for inclusive governance and stakeholder involvement in university administration (NUC, 2020). The distinction between public and private universities in Nigeria became more pronounced in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Public universities, funded and regulated by the government, often faced bureaucratic constraints that limited employee participation in decision-making processes (Odeyemi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2020). On the other hand, the emergence of private universities, driven by the need to address the demand-supply gap in higher education, introduced more flexible and market-oriented administrative practices (Adegoke, 2021). These institutions adopted participatory management practices to enhance competitiveness, attract quality staff, and ensure organizational commitment.

Despite these developments, challenges persist in both public and private universities. Public universities struggle with issues such as inadequate funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political interference, which hinder effective employee participation (Odeyemi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2020). Private universities, while more flexible, face challenges related to job security, employee rights, and balancing profitability with participatory governance (Adegoke, 2021). In recent years, the relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment has gained renewed attention, driven by the need to improve job satisfaction, performance, and retention in the higher education sector. Studies have shown that participatory practices can significantly enhance organizational commitment, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of universities (Markey et al., 2019; Kim, 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) has its roots in the work of early sociologists like George Homans, who in 1958 explored social exchange as a fundamental principle of human interaction. Homans emphasized that social behavior is an exchange of goods, material or non-material, where the aim is to maximize rewards and minimize costs. He proposed that human interactions are akin to economic transactions where individuals seek to optimize their outcomes through social exchanges (Homans, 1958).

Peter Blau further developed these ideas in 1964, applying them to organizational behavior. Blau's work expanded the understanding of social exchange processes by incorporating the complexities of organizational settings. He highlighted that social exchange extends beyond immediate economic transactions to include the exchange of non-material benefits such as respect, approval, and recognition. Blau's contributions were pivotal in applying SET to understand the dynamics of relationships within organizations, particularly how mutual exchanges between employees and employers can foster organizational commitment and loyalty (Blau, 1964).

The emergence of SET coincided with significant changes in workplace management practices. During the mid-20th century, traditional, hierarchical management styles were increasingly challenged by new ideas emphasizing employee well-being and human relations. This period saw a shift from rigid, top-down management approaches to more inclusive and participatory styles. SET offered a robust framework to understand these evolving dynamics, particularly how reciprocal exchanges between employees and organizations could enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment.

**Peter Blau:** Blau is a central figure in the development and application of SET to organizational behavior. His work underscored the importance of non-material exchanges and how these social rewards contribute to employee motivation and organizational loyalty.

**Douglas McGregor:** While not directly associated with SET, McGregor's Theory Y management philosophy aligns well with SET principles. Theory Y posits that employees are inherently motivated and seek responsibility, mirroring SET's concept of positive reciprocal exchanges. According to

McGregor, when organizations invest in their employees' well-being and provide opportunities for participation, employees reciprocate with increased effort and loyalty (McGregor, 1960).

### **Assumptions of Social Exchange Theory**

#### **Social Relationships are Transactional:**

SET assumes that individuals and organizations enter into relationships with the expectation of receiving benefits. These relationships are governed by the principles of exchange, where each party provides something of value to the other.

Relationships are maintained when both parties perceive that they are benefiting from the exchange. In an organizational setting, this means that employees and employers must both feel that they are gaining from their interaction.

#### **Reciprocity is Key:**

The theory posits that reciprocity is a fundamental aspect of social exchange. Employees are more likely to contribute effort and loyalty if they perceive that the organization is investing in them. This mutual exchange fosters a sense of trust and obligation, leading to stronger organizational commitment.

SET asserts that social interactions are based on the principle of reciprocity. When one party provides a benefit or resource to another, an expectation of return or reciprocation is created. This exchange can be material, social, or psychological. In organizational settings, when employees receive support, resources, or opportunities for participation from the organization, they feel obligated to reciprocate with increased commitment, loyalty, and performance.

