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# THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING ON EMPLOYEES' PERCEIVED CAREER SATISFACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Abstract

The changing landscape of education has made it fundamental for employees to actively participate in decision-making to increase companies' competitive advantage, aim and performance. However, academics find it difficult to find satisfaction in their careers, as they are constantly navigating these pressures and adapting to the evolving expectations of their profession. The literature reports that employees who are actively involved in organisational decisions tend to be happier and feel satisfied with their careers. Founded on the participative management theory as a democratic style of leadership in which subordinates participate in organisational decision-making and administration, the purpose of this study was achieved and consisted in elucidating the correlation between direct participation of employee in decision-making and their perceptions of CS in the realm of higher education. Through a post-positivist research paradigm and a quantitative approach, this study achieved an objective stance. Data were conveniently drawn from 293 male and female academic staff working on a contract and permanent basis in two campuses of one University of Technology in South Africa. Descriptive statistics, correlation and linear regression analyses were used to explain each construct and the relationship between both constructs. As a result of correlation analysis, employee participation was found to be a significant predictor of career satisfaction; accounting for 8 per cent of the variance in career satisfaction as per the regression analysis. Therefore, institutions should promote a more inclusive and participatory culture through open dialogue and meaningful engagement between management and employees to

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facilitate consensus-building by taking into account the diverse range of interests and expertise to foster CS.

**Keywords:** direct employee participation, decision-making, subjective career success, higher education sector, participative management theory

## **Introduction**

Employee participation in decision-making is an essential aspect of organisational dynamics characterised by factors such as technological advancements, and competitive landscape that influence the organisation's operations and strategies. It is defined by Ijeoma and Mbah (2020) as a strategy for engaging and supporting workers at work so they may put their effort toward improving both their own and the organisation's performance. Heller, Pusic, Strauss and Wilpert (1998) provided an elucidation of employee participation, defining it as the collective involvement of individuals or groups, whether directly or indirectly, in contributing to organisational goals through their creative thinking, ultimately leading to improved decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the present study specifically concentrates on direct participation in decision-making (DPDM). It is considered by Chimaobi and Chikamnele, (2020) as a unique type of delegation where subordinates acquire increased autonomy and decision-making power to bridge the communication divide between management and employees. Sofijanova and Zabijakin-Chatleska (2013) comment that it entails engaging and empowering employees to contribute their ideas and efforts to enhance individual and organisational performance, as well as foster greater autonomy in work procedures. It pertains to the extent to which employees are involved in strategic planning activities within the organisation (Noah, 2008). Wang, Hou and Li (2022) argue that it is becoming more and more important for employees to actively participate in decision-making to increase a company's competitive advantage, sustainable development aim, and performance. A DPDM helps an organisation fulfil its mission statement and meet its core objectives and values by applying its innovations, expertise, and efforts towards solving problems and making decisions (Chimaobi & Chikamnele, 2020). Participation enables employees who are not hierarchically equal to share power among themselves, and participative management approaches help to balance the involvement of managers and subordinates in ordinary duties and activities linked to the job (Mohsen & Sharif, 2020). Fontein (2021) notes that DPDM makes sure that both the staff and the

management group are accountable for the general success of the business.

