

# WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN CONSTRUCTION FIRMS

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## Abstract

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The research looked at workplace democracy and employee productivity in a few construction enterprises in Edo State, Nigeria. The study's population consisted of employees from four different construction enterprises in Edo State to meet the objectives. Yamane's (1967) algorithm was used to generate a sample size of about 302 from the whole population, of which 261 were received but only 251 were legitimate, while 10 were rejected. A structured questionnaire that has undergone a reliability test was used to obtain the necessary information from the respondents. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to assess the information gathered from the respondents. The study discovered that the ideal workplace democracy feature that existed among the workforce of chosen construction enterprises in Edo State was justice. It also revealed that the workplace democracy characteristics of participation-criticism, transparency, and equality are negatively associated with employee productivity. Still, the justice and accountability dimensions are positively related to employee productivity. Concerning these findings, the study suggests that firms ensure that management is committed, visible, and accessible to employees at all levels, establish a grievance system through which employees can make complaints in a protected manner, and implement effective training programs to improve workplace democracy.

**Keywords:** Workplace Democracy, Organizational Democracy, Employee Productivity, Construction Firms, Organization, Justice, Edo State, Nigeria

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Productivity measurement is an essential tool for aligning employee behavior with organizational goals, objectives, and expectations throughout the individual's working life. However, despite the benefits of productivity monitoring, there are several barriers to good performance management (Lawrie, 1990). The company's management frequently fails to provide truthful and honest feedback, which can be harmful to its employees because of the fear of straining the working relationship with subordinates (Lawrie, 1990; Donnachie, 2020; Hatcher, 2002). These subordinates are often persons on whom management relies to complete job deliverables (Cardy & Dobbins, 1994).

On the other hand, employees regard their bosses as useless in discussing their performance and assisting them in developing their job abilities. Some employees may also underestimate the significance of performance feedback and how it affects their career chances (Idemobi & Onyeizugbe, 2011). Organizations must have a culture of fostering employee engagement and all other productivity measures to improve performance and hence production. This type of employee engagement is known colloquially as workplace democracy (Idemobi & Onyeizugbe, 2011).

The notion of workplace democracy refers to allowing employees to have a substantial say in company decision-making and direction (Geçkil, Akpınar, & Taş, 2017). It means democratizing the workplace by allowing employees to participate in decision-making, due process, voting systems, democratic structure, discussions, an appeals system, and an adversarial process. In the absence of workplace democracy, there will be more inequality, marginalization, decreased productivity, and job stress.

Democracy in the workplace has recently received attention in organizational, industrial psychology, and management sciences. An element of the workplace democracy movement arose from the 1960s belief that when choices were made primarily at the top by a few persons, it led workers to be disengaged and biased judgments to be made. Employee ownership is a growing kind of workplace democracy in which a worker obtains stock in the organization and has a higher emotional interest in the firm's success and voting rights. Some organizations mix participative management with employee ownership to instill democratic values in the firm's decision-making process. Workplace democracy is crucial for increasing organizational ownership and improving competitiveness and disengagement (Foley & Polanyi, 2006; Boden, 2020).

Free collective bargaining between trade unions and employees determines working conditions and remuneration in a wide range of businesses. Employee engagement is practiced in several nations in America and Europe through industrial democracy and profit. Another option is co-ownership, in which a company is owned entirely by its employees. Good labour relations strive for a skilled and motivated staff that sees its work as meaningful and creative. A breakdown in industrial harmony or peace may result in a party engaging in industrial action due to an industrial dispute (Stanley & John, 2018; Stacey et al., 2018).

Employees are critical to the success of any firm. Their acts and inactions influence the success and sustainability of the company's goals. As a result, including workers' ideas in the organization's decision-making process allows them to feel ownership and provide their best efforts to achieve corporate goals. Workers' dissatisfaction has recently resulted in the shutdown of businesses owing to a breakdown in communication between management and workers on the job. As a result, production is disrupted, income is lost, and business executives/leaders lose the trust of some stakeholders.

Management has failed to democratize the workplace, resulting in inequity, a diminished employee voice, stressed-out workers, poor dedication to their employment, and decreased productivity (Nwinyokpugi, 2014). Employee morale is poor because they are denied the right to participate in decision-making processes inside their organizations (Nwanolue, Obiora, & Ezeabasili, 2018).

Some studies on worker democracy and employee productivity have been conducted by researchers (Vopalecky & Durda, 2017; Stanley & John, 2018). Despite their contributions, these researchers could not demonstrate the consequence of workforce democracy and employee productivity in their investigations. Much of their research focused on establishing organizational growth and harmony without delving into how this affects worker productivity. This uncertainty left sure holes in the endeavour to offer a comprehensive understanding of the topic of workplace democracy and employee productivity. One of the limitations identified in existing research was that most studies on the issue were undertaken outside of Nigeria. In Nigeria, Stanley and John (2018) conducted a similar study on selected River State parastatals' industrial democracy and organizational performance. It was discovered that the emphasis is on industrial principles, politics, and unionism — few studies on workplace democracy and employee productivity in Nigeria, particularly in the construction industry. Hence, the research attempts to fill this gap by examining the relationship between the dimensions of workplace democracy and employee productivity among the staff of some selected construction firms in Edo State, Nigeria.

However, the study aimed to investigate the impact of participation-criticism, transparency, justice, equality, and accountability on employee productivity among employees of selected construction enterprises in Edo State, namely:

- to examine the relationship between participation-criticism and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;
- to determine the relationship between transparency and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;
- to ascertain the relationship between justice and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;
- to investigate the relationship between equality and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;

- to find out the relationship between accountability and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.