#### **Benefits can be Extrinsic or Intrinsic:**

SET recognizes that benefits exchanged in social relationships can be both extrinsic (such as salary and bonuses) and intrinsic (such as recognition, autonomy, and respect). Both types of rewards are crucial in maintaining a balanced and effective exchange relationship. Intrinsic rewards often play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

#### **Trust and Commitment:**

Trust is a critical component of social exchanges. When trust is established, it fosters deeper commitment and loyalty, as both parties believe that their contributions will be reciprocated over time.

#### **Subjective Perception of Fairness:**

The perceived fairness of the exchange significantly impacts the quality and durability of the relationship. Employees who feel that their contributions are fairly rewarded are more likely to develop a strong organizational commitment.

Social Exchange Theory offers a powerful framework for analyzing the impact of employee participation on organizational commitment in universities. By emphasizing the reciprocal nature of relationships, SET elucidates how participative practices can lead to a more engaged and committed workforce. Universities that invest in inclusive and participative governance structures are likely to reap the benefits of higher employee commitment, job satisfaction, and retention, ultimately contributing to their overall success and resilience. In the context of public and private universities, SET provides a valuable lens to examine how employee participation influences organizational commitment.

**Public Universities:** Often characterized by bureaucratic structures, these institutions may limit employee participation, affecting perceived organizational investment. Efforts to enhance participation through mechanisms such as faculty senates can improve reciprocal relationships and organizational commitment (Odeyemi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2020).

**Private Universities:** These institutions generally offer more flexible administrative structures, allowing greater employee participation. This increased participation is seen as an organizational investment, leading to higher employee commitment and loyalty (Adegoke, 2021).

### **Strengths**

SET offers a robust and clear framework for understanding the development and influence of employee-employer relationships. It explains how reciprocal exchanges of benefits and resources between employees and organizations lead to increased motivation, commitment, and organizational loyalty. For example, when

universities involve faculty and staff in decision-making, it enhances their sense of belonging and encourages them to invest more in their roles (Blau, 1964).

One of the significant strengths of SET is its universality. The core principles of reciprocal exchange and mutual benefits are applicable across various organizational contexts, including universities. Whether in public or private institutions, the theory can be used to analyze how different forms of participation and organizational investments impact employee commitment and performance (Homans, 1958).

SET underscores the importance of trust and perceived fairness in fostering employee motivation and commitment. Trust is built through consistent and fair exchanges, where employees feel valued and supported by the organization. This focus on trust is crucial for creating a positive organizational climate and enhancing employee engagement (Cook & Emerson, 1978).

#### Weaknesses

Critics argue that SET can oversimplify the complex dynamics of the workplace. The theory primarily focuses on rational exchanges of benefits and costs, often neglecting other influential factors such as emotions, values, and organizational culture. These elements play a significant role in shaping employee behavior and cannot be fully captured by the straightforward exchange model (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

SET is grounded in the principles of self-interest and reciprocity, which may not fully explain altruistic behaviors in the workplace. Employees often engage in actions that go "above and beyond" their formal roles without expecting immediate rewards. Such behaviors, driven by intrinsic motivation or organizational citizenship, are not adequately addressed by the theory (Organ, 1997).

Another criticism of SET is its static nature. The theory tends to view social exchanges and employee expectations as relatively fixed, whereas, in reality, these dynamics are continually evolving. Changes in organizational policies, leadership styles, and external environments can alter the nature of social exchanges and employee perceptions over time. SET may not fully capture this fluidity and the adaptation processes within organizations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

#### Research Methods

This study employs a mixed research design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore employee participation and organizational commitment in public and private universities. The approach allows for a robust analysis of the differences and similarities between these two types of institutions, providing a comprehensive understanding of how participative practices and commitment levels vary across different organizational contexts. The study's sample size consists of 353 university staff members, drawn from a selection of public and private universities. To ensure that the sample is representative of the broader university staff population, a multistage sampling technique was employed.

