The Role of Workers' Participation on Workers' Wellbeing, Workplace Wellness and Safety at Selected Research Institutes in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract. *Severe consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic reinforced the importance of occupational health and safety. Associated economic disruptions and the entrenchment of institutional dynamics that are at variance with workers' interests have placed additional pressures on workplace wellness and safety measures. The connection between organisational productivity and worker safety and wellness requires worker participation to institutionalise wellness and safety measures at work. This paper examines the role of workers' participation in shaping the wellbeing of workers around workplace safety and wellness at two research institutes in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. A case study design was employed as a research strategy for the study. The justification to adopt this design hinges on its capacity to enhance empirical inquiry on workers' participation in decisions that affect them as far as workplace wellness and safety are concerned at the case institutes. The samples were selected through a combination of cluster and random sampling methods. A total of 302 questionnaires were distributed at the two research institutions; however, only 265 were returned and found to be appropriate to use in the study. Despite the significance of workplace health and safety awareness, training, education, and regulations, the study showed that employees have not been given the attention that they deserve to shape the programme.*

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Keywords: Health Promotion, Worker's participation, Worker's wellbeing, Workplace wellness and safety, Organizational productivity

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1. Introduction

There is a symbiotic relationship between working conditions, health and safety, and the productivity of workers (Antonisse & Garfield, 2018; Gubler, Larkin & Pierce, 2018; & Kirsten, 2012). The European Trade Union Confederation (2019) noted that workers' participation is a key issue in the 21st century. The global COVID 19 crisis not only dismantled personal and organizational boundaries and structures but has also exposed infractions on existing workers' rights, as well as inequalities in the workplace, impacting workers' health (Lancet, 2020). Due to the current state of workplaces, it is becoming increasingly difficult for workers to relay their concerns around health and safety, as well as other workplace issues to management owing to the erosion of workers' participation in most decision-making.Workers' working conditions affect their mental and psychological well-being (Rajgopal, 2010), ultimately influencing workplace performance and productivity (Chen et al., 2015). The health state of workers in any organisation affects its competitiveness and success. The working condition in any workplace has a powerful impact on its employees' psychological well-being (Waddell & Burton, 2006), as well as their ability to attain optimal productivity to succeed, as required by the organization (Duru & Shimawua, 2017; Taiwo, 2010). Workplaces have their own peculiar physical and non-physical hazards, which constitute threats to employees' health and safety. For example, hazards in the maritime sector are different from hazards in a research institute. Hazards could be mental, mechanical, environmental, physical, chemical, biological, and ergonomic in nature. Regardless of the presence of legislation, laws, measures, and policies to prevent and address workplace hazards in several organizations, the frequency of workplace accidents and injuries has become a cause for renewed concern amongst organizational stakeholders across the globe (Lingard et al., 2015; Mock, Nugent, Kobusingye & Smith, 2017; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; ILO, 2021).

1.1. Research objectives

The study's objective was to examine the role of workers' participation in shaping their well-being around occupational health and safety at a research institute in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study also considered how employers, employees and their representatives can collaborate to safeguard employee health and wellbeing at work by humanizing organizational work practices, improving the working environment, and promoting shared collaboration. Further, the study investigated employees' and their representatives' views and perceptions regarding workers' participation in the workplace in relation to safety, health, and wellbeing.

1.2. Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to support the research objectives.

$H0_1$: There is no linkage between workers' welfare and the quality of Occupational Health and Safety policies.

$H0_2$: Workers' participation will not significantly enhance the quality of Occupational Health and Safety measures.

$H0_3$: Workers' participation does not statistically significantly enhance workers' welfare.

2. Literature Review

Burton (2010) argues that when employees lack sufficient influence over hazardous conditions in the workplace, they lose the required control to minimize threats to their limbs and lives, which could result in direct or indirect injuries. Workers who are dissatisfied with their working conditions and terms of employment may experience anger and depression. This type of situation could adversely affect their relationship with their employers. Cordial labour-management relations often spur harmonious working relations amongst and between workers and their employers, which also has a positive effect on the quality of occupational health and safety practices through the presence of excellent safety consciousness, measures, and climate. When the conditions and terms of employment are good, there are positive

multiplier effects in terms of improved worker wellbeing, as well as reductions in the frequent occurrence of occupational accidents.