In general, it seems that employees' input into decision-making has a considerable, if not substantial, impact on academics' perceived career satisfaction (CS). CS is described as the sum of one's successful professional and psychological achievements; both an objective and a subjective perspective on careers are included in this description (Vianen et al., 2020). Lehtonen, Nokelainen, Rintala and Puhakka (2021) stressed that since promotions and salary are objective metrics that have historically been used to evaluate careers, professional achievement has been directly observable by others and quantified consistently. But these days, people's perceptions of their own self-directed and value-driven professional orientation have emerged as a crucial career indicator (Lehtonen et al., 2021). Joo and Ready (2012) posit that the implications for careers in the twenty-first century have significantly changed due to the major shifts in the psychological contract between organisations and individuals. The evolving nature of work, advancements in technology, and changing societal values have all contributed to these shifts, requiring individuals to adapt and navigate their careers in different ways. As organisations prioritise flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance, individuals are seeking more meaningful and fulfilling work experiences, leading to a redefinition of success and CS. This changing landscape has necessitated a rethinking of career development strategies and a greater emphasis on continuous learning, adaptability, and resilience to thrive in the new career context. This affirmation is supported by Joo and Ready (2012) who pointed out that as time passes, individuals within organisations become more focused on their self-development, including acquiring new skills and abilities that will contribute to their long-term CS and personal growth. This shift in how careers are conceived may not reflect how people view their future careers. It recognises that what may be considered successful or satisfying for one person may not hold for another. Hence, some workers might still view their careers with an emphasis on security, predictability, and a radial conception of a successful career (Vianen, de Pater & Preenen, 2020).

### **Problem statement**

In the academic literature, it is not obvious whether greater employee participation in workplace decision-making has a direct and beneficial impact on their perceived CS. Institutional leaders must make a lot of

decisions daily. However, Fontein (2021) is of the opinion that although individuals in the top management team have vast expertise and knowledge in a variety of fields, they cannot be as invested in the job as workers are. It is believed that employees have extensive knowledge of how businesses operate, how they could improve, and who their clients are (Fontein, 2021). However, the hierarchical structure of academic institutions may hinder their ability to voice their opinions and influence decisions, as power dynamics and bureaucratic processes can limit their autonomy. Moreover, the diverse range of academic disciplines and research interests within institutions can make it challenging to reach a consensus and make decisions that satisfy all stakeholders.

Moreover, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that impede the achievement of CS among academics, it is necessary to delve into the various challenges they face. Academic career literature appears to be dominated by pressures on the academic profession and changes in the educational function (Barnes, Du Plessis & Frantz, 2021), which in turn hinder academics from perceiving their career as fulfilling. These pressures can stem from various sources, such as the increasing demands for research productivity, the need to secure funding, and the constant pressure to publish in prestigious journals. Additionally, the changing landscape of education, with the rise of online learning platforms and the emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches, further adds to the challenges faced by academics. As a result, academics may find it difficult to find satisfaction in their careers, as they are constantly navigating these pressures and adapting to the evolving expectations of their profession. Thus, the HES is under increasing strain, which creates unfavourable academic working conditions and leads to the perception that being an academic is subject to controversy and debates (Barnes et al., 2021). The academic community has been grappling with a multitude of challenges within the HES, leading to an intricate environment. This intricate environment has presented academics with a range of difficulties, primarily characterised by amplified workloads, constrained resources, and elevated expectations. These factors contribute to a sense of strain and dissatisfaction among academics, ultimately impacting their overall CS and the quality of education they provide to students. The ongoing debates surrounding the role and purpose of academia further exacerbate the already strained conditions, as differing opinions and perspectives clash, leading to a sense of uncertainty

and instability within the academic community. Hence, the HES in South Africa continues to be a "low participation-high attrition" system despite major advancements in increasing access since 1994 (Fisher & Scott, 2011.).

### **Theoretical framework**

The participative management theory is the foundation of this study. The field of participative management has been around for sixty years, and its early research was done by Likert (1967), Coch and French (1948), and Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939). Yukl (1989) posits that one facet of the behavioural approach in leadership theory that has been the subject of numerous studies is participatory leadership. Kahai, Sosik and Avolio (1997) provided the initial definition of participative management, stating that it entails leaders encouraging and supporting subordinates to share decision-making authority and take part in its process. It is defined by Beekwilder and Endlich (2019) as the degree to which a leader incorporates the opinions and suggestions of their subordinates into the decision-making process. To successfully boost employees' sense of ownership and actively integrate their aspirations into company goals, participative management is a democratic style of leadership in which subordinates participate in organisational decision-making and administration (Wang, Hou & Li, 2022). This theory elucidates the correlation between direct involvement in decision-making processes and the perception of CS in the realm of higher education. This theory posits that when individuals are actively engaged in the decision-making process, they experience a greater sense of control and autonomy, which in turn enhances their overall satisfaction with their career trajectory within the HES. By being directly involved in decision-making, individuals feel a stronger connection to their work and are more likely to perceive their career as fulfilling and rewarding. This theory highlights the importance of empowering individuals to have a voice and influence in decision-making processes, as it can significantly impact their CS in the higher education context.