This technique involves several stages: Universities were categorized into public and private institutions. A stratified random sampling method was used to select a representative number of universities from each category. Within each selected university, departments were chosen using random sampling to ensure diversity in academic disciplines and administrative units. Staff members from these departments were then selected using a combination of purposive sampling methods. Purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of key informants with relevant experience in governance and decision-making processes, while random sampling helped maintain overall representativeness.

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires designed to measure levels of employee participation and organizational commitment and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The questionnaires included a mix of closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert scale items) to quantify attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to participation and commitment. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected staff members and analyzed using thematic analysis. These interviews provided rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives on participative practices and their impact on organizational commitment. Chi-square tests were performed to assess the relationship between categorical variables, such as the type of university (public or private) and levels of participation and commitment. These tests helped identify significant differences and associations.

A population of 4258 (FUW Staff) and 126 (KUW Staff), summing to 4384 from both universities in Wukari. To determine the proportion of each stratum in the total staff population of each university. The study applied

proportionate stratified technique to arrive at the number of respondents from each stratum in each university until the desired sample size of 353 is reached.

$$\text{For FUW: } \frac{4258 \times 353}{4,384} = 342$$

$$\text{For KUW: } \frac{126 \times 353}{4,384} = 11$$

353 questionnaire were distributed while 10 in-depth interview were conducted with academic staff of both universities.

### Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key findings from the study on employee participation and organizational commitment in public and private universities. It explores the insights gathered through both quantitative and qualitative methods, shedding light on the dynamics of participative practices and their implications for organizational commitment. The findings reveal distinct differences between public and private universities in terms of the extent and effectiveness of employee participation in decision-making processes. The Socio-demographic section provides important background information about the participants in the study, which can help to contextualize the findings and provide insights into how different demographic groups may perceive employee participation and organizational commitment differently.

**Table 1: Distribution of Socio-demographic Data of Respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percentages
Male	199	56.4
Female	154	43.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	111	31.4
30-39	128	36.3
40-49	69	19.5
50 and above	45	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	137	38.8
Married	194	55.0
Divorced/Separated	13	3.7
Widowed	9	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years of Service</b>		
Less than 1 year	5	1.4
1-3 years	49	13.9
4-6 years	72	20.4
7-10 years	146	41.4
More than 10 years	81	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Part-time	66	18.7
Full-time	192	54.4
Contract	95	26.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

The provided data represents the socio-demographic characteristics of 353 respondents. The distribution of Sex: 56.4% of the respondents are male, while 43.6% are female. This indicates a slightly higher representation of males in the sample. For Age: The majority of respondents fall within the age groups of 20-29 and 30-39, comprising 31.4% and 36.3% respectively. This indicates that the sample is relatively young, with a significant portion in the early to mid-career stages. Most respondents are married (55.0%), followed by singles (38.8%). Divorced/separated individuals make up 3.7%, while widowed individuals make up 2.5% of the sample.

Years of Service showed a significant portion of respondents (41.4%) have 7-10 years of service, followed by more than 10 years of service (23.0%). This indicates a relatively experienced sample. Employment Status: The majority of respondents are full-time employees (54.4%), followed by contract employees (26.9%) and part-time employees (18.7%). This indicates a diverse employment status among the

respondents. Overall, the data suggests that the sample consists of a diverse group of individuals in terms of age, and employment status, with a slightly higher representation of males and a significant portion of highly educated individuals with several years of service.

**Table 2: Relationship between Employee Participation and Organizational Commitment in the Private and Public Universities**

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Agree	Mean	S.D.
I feel a strong sense of loyalty towards my university.	19	46	2	114	172	4.06	1.06
I am willing to go above and beyond what is required to help my university succeed.	29	8	5	206	105	4.00	1.04
I am proud to be a part of my university	7	4	0	184	158	4.52	0.94
I am willing to recommend my university as a great place to work.	13	67	4	136	133	3.78	1.10
I feel a strong emotional attachment to my university.	110	42	2	103	96	3.47	1.18

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

These figures represent responses to statements regarding loyalty, willingness to go above and beyond, pride, willingness to recommend, and emotional attachment to the university. In regards to Loyalty: The table displayed a mean score for loyalty is 4.06, indicating that, on average, respondents agree that they feel a strong sense of loyalty towards their university. The standard deviation of 1.06 suggests moderate variability in responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others disagreeing. The table captured a mean score for willingness to go above and beyond is 4.00, indicating a strong agreement with this statement. The standard deviation of 1.04 suggests some variability in responses, with a notable number of respondents strongly agreeing.