The European Trade Union Confederation (2019) emphasised that improved working conditions, remuneration and rights for workers, as well as more social and economic inclusion, may be achieved through greater worker participation in organisational decision-making. The current work environment reinforces the need for workers' participation or workers' representatives in the entire process of designing and implementing workplace safety and health policies. At a workplace level, the ILO (2015) identified worker participation as a major pre-condition for successful OHS management, as well as a key contributing factor towards reducing occupational diseases and injuries. As a matter of fact, workers are a great source of vital information for health-related dangers, and risks, and to proffer solutions, as they serve the frontlines, carrying various responsibilities. According to the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2012), worker participation in health and safety refers to a straightforward two-way process in which employers and their workers or worker representatives talk to one another; share their perspectives and information; discuss issues timeously; and consider what everyone has to say before making decisions that apply to everyone.

Understanding how employment relations affect different groups of people can help to promote effective policies and institutional changes aimed at reducing health-related challenges in the workplace. Benach, Muntaner and Santana's (2007a) research revealed that worker participation is a powerful instrument in fair employment relations and decent work. Kohler (1986) mentions that worker participation is aimed at ensuring that employees have a voice in workplace decision-making, which helps to create a climate of labor-management collaborations such as employee involvement and participatory management. Worker involvement, according to Benson and Lawler (2013), is an approach to work systems design, which emphasizes strong employee decision-making authority. In terms of health and safety at work, they encompass a wide range of practices and resources aimed at providing employees with basic knowledge, information, and authority, which are all necessary to make informed decisions.

The term 'worker participation' encapsulates a broad spectrum of tools that are used to include workers at all stages of an organization's decision-making process, whether they are done directly with employees or indirectly through their representatives (Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington & Lewin, 2010). Providing input and participating in the development of workplace policies and decision-making processes is an effective way for employees to exert some influence over issues that affect them in the workplace. Workers are enthusiastically motivated to contribute to the organization's success once they are properly engaged (Anitha, 2014; Eldor & Harpaz, 2015). Due to their diverse experiences and skills, workers are naturally equipped to advise, propose, and design methods to enhance safe, productive, and cost-effective working environments. Employees' participation in decision-making is vital for the development of successful employee safety programs. Employees who are involved in critical issues from the onset are more likely to understand the reasons for taking a specific action, assist in developing realistic solutions for a problem, and act accordingly.

Workplace decision-making may be influenced by fundamental affirmation of employees' engagement, which has been found to be effective towards attaining higher performance (Markey, 2001). Organizational performance may also improve through training and development. It is imperative for organisations to establish these mechanisms to ensure that workers are able to generate high-quality outcomes and provide high-quality services, thereby decreasing wastages and accidents, which go a long way towards improving productivity and trust in the organisation (Vinesh, 2014). Consequently, workers must be constantly educated, instructed, and trained on workplace safety issues as means to reduce workplace hazards and improve productivity. The ETC (2019) project on "workers' involvement and fair digitalization" made some far-reaching suggestions in this respect.

The role of leadership in an organisational setting is a crucial factor to determine the type and scope of employee engagement programmes. The effectiveness of an organization's leadership may be the difference between success and failure. A company's aspirations can either be asphyxiated or realised, depending on the type and style of leadership used to achieve them, which provides all the more reason why the focus is on leadership in today's businesses. In this period of COVID-19 and associated issues,

Bendixen, Campbell, Criswel and Smith (2017) assert that leadership is the primary driver of organisational transformation. Organizations should seriously consider changes taking place in the workplace. Furthermore, the growth and direction of an organisation are influenced by the acts, inactions, words, and body language of the organization's leaders.

According to Gruban (2003), effective organisational change management is closely linked to leadership abilities, while a leader with certain skills may be more effective at leading the change effort. If employers want their businesses to survive and expand, they cannot overlook the natural strengths and abilities of their employees and the benefits of involving them in a variety of organisational schemes. Demonstrating leadership, and inspiring others to focus their efforts towards new or desired outcomes, might accomplish this. According to Josephson and Rono (cited in Lindsay & Lindsey, 2011), management prerogatives are the exclusive preserve of the employer; hence, they might object to any loss of such power. However, modern realities require eliciting strategic participation of workers in crucial decision-making processes that affect them. The presence of consensus building and harmonization of interests, which results in good management-employee relationships, often support the need for workers' participation in decision-making.

