NAU Journal of Technology and Vocational Education Volume 10, No. 2, September 2025

EMPLOYEES` PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE ICT ENTERPRISES OF OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

[1]Steve Worgu, PhD & [2]Philip Festus Ukata, PhD
[1]Department of Business Administration and Management, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port – Harcourt, Rivers State.
[2]Department of Office Technology and Management, School of Business and Administrative Studies, Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port – Harcourt, Rivers State.
Email: phillip.ukata@portharcourtpoly.edu.ng https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5019-450X

Abstract
Employees` involvement in business process seem to have proven positive performance. Therefore, this study determined Employees` Participation and Performance in Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested. Correlational research design was adopted. From a population of 162 SMS ICT Enterprises, a census survey sampling was employed. A four-point response options questionnaire was used for data collection, and it was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha which yielded coefficients of 0.73, 0.74.and 0.76. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the three research questions and measure the spread in respondents` opinions, while PPMC was used to test the three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a very high positive relationship between co-ownership and market share, delegation of authority and sales growth, and high positive relationship between employees' consultation and customers retention. It was concluded that if SMS ICT Enterprises adopt co-ownership, delegation of authority and employees' consultation in management of their businesses, it will lead to a very high Performances. Among other things, it was recommended that SMS ICT enterprises should adopt co-ownership in the management of their businesses.

Keywords: Small and Medium-Scale (SMS), Employee Participation, SMS ICT Enterprises, Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises.

Introduction

There is no generally accepted definition of a small business because the classification of business into small scale is a subjective and qualitative judgment**.** Consequently, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises are defined as those in manufacturing with 100-million paid-up capital and 300 employees, those in wholesale trade with 30 million paid up capital and 100 employees and those in the retail and service trades with 10-million paid-up capital and 50 employees (Farah & Nina, 2016). Ofoegbo et al (2013) observed that SMEs are the solution for the problem of slow economic development-among developing countries like Nigeria.

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMSE) or Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as interchangeably used in this study have been viewed globally as having positive impact with respect to economic growth and development. SMEs contribute tremendously to boasting the living standards, ensuring substantial local capital formulation and record high levels of performance and capability ((Ukata & Worgu, 2025a; Ukata & Kalagbor, 2020). SMEs are viewed/recognized as the major means of achieving greater part of equitable and sustainable industrial diversification and dispersal (Olowe et al., 2013).

According to Sofyanova and Chafleska (2013), employee participation is a course of involving and empowering employees on the job in order to maximize their efforts towards getting personal and organizational performance. Employee participation can also be defined as a direct involvement or

engagement of employee to assist an organization actualize its goals/objectives and also meets its main objectives by using and applying their respective innovations, expertise and efforts towards solving problems and taking decisions (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). Similarly, employee participation is the "entirety of forms, that is direct (personal or by the employee) or indirect (through the legislative body of the employees) by which persons, groups collective sheltered their welfare or throw in to the decision-making process" (Abdulrahma, 2016). On the other hand, employee engagement as the distributions of power between employer and employee in decision making of the organization, this is achieved either through direct or indirect participation. More so, employee participation also refers to employee involvement in making decision in the organization (Dede, 2019). Allowing workers input in developing the mission statement, establishing policies, and procedures, co-ownership, delegation and consultation accomplishes set objectives of the firm. Employee participation in decision making has become a veritable tool in human capital management (HCM), and in regarded as one of the major ingredients of employee voice, which many management scholars have seen to be an increasing management concept (Erajesvarie & Shamila, 2018).

Today, SMEs are faced with turbulent environment and intent competition. SMEs are forced to access ways to be more flexible, objective and competitive as they are faced with competitive pressure and ever-changing markets (David, 2015). Above all, SMEs are seeing that people really are the most valuable assets. Success is achieved on involving employee's capacity to come up with new ideas and ways of working to achieve competitive advantage. Employees have to be involved if they are to understand the essence for creativity, and they must be engaged if they are to be committed to changing their behaviours at work, in new and improved ways (Ukata & Worgu, 2025b). Several studies have proved that allowing employees to participate in decision making will lead to increase in motivation, job performance and organizational growth (Irawanto, 2015). However, many studies also have conflicting views on whether or not an increase in employee participation directly affects organizational performance. (Abdulrahman, 2016).