The table revealed a mean score for pride is 4.52, indicating a strong agreement that respondents are proud to be a part of their university. The low standard deviation of 0.94 suggests that responses were relatively consistent, with most respondents strongly agreeing. The table further showed a mean score for willingness to recommend the university as a great place to work is 3.78, indicating a moderate agreement. The standard deviation of 1.10 suggests some variability in responses, with a mix of agreement and disagreement.

The table outlined a mean score for emotional attachment is 3.47, indicating a moderate agreement that respondents feel a strong emotional attachment to their university. The standard deviation of 1.18 suggests variability in responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others disagreeing. Overall, the analysis suggests that respondents generally feel positive about their university, with strong feelings of loyalty, pride, and willingness to go above and beyond. However, there is some variability in responses, particularly regarding willingness to recommend and emotional attachment.



**Table 3: Organizational Commitment between Private and Public Universities (To indicate whether they agree or disagree with the following statements regarding their organization)**

Variable	Public University (342)	Private University
My institution provides opportunities for career advancement.	Agree 277 (81.0%) Disagree 65 (19.0%)	Agree 4 (36.4%) Disagree 7 (63.6%)
My institution recognizes and rewards employees for their contributions.	Agree 87 (25.4%) Disagree 255 (74.6%)	Agree 2 (18.2%) Disagree 9 (81.8%)
My institution encourages employee participation in decision-making.	Agree 114 (33.3%) Disagree 228 (66.7%)	Agree 5 (45.5%) Disagree 6 (54.5%)
My organization has a supportive and inclusive work culture.	Agree 160 (46.8%) Disagree 182 (53.2%)	Agree 3 (27.3%) Disagree 8 (72.7%)
My organization provides adequate resources and support for employees to perform their jobs effectively.	Agree 133 (38.9%) Disagree 209 (61.1%)	Agree 1 (9.1%) Disagree 10 (90.9%)

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

The table provides a comparison of responses between employees in public and private universities regarding various aspects of organizational commitment.

**For Career Advancement:**

Public University: Agree: 277 (81.0%), Disagree: 65 (19.0%)

Private University: Agree: 4 (36.4%), Disagree: 7 (63.6%)

A significantly higher percentage of employees in public universities agree that their institution provides opportunities for career advancement compared to employees in private universities. Majority of employees in public universities agreed that their institution provides opportunities for career advancement compared to those in private universities.

**Recognition and Rewards:**

Public University: Agree: 87 (25.4%), Disagree: 255 (74.6%)

Private University: Agree: 2 (18.2%), Disagree: 9 (81.8%)

Both public and private universities have a high percentage of employees who disagree that their institution recognizes and rewards employees for their contributions, with private universities showing slightly higher disagreement. Majority of employees in public universities disagreed that their institution recognizes and rewards employees for their contributions compared to those in private universities.

**For Employee Participation in Decision-Making:**

Public University: Agree: 114 (33.3%), Disagree: 228 (66.7%)

Private University: Agree: 5 (45.5%), Disagree: 6 (54.5%)

A higher percentage of employees in private universities agree that their institution encourages employee participation in decision-making compared to public universities. Majority of employees in private universities agreed that their institution encourages employee participation in decision-making compared to those in public universities.