An experiment by Elton Mayo in the 1920s found that certain characteristics such as cooperation, sense of belonging, job satisfaction, and involvement in decision-making had a significant influence on the productivity and performance of employees, which is the springboard upon which relational theory was found. As a result, many people now believe that involving workers in decision-making processes, communicating openly with them, and listening to their ideas, are all essential components of achieving cooperative results, fostering synergistic relationships, and manifesting positive labour-management relations. In respect of productivity, the work environment is a critical factor. According to Agbozo et al. (2017), it is critical for employees' job satisfaction to have an appealing and supportive work environment. According to Gordon (2021), human connections should be at the center of organisational endeavours, because such an approach serves the interests of both the employers and employees. The perspective upholds the tenets that people are motivated by interpersonal relationships, which depends on collaboration. More so, workplace growth and development can blossom when employees are treated with respect and dignity.

3. Research methodology

This study adopted a case study research strategy. The justification for selecting this strategy hinges on the need to conduct an empirical inquiry on workers' participation in decision-making in relation to health and safety issues among workers at a Nigerian research institute, namely the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies and the National Stored Products Research Institute in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

The questionnaire used in the study was adapted from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work surveys. Effective worker participation checklists, which include crucial factors to consider when designing arrangements to promote worker engagement, were also utilised as sounding boards. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first dealt with respondents' personal information; the second addressed workplace wellness and safety; and the third and final addressed worker engagement. The study population consists of 265 personnel, recruited proportionally from all the organisational tiers of the two research institutes. A combination of cluster and random sampling was used to select respondents for the study. A total of 302 questionnaires were distributed at the two research institutes; however, only 265 were returned as completed. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were utilised to analyse the demographic data, while Chi-square was utilised to test the hypotheses.

4. Findings and discussion of findings

This section presents and examines the study's respondents' demographic data, including gender, age, cadre, duration of service, and educational qualifications.

Table 1: Demographic variables

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	200	75.4%
	Female	65	24.6%

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	Total	265	100%
Age	Below 20 years	10	3.8%
	21- 30 years	30	11.3%
	31- 40 years	100	37..7%
	40 - above	125	47.2%
	Total	265	100%
Management level	Management staff	20	7.6%
	Senior staff	207	78.1%
	Junior staff	38	14.3%
	Total	265	100%
Educational qualification	NECO/WASC/NABTEB	10	3.8%
	NCE/OND/ND	36	13.6%
	Bachelor/HND	110	41.5%
	Master's/Ph.D.	85	32.1%
	Professional	24	9.0%
	Total	265	100%
Length of service	1-5	42	15.8%
	6 – 10	80	30-2%
	11 – 15	85	32.1%
	15 – above	58	21.9%
	Total	246	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021

The respondents' demographic data presented in Table 1 above revealed that a majority of the respondents are male, married, middle-aged, experienced, senior staff and highly educated. This is also emblematic of the preponderance of middle age, educated and male workers in Nigeria's labour market.

.1   **Workplace wellness and safety**

Table 2: Percentage distribution of workers' responses on workplace health & safety

QUESTIONS	Yes	No
Importance of workplace wellness and safety at work.	90%	10%
Are workers aware of existing occupational safety and health policies in the workplace?	24%	76.%
Are workers aware of the presence of health and safety materials such as bulletins, pamphlets and booklets?	13%	87%
Are workers considered and involved in work and workplace risk assessment processes?	14%	86%
Are workers trained on workplace wellness and safety and how to apply and develop safety measures at work?	14%	86%
Are workers encouraged to propose ideas to improve workplace health and safety?	24%	76%
Are workers aware of and trained on how to report workplace hazards and defects?	5%	95%
Are employees informed about and/or engaged in the design of occupational safety and health policies, procedures, and instructions?	20%	80%
Are workers afforded an opportunity to weigh in on planned changes before the final steps are taken?	24%	76%

Are employees instructed to seek out methods to improve health and safety arrangements independently?	25%	75%
Do employees participate in the selection and distribution of work equipment and PPE?	20%	80%
Are proposed safety and health measures and systems discussed and realized with workers to obtain their feedback before final policy decisions are made?	6%	94%
Perceptions of occupational safety and health policies and measures on worker safety and welfare.	90%	10%

Source: Field survey, 2021

4.2 Workers' participation

Table 3: Workers' responses on participation

QUESTIONS	Yes	No
Existence of worker participation in decision making at work.	31%	69%
Institutionalization of worker participation in the workplace.	22%	78.%
Employee and/or representative engagement in the workplace is ensured by implementation of established processes and methods.	20%	80%
Is management favourably disposed to discussing, exchanging views, sharing information, and dialoguing with workers?	34%	66%
Are workers and/or their representatives represented on advisory and decision-making bodies that make decisions around salient workplace issues?	25%	75%
Are there cordial labour-management relations that exist between workers and employers?	66%	34%
Are workers and/or their representatives encouraged to highlight and suggest innovative and best workplace practices to management?	58%	42%