As one of the most successful management approaches globally, this management theory is widely recognised for its ability to explain the connection between participatory leadership and employee involvement in decision-making (PDM) in the workplace (Shaed, 2018). The basis of this theory is that a leader should solicit feedback from every employee in the company. Before making sound

decisions, or implementing new policies and procedures, the team leader typically solicits feedback from the members of the group (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). According to Khassawneh and Elrehail (2022), this involves delegating, consulting, reaching an agreement, and involving subordinates to hear their viewpoint before leaders make decisions. Alsubaie (2021) notes that it encompasses accepting ideas and encouraging candid and unrestricted conversation among group members. The concepts are then freely discussed with a great deal of harmony, potential, and recommendations because of everyone's contributions, the group is interactive. Participatory management typically works along the following lines: (a) the team meeting is facilitated by the team leader, (b) the project manager disseminates any pertinent information and expertise on the topic or project at hand, (c) members of the team communicate their ideas and opinions to the group, (d) the collective digests all of the information and concepts, (e) a decision is made by the group or by the group leader, (f) when necessary, the decision is shared by the leader with other relevant parties, and (g) the project is carried out by the group (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). The results related to participative management indicate that when workers believe their managers are exhibiting consultative or participative management, they exhibit increased organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022).

## **Literature review**

### **The higher education sector in South Africa**

Since the country's democratic transition in 1994, HES has undergone significant transformations in terms of academic restructuring, student population growth, strategic planning, program revision, quality assurance, research output, capacity building, and community engagement (Dorasamy & Letoane, 2015). Academic restructuring has been a key aspect of the transformations in HES. This process involves reorganising academic departments, faculties, and programs to align them with the changing needs of the country and the global knowledge economy. It has been driven by the need to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration, promote innovation, and address emerging fields of study. By reorganising academic departments, faculties, and programs, universities have created a more dynamic and responsive environment. This restructuring has allowed employees to have a greater say in decision-making processes, as their input is now valued more than ever. As a result, employees feel more empowered and engaged in shaping the

direction of their institutions and may perceive their careers as successful. Overall, academic restructuring has fostered a more inclusive and forward-thinking culture within universities, benefiting both employees and the institutions themselves.

Another significant transformation has been the growth of the student population in HES. This increase can be attributed to various factors, including the expansion of access to higher education, demographic changes, and the government's commitment to promoting education as a means of social and economic development (Gray Group International, 2023). This has led to the establishment of new campuses, the construction of additional infrastructure, and the implementation of innovative teaching and learning approaches to cater to the diverse needs of the expanded student body. As the student population has expanded, so too needs increased faculty and administrative staff to cater to the growing demand for education. This has resulted in a more decentralised decision-making approach, with a greater emphasis on involving employees in the decision-making that directly impacts their work and the overall functioning of the institution. In addition, with the increase in student enrolment, there has been a corresponding rise in the demand for qualified and skilled professionals providing employees with a wider range of career paths to pursue.

Strategic planning has also played a crucial role in the transformation of HES. Before 1994, the HES in South Africa was characterised by a lack of inclusivity and limited opportunities for employee involvement in decision-making processes (Kok, Lebusa & Joubert, 2014). However, with the advent of strategic planning, there has been a notable shift towards a more participatory approach, empowering employees to contribute to the decision-making processes and shaping their career trajectories and their perceptions of CS. Today, strategic planning involves setting clear goals and objectives, allocating resources effectively and fostering partnerships and collaborations with other institutions, industries, and communities to enhance the relevance and impact of higher education.