**Supportive and Inclusive Work Culture:**

Public University: Agree 160 (46.8%), 182 (53.2%)

Private University: Agree 3 (27.3%), Disagree 8 (72.7%)

A higher percentage of employees in public universities agree that their organization has a supportive and inclusive work culture compared to employees in private universities. Majority of employees in public universities agreed that their organization has a supportive and inclusive work culture compared to those in private universities.

**Adequate Resources and Support:**

Public University: Agree 133 (38.9%), Disagree 209 (61.1%)

Private University: Agree 1 (9.1%), Disagree 10 (90.9%)

A significantly higher percentage of employees in public universities agree that their organization provides adequate resources and support for employees to perform their jobs effectively compared to employees in private universities. Majority of employees in public universities disagreed that their organization provides adequate resources and support for employees to perform their jobs effectively compared to those in private universities.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment in both the private and public sectors

There is no significant relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment in both the private and public sectors.

Hypothesis 2: Employees in the public sector exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment compared to those in the private sector.

There is no significant difference in the levels of organizational commitment between employees in the public and private sectors.

To test the hypotheses using a chi-square test, first a contingency table was created based on the data. The table will show the relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment in both the private and public sectors.

To perform the chi-square test, the study used the formula:  $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$

Where:  $\chi^2$  is the chi-square statistic, O is the observed frequency, E is the expected frequency.

**Table 4: Contingency Table**

Variable	Public University	Private University	Total
High Participation	114	5	119
Low Participation	228	6	234
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>353</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

df = (Number of Rows - 1) \* (Number of Columns - 1)

df = (2 - 1) \* (2 - 1) = 1

Chi-Square = 0.8243

With df = 1 and  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the critical value is approximately 3.841.

Since  $0.8243 < 3.841$ , the alternate hypothesis and accepts the null hypothesis for both hypotheses:

There is no significant relationship between employee participation and organizational commitment in both the private and public sectors.

There is no significant difference in the levels of organizational commitment between employees in the public and private sectors.

From in-depth interviews, the following data were gathered from both Federal University Wukari and Kwara University Wukari academic staff and were analyzed. A male Dr. from Federal University Wukari expressed that,

"At our university, faculty involvement in decision-making is highly encouraged. We have regular faculty meetings where our input is actively sought on matters ranging from curriculum changes to

strategic planning. I've always felt that my opinions are valued and that I can make a real impact on the university's direction. Being involved in these processes makes me feel like an integral part of the institution. It enhances my emotional attachment to the university because I see my contributions shaping its future. This sense of belonging and recognition definitely strengthens my commitment."

The first part of this statement highlights a culture of inclusivity and participative governance within the university. It suggests that the administration prioritizes the involvement of faculty members in key decisions, reflecting a democratic management style. The encouragement of faculty involvement indicates a leadership style that values collaboration and collective input, which is often associated with transformational leadership. Such a style can enhance motivation and morale among faculty members.

The regularity of faculty meetings indicates a structured approach to participative governance. It ensures that faculty members have consistent opportunities to contribute to important decisions. The range of topics—from curriculum changes to strategic planning—demonstrates that faculty involvement is not limited to minor issues but extends to critical areas that shape the university's direction and policies. Actively seeking faculty input suggests that the university recognizes the expertise and perspectives of its faculty, empowering them to influence significant institutional decisions.

The feeling that opinions are valued indicates a positive perception of the organizational climate. When employees believe their contributions matter, it fosters a sense of respect and appreciation. The belief that one can make a real impact implies that the feedback and suggestions provided by faculty are not only heard but also acted upon. This closes the feedback loop and enhances trust in the decision-making process. Encouraging faculty involvement in decision-making processes not only empowers staff but also fosters a strong sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the institution.

A female PhD. Holder from Federal University Wukari explained:

"Honestly, it's quite limited. While we have faculty committees and senates, the actual decision-making power rests with the administration. Our suggestions are often taken into account superficially, but major decisions are usually made without consulting us. It's frustrating because we feel sidelined. I've been here for over a decade, and I don't feel like my contributions to the university's governance are valued. This lack of involvement makes it hard to feel connected to the institution beyond my immediate teaching and research responsibilities."