Do trade union leaders possess the necessary skills and capacities to play effective roles in workers participation processes?	65%	35%
Is worker participation essential in the workplace, and is it valuable for work, workers, and workplace enhancement?	92%	8%
Is workers' welfare linked to the quality of OSH policies?	86%	14%
Can workers' participation enhance the quality of OSH measures?	90%	10%
Can worker participation enhance their welfare?	87%	13%

Source: Field survey, 2021

According to the analysed data, 76 percent of the surveyed participants were unaware of current workplace occupational safety and health rules. However, they also emphasised the significance of workplace health and safety and recommended that more emphasis should be placed on it (Rajgopal, 2020). A majority of the respondents pointed out the absence of health and safety materials such as bulletins, pamphlets, and booklets. A total of 86% of the respondents said that they were neither consulted about nor involved with workplace risk assessment processes (Magyar, 2003) Only 14% of the respondents acknowledged undergoing some form of training on occupational and safety measures, policies and how to apply and develop same at work. Also, 76% of the respondents mentioned that they are not encouraged to suggest ideas to improve wellness and safety measures in the workplace, which is critical to safeguard their lives.

Only 4.7% of the respondents claimed that they are aware of training to address hazards and other faults. This is also in tandem with the earlier finding that a majority of the respondents were unaware of the existing occupational safety and health measures that the employers had established, let alone reporting hazards and defects to the organisation. In total, 80% of the workers mentioned that neither they nor their representatives were either notified or involved in the drafting of workplace safety and wellness instructions, procedures, and policies. About 76% of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of the previous occupational safety and health policies and remarked that they were not consulted or involved with these, as well as when measures were finally adopted. They also noted that the activity was strictly perceived as a management exercise that did not involve workers.

A total of 75 percent of the respondents claimed that they lack the required training to be proactive when monitoring changes to workplace health and safety policies. Most of the respondents expatiated that their perception of occupational safety and health is that individual workers are personally responsible for safeguarding their health at work. There was a comment that one of the research institutes does not even have a functional First-Aid kit. In total, 80% of the respondents declared that they were neither consulted nor involved in the selection and distribution of personal protective equipment. There were additional comments from some of the respondents that they were neither supplied with work tools nor PPEs. Only 6% of the respondents accepted that proposed safety and health measures and systems were discussed with them before final policy decisions were made. A majority of the participants stated that they were unaware of recent OHS policies at work. They also affirmed the centrality of OHS to their wellness, welfare and safety in the workplace. From the above findings, occupational safety and health education and awareness is minimal in the two sampled organizations. There is a low level of health and safety information, instruction, training, and involvement for and amongst workers in the two organizations. Workplace wellness and safety did not seem to be adequately prioritized or given due attention by successive administrations at the sampled organizations.

Most respondents (69%) said that worker participation in decision-making, as defined in this study, does not exist in their workplace. Another 78% claimed that worker participation is not institutionalized in their respective workplaces. Only 20% of the respondents acknowledged the existence of some agreed procedure for the participation of workers and/or their representatives in the form of individual and nominated membership of specialized committees established by management to perform specific and short-term tasks. A total of 34% of the respondents agreed that management is favourably disposed to discussing, exchanging views, sharing information, and dialoguing with workers, which are all activities that are at the heart of worker participation. More than half of the respondents who concurred that management is favourably disposed in this respect, are in fact management staff.

Another 75% indicated that workers and/or their representatives are not represented on the advisory and decision-making bodies that govern salient workplace issues. Surprisingly, 66% of the respondents acknowledged the presence of cordial labour-management relations, as evidenced in the unfettered rights that employees have to join unions and bargain collectively owing to the freedom to associate that they have at work. In total, 58% of the respondents indicated that workers and their representatives are encouraged to highlight and suggest innovative and best workplace practices to management. However, they unanimously agreed that a major drawback is the non-implementation of their ideas and suggestions, regardless of its benefits to the organisation.

In sum, 65 % of the respondents agreed that their trade union leaders possess the necessary skills and capacities to play effective roles in worker participation processes, while 92% of them maintained that worker participation is essential and can add value to the workers, their work, and workplace enhancement. This is in consonance with several research articles that placed emphasis on the benefits of worker participation such as reduced incidence of industrial conflicts and unrests, as well as increased mutual understanding and synergistic working relationships between the employers and employees, which helps to strengthen industrial harmony, productivity, and sustainability.