Organizational Performance has been the most important issue for every organization, whether profit or non-profit one. Organizational performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcome (1) financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment) (2) Market performance (sales revenue, market shares); and (3) shareholders return (Adubasim et al., 2018). Organizational Performance involves the reoccurring activities to maintain organizational goals, monitor advancement towards the goals and apply adequate adjustments to accomplish those goals effectively and efficiently (Kazimoto, 2016). It is expected that a particular type of knowledge, which is valuable, rare, imitable and non-replaceable would lead to tremendous increased performance of these ICT enterprises (Nwoko & Emerole, 2017). Organizational performance is described as outcome of input as a result of setting a goals and objectives of an organization by upholding mission statement as guarding principles to achieving the stated goals (Oyebamiji, 2018). It comprises of three major areas of a firm's outcome: (a) financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment; (b) product market performance (sales growth, market share); (c) shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value add) (Udu & Aturu-Aghedo, 2016).

ICT Enterprises are those enterprises that are involved in the buying and selling of different hardware and software to customers. They are small and medium enterprises that are involved in the procurement and provision of software and hardware services to the people. They deal with both manufacturers and users' software (Ukata & Mekuri-Ndimele, 2025). They are small and medium enterprises that are expected to allow their employees participate in the decision-making process of their businesses so that they may have high organisational performance.

Co-ownership is the fact or state of being one of the joint owners of a firm. Co-ownership, therefore, provide efficient governance and better performance of the firm. Efficient governance provides better performance while poor governance leads to bad financial performance. The co-ownership of the business makes employees feel as an integral part of the business as such put in their best which usually result to great market share (Zubair et al., 2015).

Market share refers to the percentage of sales a company has in a specific market within a specific period of time. Higher market share translates into higher profits. Gaining or building market

shares in an offensive or attack strategy to improve the organization's standing in the market (Siddiqi, 2015). Market share is a measure of the consumer's preference for a product over other similar products. A higher market share usually means greater sales, lesser effort to sell more or a strong barrier to entry for other competitors. A higher market share also means that if the market expands, the leader gains more than others (Salvucci, 2022).

Delegation of authority is said to be the process whereby individual or group transfers to some other individual or group the duty of carrying out some particular decision. Decisions should be made at the lowest competent level, that is responsible and commensurate authority should be delegated as from down in the organization as possible. It gives employees a sense of belonging, committed to duties, work hard to achieve positive results, take responsivities and which always lead to sales growth (Management Study Guide, 2025).

Sales growth is defined as the change in sales per year. Sales growth (growth of sales) is an increased in the number of sales from year to year or from time to time. Sales growth is an indicator of demand and competitiveness of companies in this case SMEs in this industry. If sales growth is high, it will reflect an increase in income so that dividend payments tend to increase organizations that have increased profits have a larger amount of retained earnings (Admin Leads Profiter, 2025).

Employees` consultation aims to enhance decision making processes by drawing upon employee's expertise and considering their interests. Employee may be consulted directly (i.e., through opinion survey) or indirectly (i.e., through representatives) (Cube HR, 2023). The direct benefits of consultation and joint decision making are threefold. Latent knowledge can be harnessed to improve organizational performance; positive change to the working life of employees can be sought and negative changes mitigated; and it can be ensured that the opinion and interests of employee has been given consideration. When an employee is consulted in decision-making process, the desire to serve customers adequately and retain them is eminent.

Customer retention is a metric that measures customer loyalty, or an organization's ability to retain customers over time. It identifies the number of loyal customers and can reflect or predict customer satisfaction, repurchase behaviour, customer engagement and emotional ties to a brand which usually lead to organisational performance, (Hashemi-Pour, 2024). It is on this premise that this study sought to examine, "Employees` Participation and Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State."