The interview response provided by a female PhD holder reflects significant dissatisfaction with the level of employee participation and decision-making processes at her university. The acknowledgment of limited faculty involvement suggests a hierarchical organizational structure where decision-making authority is concentrated at the administrative level. This hierarchical model is common in many universities, particularly public institutions, where top-down decision-making is prevalent.

While faculty committees and senates exist, their role seems more advisory or consultative rather than having substantive decision-making power. This can lead to frustrations among faculty who desire a more influential role in shaping university policies and directions. The perception that suggestions are considered superficially implies tokenistic participation—where faculty input is sought primarily to fulfill procedural requirements rather than genuinely influencing decisions. This undermines the credibility and impact of faculty contributions.

Such practices can erode trust and morale among faculty members, especially those who invest time and effort in contributing constructively to committee discussions or senates. The feeling of being sidelined suggests a deep emotional response to the perceived lack of recognition and involvement in university governance. This emotional detachment can lead to disengagement and reduced commitment among faculty members.

Over time, feelings of frustration and perceived neglect can contribute to turnover intentions or decreased job satisfaction, particularly among experienced faculty who seek greater autonomy and influence over institutional decisions. A strong connection to the institution goes beyond job responsibilities, it involves feeling valued, respected, and included in decision-making processes. When faculty members feel disconnected due to limited involvement, it can affect their overall job satisfaction and commitment. The diminished sense of connection highlighted in the response suggests potential implications for organizational commitment. Without meaningful participation and recognition, faculty may struggle to align themselves with the institution's goals and values, impacting their commitment levels.

Interview response from a junior male academic staff of Federal University Wukari:

"There's a facade of participation, but in reality, decisions are made elsewhere. As an administrative staff member, I'm rarely involved in policy discussions or strategic planning. It's demoralizing. I want to contribute to the university's growth and success, but the lack of opportunities to do so makes me feel undervalued. My commitment has definitely been impacted, and I find myself questioning my long-term prospects here. I have serious concerns about this new promotion guideline. It feels unfair and arbitrary to suddenly impose requirements that were not applied to our senior colleagues when they were at our career stage. Conference proceedings are crucial for academic visibility and networking, but making them a mandatory criterion without adequate prior notice or preparation undermines our career progression. It feels unfair and arbitrary to suddenly impose requirements that were not applied to our senior colleagues when they were at our career stage.

The interview response provided by a junior male staff member at Federal University Wukari reflects dissatisfaction with the lack of genuine participation in decision-making processes and its impact on organizational commitment. The perception of a facade of participation suggests that formal mechanisms may exist for staff input, but decisions are predetermined or made without genuine consultation. This can create skepticism and erode trust in organizational processes. A culture that promotes transparency and inclusivity in decision-making is crucial for fostering trust and engagement among staff members. When participation is perceived as superficial, it undermines morale and commitment.

The role clarity issue arises when administrative staff members feel excluded from higher-level policy discussions and strategic planning. This exclusion can limit their ability to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals and initiatives. Opportunities for involvement in policy and strategic discussions not only enhance job satisfaction but also contribute to professional growth and skill development. The lack of such opportunities may hinder career advancement and personal fulfillment. The sense of demoralization stems from the discrepancy between the desire to contribute and the perceived lack of opportunities to make a meaningful impact. This can lead to decreased motivation and job satisfaction.

Feeling undervalued suggests a need for recognition and validation of contributions. When staff members' input is acknowledged and valued, it fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to organizational goals. The negative experiences described—lack of participation, demoralization, and feeling undervalued can collectively erode organizational commitment. Employees who do not feel connected to the organization's goals or their own professional growth may question their future within the institution. High turnover rates among junior staff members can be costly for universities in terms of recruitment and training. Addressing concerns related to participation and recognition can help mitigate turnover intentions and promote long-term staff retention.