From the above responses, certain aspects of the research objectives have been achieved. For instance, there are clear relationships between worker participation, occupational safety and health, and worker welfare. More than 86% of the respondents noted that workers' welfare is linked to the quality of workplace OHS policies. Also, 90% of the respondents perceived that worker participation can enhance the quality of OHS measures and policies within their respective organizations and, finally, 87% agreed that worker participation can enhance workers' welfare.
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Worker participation enhances creativity and innovation by generating organization-wide ideas that can give the organization a competitive edge in the sector or the industry in which they operate. No doubt, ideas and innovation are crucial in any organization. Since participation is designed to ensure enhanced welfare, productivity and efficiency, workers can be motivated to collectively design better systems and processes that can aid organizational effectiveness. Worker participation results in optimizing skills, knowledge and abilities and fast tracking the actualization of organizational mandates. Though most respondents acknowledged the benefits of worker participation, they also pointed out that it does not exist at the case organisations. In other words, worker participation is not institutionalized, and there are no agreed procedures for worker participation, as management does not seem to be in favour of adopting it. They re-emphasized the urgency for more training and capacity building to promote more cooperation, partnership, and collaboration for organizational growth amongst workplace stakeholders.

Management reluctance to embrace workers' participation at the case organisations could be perceived as safeguarding their position and protecting the functions from workers' encroachment and loss of power. In addition, Banach, Muntaner and Santana (2007) argue that the history of employment relations has been marked by unequal power and conflict between labour and capital, with unions demanding higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, whilst threatening to strike if these requirements are not met, and the latter resisting those demands through firings, lockouts, or court injunctions.

This means that organisations must assess the degree to which key engagement aspects correspond with their performance development and human capital plans in order to formally institutionalise employee involvement (Harter & Mann, 2017). The workplace parties should view themselves as joint partners in progressing the growth and sustainability of the organisation. They should understand the need to shift grounds and imbibe the spirit of shared cooperation and mutual benefit. In other words, workers should have more voice in the workplace, and be compensated robustly for better economic success and higher employment levels (ETUC, 2019).

Workers, their representatives, and employers should brainstorm how to design workable, mutually agreed, and beneficial templates for worker participation that captures and accommodates their respective interests, positions, and goals. Another notable observation at both organisations is the low interest to include worker representative in worker participation. Most of the respondents acknowledged the existence of high levels of cordial labour-management relations, the presence of unfettered trade unionism, and the capacity of trade union leaders to harness effective worker participation; however, workers and/or their representatives are not fully encouraged to participate in any advisory or decision-making capacity during policy formulation on important workplace issues, which relate to workplace wellness and safety. When workers and their representatives are encouraged to participate in decision-making, they can seek to leverage their new roles to canvass for the institutionalization of better welfare and wellness programmes that may benefit all within the workplace.

Sometimes, the apathy of worker representatives towards full participation could be a major reason why management is sometimes reluctant to adopt the scheme. This has prompted *workers to think that management is not interested in including their inputs into organisational decision-making, since there is no longer an option to foster a culture of involvement at work* (Harter & Mann, 2017). Hence, the trade unions need to change their attitudes towards workers' participation, particularly in the scope of safety and health in order to shore up worker confidence and trade union visibility when formulating programmes and policies that are linked to workers' welfare.

Test of hypothesis

The formulated hypotheses supporting the research objectives are tested here.

Hypothesis 1
Restating the hypothesis

H$_0$: There is no significant linkage between workers' welfare and the quality of occupational health and safety policies.

H$_1$: There is a significant linkage between workers' welfare and the quality of occupational health and safety policies.

Table 4				
		Is workers' welfare linked to the quality of OHS policies?		Total
		NO	YES	
Workers	Management	5	15	20
	Senior staff	14	193	207
	Junior staff	18	20	38
Total		37	228	265

Table 4: Chi-square tests

	Value	df	Assmp. Sig. (2-sided)	Decision
Pearson chi-square	46.260	2	.000	Ho rejected
Likelihood ratio	36.746	2	.000	
Linear-by-linear Association	16.063	1	.000	
N of value cases	265			

As shown in Table 4 above, the calculated value of the chi-square (2) = 46.260, p < 0.01. Since the calculated P-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, the alternate hypothesis is that there is a significant linkage between workers' welfare and the quality of occupational health and safety policies. This supports the work of Rajgopal (2010), which revealed that working conditions affect the mental and physical wellbeing of employees in organisations.