However, these significant transformations have brought about significant challenges leading to an intricate environment. This intricate environment has presented academics with a range of difficulties, primarily characterised by amplified workloads, constrained resources, and elevated expectations. With an ever-

increasing demand for research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities, academics find themselves grappling with an overwhelming amount of work (McCallum, 2021). This not only affects their productivity but also puts a strain on their overall well-being which may affect their ability to partake in the decision-making of their institutions and how they perceive their CS. As funding becomes scarce and budgets tighten, academics are often left with inadequate resources to carry out their research and teaching activities effectively (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz & Ustinova, 2019). This scarcity of resources hampers their ability to perceive their career as successful. Furthermore, heightened expectations have placed additional pressure on academics within the HES. As the academic landscape becomes more competitive, there is an increasing demand for high-quality research output, impactful teaching, and active community engagement (Păunescu, Nikina-Ruuhonen & Stukalina, 2022). Academics are expected to excel in all these areas, often leading to burnout and a constant struggle to meet these elevated expectations. Hence, they may not have time to engage in decision-making and fail to perceive their career as successful.

Institutions and policymakers must address these challenges and provide support systems that enable academics to thrive in their roles and contribute effectively to the institution, faculty and departmental decision-making.

### **Direct employee participation in decision-making**

DPDM is described as the active involvement of staff members in a company's efforts to carry out its mission statement and uphold its fundamental values by contributing their ideas, skills, and initiatives to problem-solving and decision-making (Ijeoma & Mbah, 2020). For Arregi, Gago and Legarra (2022), it refers to the variety of methods used to include employees in decision-making at all organisational levels, where communication and information sharing are seen as key elements in the process. Chekole (2021) refers to it as giving employees opportunities to collaborate in matters that pertain to the management of the organisation especially where employees are directly concerned. Fontein, (2021) observes that DPDM is always done with an end in mind to accomplish; hence, individuals who are open to expressing their thoughts and views must understand why they are doing so and how it impacts the company. Thus, making decisions involves choosing the best approach to an issue (Ijeoma & Mbah, 2020). Participation may be advantageous to businesses and

employees alike. Companies can increase the competitive advantage of their human resources by empowering people to manage and impact their work activities through decision-making. Taking into account this reality, Behraves, Abubakar and Tanova (2019) argue that employees who are actively involved in organisational decisions during the planning process tend to be happier and more engaged in their implementation. Chekole (2021) adds that DPDM has the potential to lower turnover, lower absenteeism, and boost productivity. It also enables management to better understand employee attitudes and implement better policies that would address employee concerns. According to Arregi, Gago and Legarra (2022), DPDM is linked to psychological benefits including happiness, dedication, and drive. Valverde-Moreno, Torres-Jiménez, Lucia-Casademunt and Muñoz-Ocaña (2019) explain that a participatory environment can increase workers' job satisfaction, dedication, motivation, and productivity as well as foster the development of cutting-edge workplaces that are advantageous to both employees and employers.

### **Career satisfaction**

The attainment of success within the work environment has always been a source of inspiration for many. Whether it is the pursuit of personal growth, financial stability, or professional recognition, success in the workplace has proven to be a compelling factor that propels individuals to strive for excellence. Hughes (1937) distinguished between objective and subjective professional triumphs and emphasised the significance of subjective career success (SCS) (Dai & Song, 2016), also called CS. Likewise, Hupkens et al. (2021) argued that objective career success (OCS) and CS are two common ways to conceive career success. SCS refers to a person's impression of obtaining significant career results, as opposed to OCS, which concentrates on directly observable factors like income and the number of promotions (Hupkens et al., 2021). However, this research primarily centres on the subjective dimension of career success, also known as CS. By focusing on CS, the study aims to delve into the personal experiences, perceptions, and feelings of individuals regarding their careers. It recognises that CS is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors such as work-life balance, job autonomy, opportunities for growth, and alignment of personal values with organisational culture. These subjective elements play a crucial role in shaping individuals' overall satisfaction and fulfilment in their careers. CS is one result of work experience it