The guideline imposes new requirements retroactively, disadvantaging junior staff who did not have the same expectations when they began their careers at the university. This disparity undermines perceptions of fairness and meritocracy within the institution. Junior staff members may not have had sufficient opportunities or resources to generate independent scores from conference proceedings early in their careers. This guideline could hinder their ability to demonstrate academic engagement and achievement relative to their senior counterparts. The sudden introduction of new promotion criteria without prior consultation or adequate lead time raises concerns about institutional transparency and communication. Clear guidelines and sufficient preparation time are essential for staff to meet new expectations effectively.

Conference participation is essential for academic visibility, networking, and professional development. Making it a mandatory criterion without sufficient preparation can hinder junior staff members' ability to meet career advancement expectations. If not addressed, such policy changes can impact morale, job satisfaction, and retention among junior staff members. It may also affect the institution's ability to attract and retain talented academics who seek clarity and fairness in career progression criteria.

The perception of unfairness arises when new criteria are introduced without prior notice or consideration for historical practices. Junior staff members may feel disadvantaged compared to their senior colleagues who did not face similar requirements earlier in their careers. Institutions need to maintain consistency and

equity in career advancement criteria to promote fairness and equal opportunities for professional growth among all staff members.

The mention of inadequate notice or preparation suggests a breakdown in communication between university administration and junior staff members. Clear and timely communication is crucial for managing expectations and fostering trust. Transparent communication about policy changes, criteria for career progression, and the rationale behind them is essential for maintaining trust and morale within the academic community. Lack of transparency can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction among staff members.

Interview response from a male staff from Kwararafa University revealed this:

"While we do have faculty meetings and some committee work, the administration tends to make the final decisions without much input from us. It can be frustrating when decisions are imposed without real consultation. I love teaching and conducting research, but my commitment to the university as an institution is wavering. I want to feel like my expertise and insights matter, but the top-down approach undermines that sense of connection and commitment. Teaching is interesting but when salaries are not forthcoming with this present economic situation, university staff become frustrated."

The interview response from a male staff member at Kwararafa University reflects frustration with the lack of meaningful participation in decision-making processes and its impact on his commitment to the institution. The staff member's statement suggests a perception of limited influence over university decisions despite participating in formal governance structures like faculty meetings and committees. This can lead to feelings of disempowerment and frustration among faculty members who seek a more collaborative approach to decision-making.

The dominance of administrative decision-making processes can create disconnect between faculty and university leadership, potentially hindering organizational cohesion and trust. The frustration expressed indicates dissatisfaction with the lack of genuine consultation or dialogue in decision-making processes. When decisions are imposed from the top-down without adequate input from faculty members, it can diminish morale and undermine a sense of ownership and commitment to the institution's goals. Institutions that prioritize collaborative governance models where faculty members are actively involved in decision-making tend to foster a more engaged and committed academic community. Lack of consultation can lead to faculty feeling undervalued and disconnected.

Faculty members' commitment to an institution is often tied to feeling valued and recognized for their expertise and contributions. The top-down decision-making approach described undermines this sense of value, leading to wavering commitment and potential disengagement. A collaborative and inclusive organizational culture that values faculty input can enhance commitment and job satisfaction. When faculty members feel their insights matter and their voices are heard, they are more likely to align themselves with the institution's mission and goals.

The statement reflects the significant impact of the economic situation on the timely disbursement and adequacy of salaries. In many contexts, universities may face financial constraints that delay salary payments, which can create uncertainty and financial stress among staff. Financial stability is crucial for employee well-being and job satisfaction. When salaries are delayed or insufficient, it can lead to frustration, anxiety, and dissatisfaction among staff members who rely on timely payments to meet their financial obligations.

Frustration is a natural response to delayed or irregular salary payments, especially when staff members are dedicated to their work but face financial uncertainties. This emotional response can impact morale and overall job satisfaction. Studies show that financial stress and dissatisfaction with compensation can affect motivation and job performance negatively. When staff members are preoccupied with financial concerns, their ability to focus on teaching, research, and administrative duties may be compromised.