Based on the research problem, the following research questions are proposed:

*RQ1: What is the relationship between participation-criticism and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State?*

*RQ2: What is the relationship between transparency and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State?*

*RQ3: What is the relationship between justice and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State?*

*RQ4: What is the relationship between equality and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State?*

*RQ5: What is the relationship between accountability and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State?*

More so, this study aims to investigate the relationship that promotes workplace democracy and employee productivity in selected construction firms in Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives seek to:

- examine the relationship between participation-criticism and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;

- determine the relationship between transparency and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;

- ascertain the relationship between justice and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;

- investigate the relationship between equality and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State;

- find out the relationship between accountability and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyses the methodology that has been used to conduct empirical research on workplace democracy and employee productivity in selected construction firms. Section 4 presents the analysis of the study while Section 5 discusses the findings and concludes the study with recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Productivity assesses the efficiency of a single unit of work or an entire company. Participatory management approaches, which are more contemporary, increase worker happiness and productivity even when low pay rates (Madison & Wisconsin, as cited in Embretson & McCollam, 2000). Effective management and work happiness have an impact on productivity. Workers whose bosses effectively push them to be more productive are more likely to enjoy higher levels of work satisfaction, which becomes a productivity driver. Workplace bullying, incivility, toxic workplaces, and workplace psychopathy can result from a lack of workplace democracy (Einarsen, Helge, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). As judged by self-rated job performance (Einarsen et al., 2011). They believe

that a lack of civility in the workplace might lead to lower productivity regarding both the amount and quality of work. When there is a lot of infighting and drama in the workplace, productivity suffers from personal struggles. When toxic personnel leave the workplace, the general culture of the company improves as the surviving employees become more productive and engaged. The presence of a workplace psychopath may be highly damaging to a company's efficiency (Boddy, 2010).

Productivity refers to many measurements of manufacturing efficiency. The ratio of outputs utilized during the manufacturing process measures productivity. That is output per unit of input in an organization; knowing the production personnel in a corporation is critical. Peshave and Gujarathi (2013) defined it as the output percentage of a factor of production by the image in light of this. However, among other productivity criteria, products and services generated by an employee per hour or the production of a country's economy are measured. Labour productivity measures the number of services and goods produced per hour of labour. It indicates that the amount of actual gross domestic product (GDP) produced by one hour of labour relies on three major elements. Examples are savings and investments in physical capital, human capital, and new technologies. Labour productivity is also known as worker productivity.

Employee productivity refers to evaluating a group of employees or an individual employee's degree of efficiency. Employee productivity assessment may result in a rise in a firm's bottom line. Still, to have productive workers, the proper workers must first be found, and then the instruments for growth must be accessible. All businesses function in various ways; nonetheless, having a winning plan for hiring and developing employees is critical. Employee productivity may be increased or improved for various reasons, including loosening internet limitations, regularly measuring overall employee growth, accounting for brain brakes, and promoting workforce democracy deemed necessary by people (Böckerman & Ilmakunnas, 2012).

According to Bawa (2017), productivity is defined as the optimal use of resources in providing services and the manufacturing of commodities that satisfy previously established goals. He considers productivity to be one of the most trendy and often utilized concepts in the management area in recent times. To maximize production levels, the firm's management must nurture and cherish its employees' most important assets. Formal, authoritarian, and clandestine interactions must be replaced with an atmosphere that recognizes the value of every employee. The goal of participation, like with many leadership approaches, the goal of participation is to inspire better levels of production and keep a contented workforce. It demonstrates that when a worker can participate in firm decision-making, he derives personal delight from seeing his proposals adopted. It results in more excellent production and morale inside the company.

Democracy in the workplace is regarded as critical to realizing democratic concepts such as employee voice, independence, individual autonomy, and involvement in all relevant issues affecting

the lives of organizational members. It entails bringing democratic concepts and practices to the workplace, such as integrating employees into organizational decision-making. According to Geçkil, Akpınar, and Taş (2017), workplace democracy allows workers to have a say in the organization's decision-making process. Workplace democracy, according to Petersson and Spångs (2005), is a set of structural or interpersonal arrangements that result in a relationship between decision-making and the influence and interest of workers at various organizational levels. According to Madison and Wisconsin (as cited in Embretson & McCollam, 2000), effective workplace democracies share three things with their employees: incentives, information, and discretion. Workers are aware of the firm's performance and goals as a result of information exchange, and they contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Workers should have information about the firm's aims and how their jobs fit into the larger picture when sharing discretion. Then they should have discretion in determining the best approach to do their assignment. Workers under reward sharing always bear the firm's terrible performance repercussions, whether through decreased income or layoffs. Workplace bullying, incivility, toxic workplaces, and workplace psychopaths have resulted from a lack of workplace democracy (Einarsen et al., 2011). Bullying at work typically entails the misuse or abuse of authority. Bullying is defined as behavior that humiliates, degrades, intimidates, or offends an employee in front of other people, resulting in lower productivity as assessed by self-rated work performance. Workplace incivility is defined as impolite or discourteous behavior that demonstrates a lack of concern for others. It has also been linked to lower productivity in terms of quantity and quality of work (Anderson, 2007). A toxic work environment is frequently characterized by a substantial degree of infighting and drama, where personal struggles hinder workers' productivity. In contrast, workers are distracted by this; exemplary dedication of time and attention to the fulfillment of firm goals is impossible. The presence of psychopaths in the workplace negatively influences organizational productivity. Psychopaths are typically prevalent at higher levels within the organization, with their acts generating ripples throughout the firm, establishing the foundation of the firm's corporate culture; the ethical standards of the whole firm might be severely harmed if a corporate psychopath is a boss (in control) (Einarsen et al., 2010).

Institutions seeking to include democracy in their organizational structure and processes must prevent organizational decision models from becoming structures produced by a single manager or a small group of persons. There are five distinct components of workplace democracy: participation-criticism, openness, fairness, equality, and accountability (Geçkil & Tikici, 2016).

Criticism refers to employees' freedom at all organizational levels to remark on work policies, procedures, practices, and processes, as well as to assess and provide ideas (Geçkil & Tikici, 2016). In organizational democracy, this idea is closely related to freedom of expression, opposition, and criticism in political democracy. This component cannot simply be defined as freedom of expression

in a democratic democracy. It also refers to the availability of practical methods (newspapers, journals, and television) for disseminating advocated views and calling for a gathering under the same roof. However, in terms of organizational democracy, these features are primarily debatable. The central premise is to create an environment where critics feel safe and adequately respect the criticized party's rights and social standing. The democratic system must also be conducive to self-reflection and be open to self-sustaining growth. Furthermore, it should target criticism and conversation while also providing conducive discussions and solutions. An organization's values and accomplishments should be accessible to criticism and discussion by both internal and external observers (Forcadell, 2005; Schutte, 2020).