Hypothesis 2
Restating the hypothesis

H$_0$: Workers' participation will not significantly enhance the quality of occupational health and safety measures.

H$_2$: Workers' participation will significantly enhance the quality of occupational health and safety measures.

Table 5				
Workers		Can worker participation enhance the quality of OHS policies and measures?		Total
		NO	YES	
Workers	Management	12	8	20
	Senior staff	5	202	207
	Junior staff	10	28	38
Total		27	238	265

. **Table 5: On chi-square tests**

	Value	df	Assmp. Sig. (2-sided)	Decision
Pearson chi-square	78.699	2	.000	Ho rejected
Likelihood ratio	56.648	2	.000	
Linear-by-linear Association	2.819	1	.093	
N of value cases	265			

Table 5 above shows that the calculated value of the chi-square (2) = 78.699, p<0.05. Since the calculated P-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, workers' participation will significantly enhance the quality of OHS measures. This result corroborates Weil's (1991) study, which reported that a safer workplace can result when workers' rights to actively participate in OHS inspections are promoted and protected. Moreover, participation of workers through unions or health and safety staff also increases prevention rates and manages occupational hazards (Nichols et al., 2006), which reduce workplace mishaps (Reilly et al., 1995;

Nichols et al., 2006). Hence, the management of OHS measures necessitates collaboration between companies, employees, and their representatives.

Hypothesis 3
Restating the hypothesis

H_0: Workers' participation will not significantly enhance workers' welfare.

H_3: Workers' participation will significantly enhance workers' welfare.

Table 6				
Workers		Can workers' participation enhance their welfare?		Total
		NO	YES	
Workers	Management	14	6	20
	Senior staff	7	200	207
	Junior staff	14	24	38
Total		35	230	265

Table 6: On chi-square tests

	Value	df	Assmp. Sig. (2-sided)	Decision
Pearson chi-square	92.226	2	.000	Ho Rejected
Likelihood ratio	71.239	2	.000	
Linear-by-linear Association	.865	1	.352	
N of value cases	265			

Table 6 above reveals that the chi-square (2) = 92.226, p<0.05. Since the calculated P-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, workers' participation will significantly enhance their welfare. This result concurs with Yuan, Lin, Shieh and Li's (2012) findings that

competency and satisfaction are fostered when leaders provide employees with an opportunity to communicate about issues that they may have experienced in the workplace and are allowed to provide inputs on the day-to-day operations of the organisation, which ultimately leads to job satisfaction and employee wellbeing.

5   Conclusion

In conclusion, despite the great importance of workplace wellness, safety awareness, training, education and policies, workers have not been given the deserved attention to participate in the scheme. Again, while workers confirmed a high interest in participating in decision-making regarding issues that affect their health, safety, and welfare, and highlighted the essence, importance, and benefits of participation, they are not fully involved in policy-making, implementation and evaluation processes at their organisations.

Leadership and human relations theories can be deployed to design more actionable strategies for the development of organizational-specific workers' participation mechanisms. This can also be translated by both organisation management and trade union officials putting this into practice by institutionalizing or mainstreaming workers' participation into organizational policy via valid information for worker participation, which will go a long way toward improving the occupational safety and health of workers, good labour-management relations, high motivation levels, and increased productivity. Based on the above analysis, the following recommendations are worth pondering.

- It is imperative that all parties in a workplace should participate in efforts to promote and safeguard occupational safety and health, whilst expediting efforts to execute the fundamental requirements of the Federation of Nigeria's Factories Act Cap 15.
- When formulating and implementing workplace regulations that impact employees' health, safety, and well-being, employers and employees alike should work together to advance democratic ideals and good governance.

- Parties in the workplace must ensure the establishment and institutionalisation of effective channels for the involvement of workers and trade unions in policy creation and decision-making at all levels.

- Workplace parties should intensify efforts to jointly devise holistic approaches for joint consultations between employers and workers and/or their representatives to design, implement, monitor and evaluate best occupational safety and health policies, measures and systems in ways that will capture divergent interests, positions and goals so that workers and employers can enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.

- Against the background of the pandemic, workplace parties should combine efforts to ensure adequate training, sensitization, provision of personal protective equipment, maintenance of social distancing, extensive COVID-19 vaccination, and other protective measures for workers.

The Leadership of Trade Unions should commit resources towards occupational safety and health advocacy, education, mobilization and research in meaningful ways that can impact their members positively. This should include the production of a broad range of publications, reports, and case studies on various aspects of OHS. Trade unions should also take reasonable care of worker safety and health through training and advisory services.

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