is described as the achievement of desired job-related outcomes at any time throughout an individual's employment experiences and career (Harry, Dodd & Chinyamurindi, 2019). Initially, academics viewed CS as a proxy for professional success. This viewpoint is based on the notion that individuals who experience a high level of satisfaction in their careers are likely to have achieved significant milestones and accomplishments.

According to Hupkens Akkermans, Solinger and Khapova (2021), CS components are:

**Autonomy:** marked by a sense of personal control over a person's independence, and proprietorship and envisioned as a general feeling of individual achievement that makes use of workplace assets.

**Personal growth:** represents knowledge striving, a crucial element of CS. The acquisition of knowledge and skills, not just for learning, but also out of a pressing need to "stay current" in one's line of work is one of the primary goals of CS.

**Influence:** emphasises the significance of having an impact on an organisation or its members. Influence requires one to feel as though they are making a difference.

**Widespread interest and operationalisations:** have been shown for the idea of meaningful employment, or assistance and support to others.

**Work-life balance:** encapsulates the significance of striking a balance between work and non-work activities. Recovery from work-related stress depends on one's capacity to mentally, emotionally, and physically distance oneself from work.

**Quality work:** is concentrated on performances and results that are specific to the work situation. What one provides to others (customers and clients) on behalf of the hiring organisation is what is at stake.

**Recognition:** is related to the social environment of an individual's CS. Recognition at work, receiving respect, and feeling confident in oneself are connected to one's social standing and identity.

### **Significance of the study**

Making decisions is a crucial component of management, and managers make decisions that have an impact on the efficiency, effectiveness, and success of their companies (Chekole, 2021). Consequently, the significance of DPDM in the public and private sectors cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of HEI. The

implications of effective decision-making in the higher education sector are far-reaching. Firstly, well-informed decisions can enhance the efficiency of administrative processes within HEIs. This can lead to streamlined operations, optimised resource allocation, and improved overall performance. Secondly, they can contribute to the effectiveness of educational programs and initiatives, ensuring that they align with the institution's goals and meet the needs of students and internal and external stakeholders. Lastly, they can positively impact the overall success and reputation of the institution, attracting talented faculty members, students, and funding opportunities.

The ability of academics to actively engage in decision-making allows for a more inclusive and democratic approach to governance. By involving academics, institutions can tap into a diverse range of perspectives, expertise, and experiences, leading to more informed and well-rounded decisions. This participatory approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders, enhancing their engagement and satisfaction with their careers and institutions. Moreover, direct participation promotes transparency and accountability, as decisions are made collectively and stakeholders have a clearer understanding of the rationale behind them. Ultimately, this inclusive decision-making process contributes to the overall effectiveness, efficiency, and success of HEI.

This study stands out for its originality as it adopts a comprehensive approach that combines DPDM and CS, investigating their correlation within the context of higher education. This particular area of research has received limited attention in the past, making this study highly valuable in expanding the understanding of the subject matter. By exploring the relationship between both constructs in higher education, this research contributes to filling the existing gap in knowledge, shedding light on the factors that contribute to academics' CS in the HES and provides insights that can inform future policies and practices in the field.

### **Ethics**

To ensure ethical standards were met, the ethical committee of the surveyed University of Technology granted an ethical clearance for this study involving human participants. The subjects were required to give written informed consent before taking part in the investigation.