Justice refers to the equal application of legal rights. It refers to the social norms and standards that are system-related and govern the administration and distribution of emerging penalties and rewards in organizations (Yıldırım, 2007). "Organizational justice concept is treated as distribution of gains (distributional justice), processes harnessed in taking distribution decisions (procedural justice) and interpersonal relations (interaction justice)" (Geçkil & Tikici, 2016, p. 125). Organizational justice study focuses on perceptions of equality in business choices and decision-making processes. There are significant differences in the amount, nature, and terminology of several organizational justice ideas connected to perceived equality. In essence, organizational justice may be separated into two branches: justness of results (distributional justice) and process fairness (procedural justice). It was demonstrated that interaction justice, when viewed as a third dimension, is undoubtedly a subcomponent of procedural justice, as described by some of the researchers mentioned above (Geçkil & Tikici, 2016). Organizational level justice is used to demonstrate the impact of justice in the workplace. Organizational justice analyzes employees' opinions of the extent of equality in their workplace. On top of these essential drivers, fairness perception may emerge as the shared benefits obtained from an organizational activity and the criteria used in promotion designation. Organizational democracy demands equity in revenue distribution. Individual economic disparities taint democratic bodies, preventing the flourishing of democratic organizations and embedding democratic management principles inside any company.

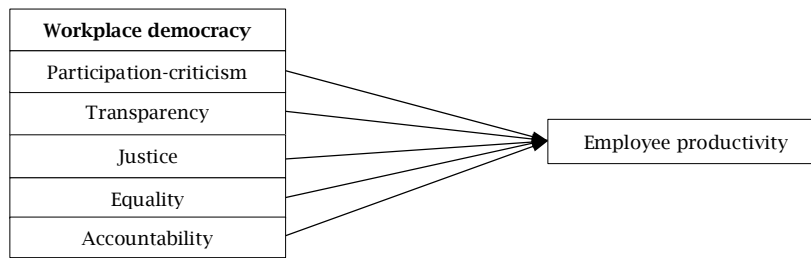
The equilibrium between many or just two quantities of things is equality. It also refers to giving equal rights and advantages to two parties. Once equality is acknowledged as a component of organizational democracy, it should never be seen as absolute equality (Geçkil & Tikici, 2016; Balderson, 2020). Instead, it provides similar methods and services to two parties with entirely and unquestionably equal terms. Individual treatment should be determined following the equality requirements (performance, education, promotion, etc.). Equality and justice are intertwined and incorrectly perceived as the same notion in most circumstances.

Accountability relates to accounting for incidental savings, expenditures, and established firm choices and requesting clarification on relevant

matters. Accountability is a critical moral practice, and the public has recently requested that administrators be held more accountable. Accountability also refers to an individual or company's honesty in explaining, advocating, or clarifying as their obligation all completed operations or processes to other impacted persons or organizations (Eryılmaz & Biricikoğlu, 2011; Messner, 2009). In related literature, the terms "responsibility" and "accountability" are frequently employed interchangeably, and both are sometimes misconstrued as the same notion. The fact is that accountability is accepting responsibility for

the consequences of certain acts and providing defence and insights as required by the specific circumstance (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003; Scobic, 2020). Accountability talks primarily focus on shareholders' concerns, whereas similar conversations on a societal level have focused on employees, customers, or future generations (Messner, 2009). By broadening the idea of accountability beyond shareholders to include all workers, consumers, and society, a democratic company and a democratic society have developed a more meaningful partnership.

**Figure 1.** Model of workplace democracy and employee productivity



Source: Adapted from Geçkil and Tikici (2016).

The model shown in Figure 1 just describes the link between workplace democracy and employee productivity. It demonstrates how the characteristics of workplace democracy influence employee productivity. The transparency dimension revealed the most form of workplace democracy out of the five dimensions describing workplace democracy (participation-criticism, transparency, justice, equality, and accountability). In contrast, the participation-criticism dimension revealed the slightest form of workplace democracy. Employee productivity was shown to have a positive link with the justice and accountability aspects, but participation-criticism, transparency, and equality exhibited a negative and negligible relationship with employee productivity.

Blumberg's models of decision-making participation and participatory democratic theories were utilized to steer the conversation on workplace democracy, while the two-factor theory was also employed for employee productivity.

Workplace alienation is a frequent phenomenon for modern males, according to Blumberg (1968), and it may be mitigated by allowing them to participate in decisions that influence their life at work. Blumberg discovered that autocratic corporations treat their employees immaturely, which adds significantly to alienation. According to Argyris (1957), the way organizations and employment are created is the mature human desire for control over one's actions and behavior, and autonomy. As individuals progress from infancy to maturity, the amount of related responsibility rises; nevertheless, in corporations, all efforts appear to be oriented toward treating workers as dependents, eliminating their control over their behavior. Sievers (1993) investigates this infantilization of the employee in great detail it appears as though they only pattern with most western employees who may correspond to that of the kid *vis-a-vis* its parents via the nature of the employment supplied for them, the employing institutions the workers. They do not

allow children to evolve or develop, but instead confine them to regressive and familiar reflexes. Sievers (1993) suggests that participation is not the solution but rather a symptom of the issue, which can only be remedied by democratizing labour. According to Chomsky (1993), corporations are fundamentally training, hierarchical, governed from above, and you get out if you don't like what they're doing. That is to say, all firms contribute to alienation. According to Blumberg (1968), when workers are involved in decision-making, their authority in the workplace rises, which increases the workers' state both in the context of the business and in their own eyes, which leads to higher productivity and morale. The Blumberg's hypothesis is relevant to this study because decision-making enhances the degree of authority workers have in the workplace, which leads to a rise in the worker's status both in the context of the company and in his own eyes, resulting in increased productivity and morale.