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted in this study was the Value Chain Theory postulated by Michael Porter in 1985 under organizational activities and work performance. Michael Porter says that decision making process is part and parcel of activities that make the organization to perform, therefore the need to allow every employee to participate in the process. Porter argued that decision-making represents course of actions to deal with a specific problem for organizational performance in the following aspects of problem-solving ability, innovativeness, and social responsiveness in business environment, therefore, employees should be allowed to participate. This theory further explained that, organizations can improve on the quality of decision making and create a superior value to promote organizational performance if every worker in allowed to participate in the decision-making process. Consequently, the more participatory decisions are made, the greater the organizational performance. The idea of the value chain is based on the process view of organizations production or service as a system made up of subsystems, each with inputs, transformation processes and outputs (performance). This theory is very related and important to this study because, the more employees are allowed to participate in the

decision making, the better performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Employees` alienation has been reported in most business organizations worldwide including Nigeria, as many employers seem not to carry their employees along in the decision-making process. Employees non-participation in organizational decision making may lead to conflict between management and staff, and in turn lead to low morale, low productivity and poor performance in an organization. This is because employees constitute one of the critical resources of an organization and therefore drive its processes. Some of the symptoms and manifestations of an organization characterized by poor performance may be high labour turnover, decline in profit and revenue, poor returns on investment and low market share position. While the problem is not limited to large-scale business organizations, it seems the small and medium-scale ICT enterprises have also been affected (Ukata & Obinichi-Aaron, 2025)

Organizational behaviour experts have contended that the level of employees` participation may influence employees` work attitude and organizational outcomes. This therefore tends to suggest that employees` participation strategies adopted by an organization such as co-ownership, delegation of authority and consultation might predict organizational performance through sales growth and market share. However, this postulation has not been clearly substantiated empirically in the Nigerian small and medium-scale ICT enterprises context, thereby creating a gap in the literature that needs to be bridged. As such, the reasons for this study, "Employees` Participation and Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State." This study will provide empirical data for stakeholders through recommendations to aid them in addressing related issues.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between co-ownership and market share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?
2. What is the relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?
3. What is the relationship between employees` consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were test at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between co-ownership and market share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises.
2. Significant relationship does not exist between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?
3. There is no significant relationship between employees` consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was a correlational research design. The research design was used because it measures the relationships between the major and sub-variables of "Employees` Participation and Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises." The population of the study was a selected One Hundred and Sixty-Two (162) Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises (Operators). The details about the population and sample size are as presented in table form below:

Table1: Population and Sample Size Details

Population and sample size details of the areas of ICT enterprises that were selected	Copies administered	Copies retrieved	Percentage % retrieved/ used	Copies not retrieved	Percentage %Not retrieved/used
Rumuokwurushi	56	49	30	7	6
Ogbunabali/Garrison	66	61	38	5	3
Artillery	40	38	23	2	1
Total	162	148	91	14	9%

Source: Fieldwork, (2025)

Due to the manageable size of the population, a census survey technique was used to sample all One Hundred and Sixty-Two (162) Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises (Operators). The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed four-point response options questionnaire titled "Employees` Participation and Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises (EPPSMSICT).". It contains three sections. Sections A, B C. Each sections carries 5 items and were rated as very high (4.50 - 500), high (3.50 – 4.49), moderate (2.50 – 3.49), and low (1.50 – 2.49). The questionnaire was subjected to face and contents validation by three experts, two from the Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, and one from the Department of Business Education with specialization in Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, all from Rivers State University. The measure of internal consistency method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered to 16 Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises Operators from Rumuokoro who were not part of the population of the study. The Cronbach's alpha was applied to compute the reliability coefficient which produced alpha values of 0.73, 0.74.and 0.76 for the three sections. This high reliability coefficients show that the instrument was reliable for the study as seen in the methodology of (Ukata & Amini, 2025; Ukata & Agburuga, 2024) that a research instrument with a reliability index of 0.70 and above is reliable. The researchers and assistants who had received adequate training on the procedures to be followed, went to each of the operators and gave the necessary number of copies of the instrument for completion. On the spot filling and return of the questionnaire for those who were ready, and five working days later methods were used. The researchers and assistants went back for retrieval of the remaining questionnaire. Out of the 162 copied administered, 148 were correctly filled and returned. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions and measure the spread in respondents' opinions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used test the null hypotheses. The data obtained through the questionnaire were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A null hypothesis was accepted where the calculated significant (Sig.) value, (p- value) was greater than or equal to (≥) the alpha value of 0.05. Otherwise, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Result

Research Question 1

What is relationship between co-ownership and marketing share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?