Adequate and timely salary payments are essential for maintaining job satisfaction and retention. When staff members feel valued and financially secure, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and committed to the institution's mission. The provision of competitive and reliable compensation packages is crucial for fostering organizational commitment. Staff members who perceive fair compensation practices are more likely to feel invested in the institution's success and long-term goals.

Interview responses from a male senior staff at Kwararafa University presents this:

"I rarely have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes. Most decisions are made at the top level, and there's little transparency or consultation with staff like me. It's disheartening. I don't feel invested in the university's success because I don't see my input being valued. My job satisfaction has suffered, and while I do my work diligently, my commitment is more out of necessity than a sense of loyalty to the institution."

The interview response from a male senior staff member at Kwararafa University highlights frustration with limited opportunities for meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, lack of transparency, and its impact on job satisfaction and commitment to the institution. The staff member perceives a lack of opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes, indicating a top-down approach where decisions are primarily made by senior administrators without broader consultation. This can lead to feelings of exclusion and disempowerment among staff members. Institutions that foster inclusive decision-making processes tend to promote a culture of transparency and trust. When staff members are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to feel valued and invested in the organization's goals and outcomes.

The statement reflects a perception that the staff member's contributions are not valued or acknowledged by senior leadership. This lack of recognition can diminish morale and job satisfaction, leading to a sense of detachment from the institution's mission and goals. When employees feel their input is valued, they are more motivated to contribute actively to organizational success. Conversely, perceived lack of value can result in decreased motivation and disengagement from work tasks. Job satisfaction is closely linked to perceptions of fairness, recognition, and meaningful work. When employees feel disconnected from decision-making processes and undervalued, their overall job satisfaction can decline.

Commitment to the institution may wane when employees feel their contributions are not valued. A sense of loyalty and dedication to organizational goals often stems from feeling respected and involved in decision-making that impacts their work and the institution as a whole. The analysis of this interview response underscores the importance of inclusive decision-making processes, transparency, and recognition in fostering employee engagement and commitment within higher education institutions. By providing opportunities for staff members at all levels to contribute meaningfully to decision-making, institutions can enhance morale, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research study on employee participation and organizational commitment in public and private universities has revealed insightful perspectives from staff members across various academic institutions. The research study underscores the importance of cultivating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture in higher education institutions. Staff members expressed varied experiences regarding their involvement in university decision-making. While some reported active participation through committees and faculty meetings, others felt marginalized with decisions predominantly made at the top level. Economic challenges, including delayed salary payments and financial instability, emerged as significant stressors affecting job satisfaction and commitment among university staff. Concerns about transparency in decision-making and the perceived lack of consultation were prevalent across interviews. Staff members emphasized the importance of clear communication and inclusive processes in fostering a sense of value and organizational commitment.

The study highlighted a direct link between perceived value, recognition, and job satisfaction. Staff members who felt their contributions were valued reported higher levels of commitment and motivation to contribute to institutional success. Institutions with inclusive decision-making processes and transparent communication channels were associated with higher staff morale and greater organizational commitment. Conversely, top-down approaches and perceived lack of consultation were linked to decreased job satisfaction and engagement. Based on these findings, several recommendations were considered to enhance organizational effectiveness and staff well-being in universities:

Institutions should strive to involve staff members at all levels in decision-making processes, ensuring transparency, fairness, and recognition of diverse perspectives.

Efforts to improve financial stability and ensure timely salary payments are crucial for mitigating stress and enhancing job satisfaction among university staff.

Establishing clear communication channels and mechanisms for feedback can foster a culture of openness and trust, promoting staff engagement and commitment.

Supporting staff development and career progression opportunities can boost motivation and organizational loyalty, contributing to long-term institutional success.

Future studies should be encouraged on both teaching and non-teaching staff to unveil hidden facts.

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