The work was also based on participatory democracy theory, which emphasizes the circumstances required for effective involvement and functioning of society and people. For example, it is considered that through engaging in decision-making, a person's sense of freedom rises since he is granted a high amount of influence over the direction of his life and the structuring of his surroundings. As someone can be his owner, the value of individual freedom rises. Mills (1956) and Scully-Russ and Torracco (2020) see the business as where individuals may learn more management experience. They see the political sector as a market where people always attempt to maximize the losses secured via the political process. The presumption is that man is selfish because each individual's drive to improve and defend his interests motivates him. According to the hypothesis, more participation would likely increase ordinary people's sense of political efficiency. This helps to improve their potential so that their actions can influence public

policy, resulting in a greater sense of control over their lives in the community. In other words, more engagement in one's sense of life leads to increased participation in other areas, such as the job.

Strong democracy, or associative democracy, is another name for this ideology. It places great emphasis on increasing citizens' participation in public choices that affect their lives. When people actively participate in policy, it benefits both the system and individuals since individual engagement is anticipated. Election participation should be ongoing rather than just sporadic. Citizens protect and define their interests through various civil entities (organizations), including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, interest groups, civil associations, and grassroots citizens. Participation changes public citizens' choices, political interests, and ability to appraise public problems that develop throughout the public deliberation process. As a result, this theory is concerned with bottom-up communication. The media might become a vehicle for self-organizing individuals to express their concerns and bring them to the political agenda and institutional venues of political decision-making. The participatory democracy theory is relevant to this study because greater engagement in one's sense of life leads to greater participation in other areas; for example, if workers are permitted to participate in decision-making at work, their productivity will grow.

The work is also buttressed with the two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1966) which claimed that wage, status, policy, relationship with supervisor, work circumstances, security, and relationship with a co-worker (hygiene factors) are required to guarantee that employees do not become unsatisfied. It is preferable if there is a solid fit between what the staff wants, and what the company requires. Personnel turnover can only remedy a mismatch between the two, which hurts production (Arokiasamy, 2013). The idea emphasizes the significance of distinguishing between intrinsic motivation (related to motivator requirements) and extrinsic motivation (related to hygiene needs), and it has inspired researchers and managers to investigate how professions might be created or altered to be intrinsically motivated (Jones & George, 2007). According to the thesis, the organization may retain critical individuals by fulfilling intrinsic and extrinsic drives.

Herzberg made a significant contribution to this field. He proposed a research-based theory and identified numerous aspects that contribute to job happiness (Ramayah, as cited in Lalwani & Lalwani, 2017). According to Lalwani and Lalwani (2017), Herzberg's hypothesis remains relevant, implying that the importance of *motivators* and *hygiene* variables to *job satisfaction* has not altered. Job satisfaction is influenced by motivators, while hygiene considerations avoid job discontent. In today's reality, managers may use the idea to encourage their staff by giving these variables to achieve desired behaviors. One of the disadvantages of this idea is that more elements that influence work satisfaction were not included in the study.

Recent research has examined workplace democracy, the participation of workers in making decisions has been found to favourably influence workers' productivity, commitment, and attitude

(Prisca, 2011). The study found that how managers and workers perceive participation differs and so influences the use of participatory leadership in various workplaces. The types of decisions in which workers can be involved depending on the firm and its structure. The researcher advises that managers increase their efforts in persuading workers to bring up useful decisions, and suggestions and make sure to incorporate them into the firm's policies and decisions.

Dede (2019) examined the participation of workers in the decision-making process and firm productivity. The researcher found that workers' participation in the making of decisions causes the implementation to become easier, leads to the creation of a good working environment, and increases satisfaction and commitment to take decisions. It also increases the morale of the workers as they feel like they are recognized and are part of the organizational team which causes a direct increase in productivity.

Brione and Nicholson (2012) researched workers' empowerment towards greater workplace democracy and believe that a campaign targeted at workers needs to be made. This campaign would raise the awareness surrounding workplace democracy showing that it is an effective way to modernization of management style for increased productivity. Managers should also be encouraged to talk with and visit counterparts at other firms that have successfully implemented employee empowerment. They should also be given guidance from the department of business innovation and skills on the ways to proceed and what approaches are best practices.

Levin (2006) who researched worker democracy and worker productivity reviewed that one of the major sources of oppression within post-industrial and industrial societies is the restrictive and largely authoritative nature of the work environment. What is needed is for the workplace to be democratized through increased worker participation in decision-making, choosing and evaluation of managers, and employee ownership in the organization. He surveyed different types of work organizations and concluded that the workplace democracy (distributive justice) of employees causes productivity to increase, especially when workers have a share in the benefits of high productivity.

Isichei and Damachi (2015) carried out research on employee participation in decision-making and the hospitality industry in Nigeria. They examined a selected number of hotels in Abuja and found that workers' participation in decision-making processes influenced hotel performance in Nigeria. The study concluded that a positive and significant relationship existed between the level of workers' participation in making decisions and the performance of the firm. The study recommended that workers' participation be holistic and not partial to give them a sense of belonging.

Ndubuisi (2012) performed a study to determine the influence workers' decision-making participation had on the firm's productivity. The case studies were the printing press of the government and two other firms of private ownership in Lagos and Enugu. The study found that when workers were not involved in making decisions

within the firm, the productivity of the organization was heavily affected negatively. The research, however, did not show how workers participating in the process of decision-making influenced the commitment level of employees.

Abdulai and Shafiwu (2014) carried out a study on the participatory style of making decisions and the productivity of workers. Community banks in the Ghanaian upper east region were used as a case study for the research. The research found that when workers were involved in various forms of decision-making within the firm a good environment is created, the implementation of decisions becomes much easier satisfaction and commitment to the taken decision are higher. The research did not however show how the morale of employees was affected by participative decision-making.