Table 2: Respondents' mean ratings on the relationship between co-ownership and marketing share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises *N = 148*

SN	Relationship between co-ownership and marketing share …	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1	There is positive relationship between pulling of funds together and controlling market share	4.50	.84	Very High
2	There is positive relationship between participation of co-owners in decision making and gaining market share	4.52	.88	Very High
3	There is relationship between operational involvement of co-owners and controlling good market share	4.52	.92	Very High

4	There is positive relationship between efficient governance of co-owners and having greater sales	4.54	.81	Very High
5	There is positive relationship between better performance of co-owners and having good market share	4.52	.92	Very High
	Aggregate Mean	**4.52**		**Very High**

Table 3 shows that all the 5 listed items under co-ownership have a very high positive relationship with marketing share with mean scores that ranged from 4.50 to 4.52.

Also, the aggregated mean score of 4.52 shows high positive relationship between co-ownership and market share which can lead to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied. The standard deviations for the 5 listed items ranged within 0.81 to 0.92 which shows that respondents were homogeneous in their opinions that all the listed items under co-ownership have a very high positive relationship with controlling market share which can lead to to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied.

Research Question 2

What is relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?

Table 3: Respondents' mean ratings on the relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises N = 148

SN	Relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth…	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
6	There is positive relationship between entrusting co-owners with tasks and sales growth	4.54	.85	Very High
7	There is positive relationship between co-owners' sense of belonging and sales growth	4.51	.84	Very High
8	There is positive relationship between allowing co-owners to take part in decisions-making and sales growth	4.51	.88	Very High
9	There is positive relationship between developing co-owners in business and sales growth	4.53	.92	Very High
10	There is positive relationship between clarifying roles for co-owners to perform and sales growth	4.52	.81	Very High
	Aggregate Mean	4.51	.81	**Very High**

Table 4 shows that all the 5 listed items under delegation of authority have a very high positive relationship with sales growth with mean scores that ranged from 4.51 to 4.53. Also, the aggregated mean score of 4.51 shows very high relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth which can lead to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied. The standard deviations for the 5 listed items ranged within 0.81 to 0.92 which shows that respondents were homogeneous in their opinions that all the listed items under delegation of authority have a very high positive relationship with sales growth which can lead to to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied.

Research Question 3

What is relationship between employees` consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises?

Table 4: Respondents' mean ratings on the relationship between employees' consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises N = 148

SN	Relationship between employees` consultation & customers retention…	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
11	There is positive association between access to expertise marketing skills of the employees and customers retention	4.73	.50	Very High
12	There is positive relationship between objective perspective of employees on customers problems and customers retention	4.07	.53	High

13	There is positive relationship between transfer of knowledge from employees and customers retention	4.20	.59	High
14	There is positive relationship between improved decision from consultation of employees and customers retention	4.73	.50	Very High
15	There is positive relationship between supporting ideas from employees and customers retention	4.06	.53	High
	Aggregate Mean	**4.34**		**High**

Table 5 shows that items 1 and 4 of the 5 listed items under employee consultation have mean scores of 4.73 and 4.73, meaning a very high positive relationship with customers retention, while items 2, 3 and 5 shows 4.07, 4.20 and 4.06, which means high relationship with customers retention.The aggregated mean score of 4.34 shows a high relationship between employees consultation and customers retention which can lead to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied. The standard deviations for the 5 listed items ranged within 0.50 to 0.59 which shows that respondents were homogeneous in their opinions that all the listed items under employees' consultation have a high positive relationship with customers retention which can lead to to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied.