Bevandam (as cited in Inayat & Khan, 2021) performed a study to investigate how workers' involvement related to productivity. The research discovered that as workers' involvement increased the higher the positive impact on the performance and productivity of the firm. The research did not however show how participative decision-making influenced workers' job satisfaction, productivity, and morale.

Irawanto (2015) carried out research, which focused on workers' participation in the process of decision-making. The study used as its case study two enterprises owned by the Indonesian state, to investigate the impact some trends had in real life on both the workers and the firm. It discovered relations between workers' participation in making decisions and their motivation levels.

Sofijanovna and Zabijakin-Chatleska (2013) performed a study on the involvement level of workers and firm performance. The study examined the relationship between workers' involvement in problem-solving, decision-making, and the performance of the organization. They found that effective usage of worker involvement is positively and significantly related to the performance of the firm. They found that when self-management teams were used and when workers participated in programs directed at empowering them, it directly and significantly correlated to the performance of the firm. The study recommended that firms adopt programs, which aim at increasing employees' involvement to increase the performance of the firm, its competitiveness, and growth in global and regional markets.

Khaton (2014) performed research on how employee performance was impacted by their participation. The study aimed to show the level of importance workers participating in decision-making had on the success of the firm. Workers' participation is mainly to cause an increase in their level of commitment, to increase their retention and satisfaction, to improve communication, and to cause proactive development and assessment actions to take place. The research found a link, which was significant, between the decision-making participation level of workers and how they performed within the firm.

Ripsang (as cited in Songok, 2001), researched the empowerment of employees and how it impacted the performance of the firm as in the case of Kenya Post Office Savings Bank. The paper tried to find out the relationship between employee

empowerment and organizational performance. The paper determined whether the employees can make the decisions of authority and responsibility affecting their work. The employees can make decisions of authority and responsibility affecting their work. The employees find the delegation of authority and responsibility adequate. The employees solve problems in teams it was found that there is a positive relationship between employee empowerment and organizational performance.

Asgarsani, Duostdar, and Rostami (2013) performed research aimed discovering at how the empowerment of employees influenced the productivity of the firm. The study recognized the relationship between the commitment of teachers to their job and psychological empowerment. It found that a positive link existed between career development and psychological components of empowerment. The study concludes that in today's firms, empowerment of workers is a requirement, as employees need to create creative teams, the scope for creative teams, and changing demands of customers (Williams, Kesavan, & McCorkell, 2018).

Ndegwa (2015) carried out a study on the relationship between the empowerment of employees and the performance of firms using Kenyan commercial banks as a case study. The researcher found the empowerment of workers to largely influence commercial banks. The study concluded that training workers help them meet their targets and increases their performance. It further recommended that the level of employee empowerment and accounting for established decisions within commercial banks be increased, as this would significantly influence the productivity of the business, its effectiveness, and its revenue.

Mayer (2001) and Prisca (2011) researched workers' decision-making participation and how it impacted the firm's productivity. Two publishing firms of private ownership and the printing press of the Government were understudied. It found that participation in making decisions must not involve the participation of management at all levels and that a positive relationship existed between productivity and management, which is participative. The study found that participatory management resulted in increased levels of productivity; it however did not show how workers' participation in the making of decisions influenced their level of productivity. This research seeks to fill this gap.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The survey research approach was used for this study because the sampled components and variables to be researched are simply observed without any attempt to modify or change them. The population of this study included all construction firms in Nigeria; however, due to the country's enormous size and high number of construction enterprises, the researcher opted to limit the study to Edo State. As of 2020, Edo State had 79 construction enterprises affiliated with the National Union of Civil Engineering, Construction, Furniture, and Wood Workers (NUCECFWW). Because of the government's importance on road building, our study focused on it. There are 12 road-building

businesses, but 4 were chosen because of their consistent engagement in roadwork. As a result, the study's population included all employees from four Edo State enterprises (Hartland, Mothercat, Ray Royal, and Setraco). Because all construction enterprises in Edo State operate in a similar political, social, and economic context, these firms were chosen (Ruya, Chitumu, & Jatau, 2017). Hartland, Mothercat, Ray Royal, and Setraco Nigeria Limited have populations of 317, 320, 124, and 460 people, respectively, as of May 2020. As a result, the study's overall population is 1221. This information was obtained from the firm's Administrative Officer. Given that the population was known and limited, the researcher estimated the sample size for the study using the Yamane's (1967) formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

where,  $n$  = sample size,  $N$  = population size,  $e$  = 0.05 (error term or probability of type I error).

$$n = \frac{1221}{1 + 1221(0.05)^2} \quad (2)$$

where,  $n$  = 301.29, approximately 302 respondents.

The sample size was established proportionately, and the number of research instruments (questionnaires) is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Questionnaire distribution

S/N	Firms	Population	Sample size
1	Hartland Nigeria Limited	317	317/1221 * 301 = 78
2	Mothercat Nigeria Limited	320	320/1221 * 301 = 79
3	Ray Royal Construction Company Ltd.	124	124/1221 * 301 = 31
4	Setraco Nigeria Limited	460	460/1221 * 302 = 114
Total		1221	302

As a result, a sample size of roughly 302 was chosen for this investigation. This implies that 302 copies of the questionnaire were distributed proportionally to the businesses' employees, as indicated in Table 1. However, due to the nature of the construction businesses, the questionnaire was administered using a convenience sample approach. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling approach in which respondents are chosen based on their ease of access.

Only two hundred and fifty-one (251) of the total 302 copies of questionnaires administered were returned, representing 83.1% of the total questionnaires administered. At the same time, the remaining 10 were eliminated for poor filling and mutilation.

The independent variable is *workplace democracy* in this study, while the dependent variable is *employee productivity*. Organizational democracy scale (ODS) was used. This scale has five dimensions: *participation-critique*, *transparency*, *justice*, *equality*, and *accountability*. The questionnaire has 28 items that will be scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Unsure, 4 – Agree, and 5 – Strongly agree). In addition, employee productivity scale was adapted to measure employee productivity; the instrument consists of seven items, which will also be rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree). To test the instrument's reliability, 40 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the selected 4 construction firms in Edo State staff. Cronbach's alpha reliability testing was used to verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire questions based on the data obtained from the recovered questionnaires.

Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha value for each item on the questionnaire.

**Table 2.** Reliability test

S/N	Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha value
1	<i>Participation-criticism</i>	8	0.656
2	<i>Transparency</i>	6	0.738
3	<i>Justice</i>	5	0.624
4	<i>Equality</i>	6	0.639
5	<i>Accountability</i>	3	0.624
6	<i>Employee productivity</i>	7	0.715

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2021.

Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha value for each construct is more than 0.6. It indicates that the questionnaire is trustworthy and can be relied on to extract essential information from responders (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze data from questionnaires in general. At the same time, regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the hypotheses given to assess the extent to which workplace democracy influences employee productivity. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0.

To accomplish this goal, we first computed the mean scores and standard deviation of responses to each component of workplace democracy, which were scored on a five-point Likert scale with 1 representing strongly disagreed and 5 representing strongly agreed.

The description of workplace democracy among employees of the chosen construction enterprises in Edo State is shown in Table 3.



**Table 3.** Description of workplace democracy

S/N	Item	% response						
		1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
<b>Participation-criticism</b>								
1	Managers encourage me to participate in organizational decisions.	10.4	23.1	19.9	32.7	13.9	3.1673	1.22796
2	Decisions of the majority are taken into consideration in corporate decision-making.	5.6	8.4	23.1	39.0	23.9	3.6733	1.09765
3	While decisions are taken in my organization, all people affected by the decisions have a right to speak.	8.4	24.3	5.6	43.4	18.3	3.3904	1.26450
4	Managers respect the decisions taken by the majority even if they are not happy about it.	9.2	19.1	35.7	27.5	8.8	3.0757	1.08731
5	I can easily criticize the decisions and policies which I find wrong.	22.3	18.7	18.7	33.9	6.4	2.8327	1.28526
6	Management encourages employees to criticise.	41.8	12.7	28.3	14.3	2.8	2.2351	1.21512
7	Management considers the critics of employees.	10.0	19.9	14.3	47.8	8.0	3.2390	1.15872
8	The criticism of employees about management applications is considered normal.	9.6	9.2	19.5	45.4	16.3	3.4980	1.15715
Total							3.1389	1.18671
<b>Transparency</b>								
9	In the meetings, everyone has the opportunity to express their ideas.	8.4	12.0	12.0	39.4	28.3	3.6733	1.23808
10	Work is performed by the transparency principle in my organization.	4.0	15.9	14.3	42.6	23.1	3.6494	1.11919
11	Managers arrange informative meetings during periods of significant development.	19.1	12.0	9.6	39.0	20.3	3.2948	1.41730
12	There is open and two-sided communication in my organization.	1.2	15.1	36.7	34.3	12.7	3.4223	0.93645
13	Performance assessments are performed according to the transparency principle in my organization.	8.4	8.8	17.9	51.8	13.1	3.5259	1.09285
14	My organization supports employees to receive education and develop themselves.	11.2	1.2	27.0	35.1	25.5	3.6255	1.20133
Total							3.5319	1.16753
<b>Justice</b>								
15	There is a fair bonus system in my organization.	27.9	2.4	7.6	47.0	15.1	3.1912	1.47895
16	The salaries and other income of employees are determined by taking their work and their contributions to the organization into consideration.	15.5	8.8	11.6	45.0	19.1	3.4343	1.32010
17	Competence is taken into consideration in decentralization.	11.2	10.0	27.5	37.8	13.5	3.3267	1.16827
18	Assessment criteria are standardized in our organization.	6.8	7.6	27.9	45.4	12.4	3.4900	1.02903
19	The opinions of subordinates are essential in the determination of the success levels of superiors.	13.9	10.0	30.3	39.8	6.0	3.1394	1.13158
Total							3.3163	1.22559
<b>Equality</b>								
20	Gender discrimination is not practiced in my organization.	5.2	8.8	13.5	40.6	31.9	3.8526	1.11990
21	Political ideas and the worldview of people are practical for recruitment in my organization.	19.5	22.7	38.7	15.1	4.0	2.6135	1.08354
22	In meetings, the quality of the suggestion is more important than the person making the suggestion.	5.6	8.0	24.7	41.8	19.9	3.6255	1.06357
23	Discrimination is practiced among the employees in my organization.	35.9	18.7	9.9	24.3	11.2	2.5618	1.45848
24	Language, religion, race, etc., discrimination is not practiced in my organization.	6.8	3.2	8.8	42.6	38.6	4.0319	1.10226
25	I think my organization is democratic.	9.6	14.7	29.1	31.1	15.5	3.2829	1.17799
Total							3.3280	1.16762
<b>Accountability</b>								
26	Employees in our organization can always question policies and procedures.	30.3	15.9	25.9	26.7	1.2	2.5259	1.21092
27	Employees at all levels can always be called to account in our organization.	3.2	15.1	22.7	35.5	23.5	3.6096	1.09861
28	A culture of accountability is developed in my organization.	9.6	14.7	19.9	38.6	17.1	3.3904	1.20621
Total							3.1753	1.17191
Overall workplace democracy score							3.2981	1.18387

Note: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, unsure, agreed, and strongly agreed response rates, respectively.

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2021.

#### **Participation-criticism**

According to Table 3, the majority of respondents (more than 50%) agreed or strongly agreed that management encourages employees to participate in decision making, where majority decisions and critics of employees are taken into account, with all stakeholders having a right to speak. That criticism is typical in the workplace. However, more than 40% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that employees may readily criticize management choices and policies. Management is sometimes apathetic about following

majority decisions, especially when they are unhappy with them.

#### **Transparency**

On the dimension of transparency, most respondents (more than 60%) agreed or strongly agreed that work and performance evaluations are founded on the concept of transparency. There is an open, two-way communication approach in place, and employees are encouraged to share their opinions while also supporting staff training and development.

### Justice

On the justice dimension, more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there is a fair bonus system in place where employees' salaries and incomes are determined based on their work and contributions to the organization; and standardizing criteria assessment considering competence. However, the majority of respondents believe that the opinions of subordinates are significant in determining the success levels of their superiors.

### Equality

According to Table 3, most respondents (more than 50%) agreed or strongly agreed that language, religion, ethnicity, and gender discrimination are not practiced in the company and that the quality of proposals presented in a meeting is more significant than the individual offering the suggestion. Employees regard their organization as democratic, but they are unsure if it considers political ideologies and people's worldviews when hiring.

### Accountability

On the accountability dimension, the majority of respondents (more than 50%) agreed or strongly

agreed that the organization has a culture of accountability, that employees at all levels can be held accountable at all times, and that employees cannot question the organization's policies and procedures.

As indicated in Table 3, the transparency dimension seemed to be the most shown form of workplace democracy among employees of the chosen construction enterprises in Edo State (Mean = 3.5319, SD = 1.16753) using a potential five-point rating (Mean = 3.5319, SD = 1.16753). However, the aspects of participation-criticism, justice, equality, and accountability all exhibited mean values more than 2.5 on a five-point scale (Mean = 3.1389, SD = 1.18671; Mean = 3.3163, SD = 1.22559; Mean = 3.3280, SD = 1.16762; and Mean = 3.2981, SD = 1.17191, respectively). The total mean for workplace democracy was 3.2981 (SD = 1.18387). The firms appear to have a high level of workplace democracy.

### Employee productivity

Table 4 depicts a description of employee productivity among employees of selected Edo State construction enterprises.

**Table 4.** Description of employee productivity

S/N	Item	% response					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
<b>Employee productivity</b>								
1	I do not have enough time to perform all the tasks on my job.	33.9	31.1	20.3	14.7	0	2.1594	1.05380
2	My company has a calm and conducive environment to work in.	6.8	1.2	8.8	61.4	21.9	3.9044	0.97919
3	I am provided with enough materials for production at the right time.	14.7	10.8	12.0	55.3	7.2	3.2948	1.20695
4	Training programs have helped to increase my company's productivity.	13.5	4.4	41.0	31.1	10.0	3.1952	1.12327
5	Adequate compensation plans have improved employee's productivity.	9.6	9.6	42.2	33.1	5.6	3.1554	1.00586
6	Performance appraisal has been of significant effect on my company's productivity.	12.0	19.9	23.5	33.0	11.6	3.1235	1.20859
7	Positive feedback has played a crucial role in enhancing my company's productivity.	2.4	6.0	31.9	40.6	19.1	3.6813	0.93060
	Total						3.2163	1.07261

Note: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, unsure, agreed, and strongly agreed response rates, respectively.  
Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2021.

According to Table 4, the majority of respondents (more than 50%) agreed or strongly agreed that the employees claimed to have adequate time to complete all of the responsibilities of their jobs in a quiet and conducive atmosphere; that the organization offered enough supplies for production at the proper time. They all agreed that performance evaluations and positive comments had a significant impact on its productivity. However, they are dubious if training programs or good remuneration schemes have increased staff productivity.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Workplace democracy and employee productivity of selected construction firms in Edo State

A regression study was carried out to determine the association between workplace democracy and employee productivity. The following tables show the results of the regression analysis.

**Table 5.** Model summary

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.713	0.508	0.498	0.45821	2.200

Note: Predictors: (Constant), accountability, justice, equality, participation criticism, transparency. Dependent variable: Employee productivity.

Table 5 above examined a coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) value of 0.508, indicating that the independent factors explain 50.8% of the variation in the dependent variables (*employee productivity, participation-criticism, transparency, justice, equality, and accountability* dimensions). It suggests that workplace democracy influences just 50.8% of employee productivity responses. When the R<sup>2</sup> was taken into account, the number dropped to 49.8%. It suggests that variables other than workplace democracy aspects are to blame for employee productivity. In addition, a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.200 (value more than 2) suggested a negative connection.

Table 6. ANOVA

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	53.188	5	10.638	50.666	0.000
Residual	51.439	245	0.210		
Total	104.627	250			

Note: Dependent variable: Employee productivity. Predictors: (Constant), accountability, justice, equality, participation criticism, transparency.

According to Table 6, the regression result generated an F-statistic of 50.666 and a  $p$ -value of 0.000, indicating that the independent and dependent variables have a statistically significant association. The hypotheses were evaluated using the  $p$ -value from the regression results. The null

hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is not rejected when the  $p$ -values are more significant than or equal to 0.05. Furthermore, the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) are rejected when the  $p$ -values are less than 0.05. The hypothesis findings are provided below.

Table 7. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.999	0.213		4.699	0.000
Participation-criticism	-0.052	0.066	-0.051	-0.797	0.426
Transparency	0.107	0.062	0.119	1.710	0.089
Justice	0.475	0.048	0.549	9.910	0.000
Equality	-0.082	0.060	-0.074	-1.370	0.172
Accountability	0.222	0.048	0.269	4.664	0.000

Note: Dependent variable: Employee productivity.

## 4.2. Hypotheses testing

### 4.2.1. The first hypothesis

The null hypothesis ( $H1_0$ ): *There is no significant relationship between participation-criticism and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.*

Table 7 shows the regression coefficients,  $t$ , and  $p$ -values for the influence of the participation-criticism dimension on employee productivity. The regression result has a  $p$ -value of 0.426, more significant than 0.05. As a result, we do not reject  $H1_0$ . According to the study, there is a negative association between the participation-criticism component and employee productivity.

### 4.2.2. The second hypothesis

The null hypothesis ( $H2_0$ ): *There is no significant relationship between transparency and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.*

Table 7 shows the regression coefficients,  $t$ , and  $p$ -values for the influence of the transparency dimension on employee productivity. In the regression result, the  $p$ -value corresponding to the coefficient linked with the influence of the transparency dimension on employee productivity is 0.089, more significant than 0.05. As a result, we do not reject  $H2_0$ . It indicates a negative link between the transparency component and staff productivity.