Hypotheses Testing

H0$_1$: There is no signification relationship between co-ownership and marketing share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Co-ownership and Market Share

			Co-ownership	Market Share
PPM	Co-ownership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.557**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	148	148
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.557**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	148	148

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 of PPMC shows a correlation coefficient of r=.557 with a p-value of .000 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 (.000<0.05), meaning that the correlation is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no signification relationship between co-ownership and marketing share of small medium-scale ICT enterprises were rejected. This means that there is a positive and very strong correlation between co-ownership and market share of ICT SMEs in Obio-Akpor LGA**.**

H0$_2$: Significant relationship does not exist between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Delegation of Authority and Sales Growth

			Delegation of Authority	Sales Growth
PPM	Delegation of Authority	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.863**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.045

	N	148	148
Sales Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.863**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
	N	148	148

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 of PPMC shows a correlation coefficient of r=.863 with a p-value of .003 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 (.003<0.05), meaning that the correlation is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis which stated that significant relationship does not exist between delegation of authority and sales growth of small medium-scale ICT enterprises were rejected. This means that there is a positive and very strong correlation between delegation of authority and sales growth of ICT SMEs in Obio-Akpor LGA.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between employees` consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises.

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Employees` Consultation and Customers Retention

			Employees` Consultation	Customers Retention
PPM	Employees` Consultation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.813**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.021
		N	148	148
	Customers Retention	Correlation Coefficient	.813**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	148	148

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 of PPMC shows a correlation coefficient of r=.813 with a p-value of .001 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 (.001<0.05), meaning that the correlation is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between employees` consultation and customers retention of small medium-scale ICT enterprises were rejected. This means that there is a positive and very strong correlation between employees` consultation and customers retention of ICT SMEs in Obio-Akpor LGA**.**

Discussion

Firstly, Findings of the study showed a very high positive relationship between co-ownership and market share which can lead to very high performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied. Also, the study further showed that there was positive and very strong correlation between co-ownership and market share of ICT SMEs. The findings of this study agree with the views of Zubair et al., (2015), who said co-ownership of the business makes employees feel as an integral part of the business as such put in their best which usually result to great performance and control market share. The Authors further expressed that, co-ownership provides efficient governance and better performance of the firm.

Efficient governance provides better performance and control of greater market share while poor governance leads to bad financial performance of the organizations and less control of market share.

Secondly, finding of the study showed a very high positive relationship between delegation of authority and sales growth which can lead to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied adequately. Similarly, the study as well disclosed a positive and very strong correlation between delegation of authority and sales growth of ICT SMEs. The findings see eye to

eye with Management Study Guide, (2025) which postulated that delegation of authority gives employees a sense of belonging, make them to be committed to duties, work hard to achieve positive results (sales), take responsivities and which always lead to sales growth as signs of positive relationships (Management Study Guide, 2025).

Thirdly, the study showed a high positive relationship between employees' consultation and customers retention which can lead to very high Performance of Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises if applied properly. Correspondingly, there was a positive and very strong correlation between employees` consultation and customers retention of ICT SMEs. These findings concur with the opinion of Cube HR, (2023) which stated that consultation enhance decision making processes by drawing upon employee's expertise and considering their interests. The author also added that, when an employee is consulted in decision-making process, the desire to serve customers adequately and retain them is very eminent.

Conclusion

Based on the findings that emanated from the discussions of the study, it was concluded that if Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises adopt co-ownership, delegation of authority and employees' consultation in management of their businesses, it will enable them to have a good market share, sales growth and customers retention, which will definitely lead to a very high Performance in their Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises.

Recommendations

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

1. Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises should adopt co-ownership in the management of their businesses. This will enable them to gather more resources and use them to control the market share of their target customers.
2. Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises should adopt employees' consultation and delegation of authority in the management of their businesses. This is because, it will enable them to have sales growth and customers retention because of the sense of belonging and commitments form the part of the employees. These approaches will definitely lead to a very high Performance in their Small and Medium-Scale ICT Enterprises.

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