### 4.2.3. The third hypothesis

The null hypothesis ( $H3_0$ ): *There is no significant relationship between justice and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.*

Table 7 shows the regression coefficients,  $t$ , and  $p$ -values for the influence of the justice

dimension on employee productivity. In the regression result, the  $p$ -value corresponding to the coefficient linked with the influence of the transparency dimension on employee productivity is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, as shown in Table 7 above. As a result, we reject  $H3_0$ . It suggests a positive association between the justice component and employee productivity among employees of selected Edo State construction enterprises.

### 4.2.4. The fourth hypothesis

The null hypothesis ( $H4_0$ ): *There is no significant relationship between equality and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.*

As indicated in Table 7, the  $p$ -value corresponding to the influence of the equality dimension on employee productivity in the regression result is 0.172, which is more significant than 0.05. As a result, we do not reject  $H4_0$ . It suggests a negative association between the equality component and employee productivity among employees of selected Edo State construction enterprises.

### 4.2.5 The fifth hypothesis

The null hypothesis ( $H5_0$ ): *There is no significant relationship between accountability and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.*

In the regression result, the  $p$ -value related to the influence of the accountability dimension on employee productivity is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, as shown in Table 7 above. As a result, we reject  $H5_0$ . It suggests a positive association between the accountability component and employee productivity among employees of selected Edo State construction enterprises.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to investigate the impact of workplace democracy features on employee productivity among employees of selected construction enterprises in Edo State. It looked specifically at the link between workplace democracy and employee productivity. The study discovered a negative association between participation-criticism and employee productivity among employees of selected construction enterprises in Edo State. It contradicts the findings of Prisca (2011) and Dede (2019), who investigated worker engagement in decision-making and business productivity and discovered a positive association between the participation component and employee productivity.

It also revealed a negative association between the transparency component and employee productivity among selected Edo State construction enterprises. It contradicts the findings of Ripsang (as cited in Songok, 2001), who investigated employee empowerment and how it impacts performance and discovered that workers find acceptable delegation of authority and responsibility and make decisions of authority and responsibility influencing their job. It demonstrates a link between openness and staff productivity. According to the findings of this study, there is a good association between the justice component and employee productivity among employees of selected construction enterprises in Edo State. It corroborated Levin's (2006) results of a favorable association between workplace democracy (distributive justice) and productivity.

It also revealed a negative association between the equality component and employee productivity among selected Edo State construction enterprises. Finally, this study discovered a favorable association between the accountability component and employee productivity among employees of selected Edo State construction enterprises. It is consistent with the findings of Ndegwa (2015), who conducted research on the link between employee empowerment and company performance and concluded that accountability would have a substantial impact on the business's productivity, effectiveness, and revenue.

Based on the hypotheses tested, the following findings were made:

- 1) There is a negative relationship between the participation-criticism dimension and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.
- 2) The transparency dimension also had a negative relationship with employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.
- 3) There is a positive relationship between the justice dimension and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.
- 4) There is also a negative relationship between the equality dimension and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.
- 5) Lastly, the study revealed a positive relationship between the accountability dimension and employee productivity among the staff of selected construction firms in Edo State.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The research looked at the impact of workplace democracy on employee productivity at a few construction enterprises in Edo State. When correctly constructed, the workplace may serve as a training ground for democratic behaviors and attitudes by fostering more workplace engagement, a feeling of urgency, and transferrable skills. Failure to democratize the workplace may result in a diminished employee voice, inequity, and a lack of justice, as well as a lack of trust and transparency. Our work also confirms with Ruya, Chitumu, and Jatau (2017) who affirm that political, social, and economic contexts were responding to the firms' choices. It also collaborates with the study of Isichei and Damachi (2015) found that workers' participation in decision-making processes influenced hotel performance in Nigeria and concluded that a positive and significant relationship existed between the levels of workers' participation in making decisions in the performance of the firm.

Based on the findings, we concluded that the dimensions of workplace democracy of justice and accountability have a significant positive influence on employee productivity. In contrast, the dimensions of workplace democracy of participation-criticism, transparency, and equality have no significant influence on employee productivity.

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend the following:

- 1) The dimensions of justice and accountability have a significant link with workplace democracy; management should guarantee that employees of chosen construction enterprises in Edo State get their due rights and fair and acceptable treatment. They should also be urged or encouraged to be accountable for their job-related responsibilities.

- 2) Companies must guarantee that management is dedicated, visible, and accessible to employees at all levels. It may be accomplished via enhancing open communication inside the organization. Make the communication process as transparent as possible. Hold open-ended meetings that allow each team member to discuss their ideas, points of view, successes, and concerns; management should establish clear standards for all job duties and what is expected of employee behavior. Avoid surprising employees with work-related surprises; management should build a grievance mechanism via which employees can securely communicate grievances. Such concerns should be taken seriously, and employees should be notified that their voices have been heard. Complaints should be investigated and the results relayed to all parties involved.

- 3) To improve employee productivity, good working relationships should be formed between staff and management.

- 4) Workplace democracy might be strengthened by implementing effective training programs and on-the-job perks such as housing loans, medical services, and opportunities to learn new skills (seminars and courses). It, in turn, will boost their confidence at work.

Following the study, the following limitations were encountered in the course of this work:

- 1) Delay in the approval of consent to distribute questionnaires as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2) Some of the respondents were reluctant and unwilling to fill out and submit the questionnaire that was administered to them. There was a slow response rate for retrieval due to the nature of the work.

3) The generalizability is limited because of the sample size used. Four (4) out of twelve (12) construction firms in Edo State were used.

4) The employees were mostly on site, which makes the atmosphere not conducive without protective measures.

Based on the scope of this study, the employees of selected construction firms in Edo State were focused on. We, therefore, recommend that further research should be extended to other sectors like manufacturing, banking, information technology, and the public sector in the state in particular and the country in general. Further research should attempt to examine the relationship between workplace democracy and employee loyalty in the Nigerian academic system.

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