## **Research methodology**

A quantitative research method based on the postpositivist view was utilised in this study to achieve the research objectives. Both primary and secondary data were collected, with the primary data being obtained through a questionnaire using the Likert scale method. The ratings for each measure ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Secondary information was gathered from journals and past research. The study population consisted of permanent and contract employees, including both male and female academic staff, working on two campuses of a South African University of Technology. A sample size of 253 was selected using a nonprobability sampling technique known as convenience sampling from a total of 405 university employees. The collected data was analysed quantitatively by coding the questionnaire and entering the data into the computer using SPSS software version 27.0. Correlation and regression analyses were then conducted to establish and determine the relationship between DPDM and CS. The sample included various job grade levels, ranging from junior lecturers (also known as developmental lecturers' posts) and laboratory technicians (job grade level 9), lecturers (job level 8), senior lecturers (job grade level 7), associate professors (job grade level 6), academic Heads of Departments (HoDs) and professors (job grade level 5), to the Executive Deans (EDs) (job grade level 4). However, individuals in top management positions such as The Vice-Chancellor (VC) and Principal (job grade level 1), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (job grade level 2) and the Registrar and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (job grade levels 3), were not included in the study due to their responsibility for strategic decisions within the institution.

## **Results**

### **Sample profile**

The data collected from the sample of academics in this study revealed a gender distribution that was slightly skewed towards males, with 59.7% of the participants being male and 40.3% being female. This gender imbalance may have implications for gender equality and representation within the higher education sector, as it suggests that there may be a higher proportion of male academics compared to their female counterparts.

The age distribution of the respondents showed that the largest group, accounting for 35.7% of the sample, fell within the age range

of 30 to 39. On the other hand, only 16.3% of the participants were 60 years of age or older. This age distribution may indicate a potential generational gap within the higher education sector, with a larger number of academics from younger age groups compared to older ones. This could have implications for the transfer of knowledge and experience within the sector.

The findings regarding work experience revealed that the majority of respondents, accounting for 44.4% of the sample, had more than 10 years of work experience. Conversely, a smaller proportion of participants, 21.6%, had fewer than 5 years of experience. This distribution suggests that there is a significant number of experienced academics within the higher education sector, which could contribute to the overall quality and expertise of teaching and research.

In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of respondents, 48.8%, held a Master's degree, while only 0.8% received a diploma. This indicates a high level of educational attainment among the academics in the sample, which is expected in the higher education sector. However, it is worth noting that the percentage of individuals with a diploma is relatively low, suggesting that higher degrees are more valued and prevalent in this sector.

The distribution of academic levels within the sample showed that level 8, which includes lecturers, received the highest percentage with 64.7%. On the other hand, level 5, which includes Heads of Departments and professors, obtained the lowest percentage with only 3.2%. This distribution may have implications for the hierarchical structure within the higher education sector, as it suggests that there is a larger number of lecturers compared to higher-ranking positions. This could impact decision-making processes and the distribution of responsibilities within academic institutions.

Overall, these results provide insights into the gender, age, work experience, educational qualifications, and academic levels within the higher education sector. The implications of these findings may include the need for promoting gender equality.

### **Descriptive results**

The scale was used to gather data on how employees perceive their DPDM within the institution. The findings from this survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: DPDM

Item description	Mean	Std. deviation
1. In this institution, I have a degree of influence in the decisions affecting me	2.79	1.165
2. I am allowed to take part in decisions in my department	3.38	1.011
3. The decisions in my department are made through consultation with members of the department	3.39	1.024
5. My supervisor asks for my opinion about how work gets done	3.50	1.060
6. As an employee, I participate in the decisions that are made in my institution	2.64	1.080

The analysis of employee responses regarding decision-making in the department revealed a tendency toward agreement regarding the statement of the supervisor seeking their opinion on work processes (mean=3.50) and a neutral stance among the employees. The mean scores for statements such as being allowed to make decisions in the department (mean=3.38), and decisions being made through consultation with department members (mean=3.39), indicated a lack of strong agreement or disagreement. However, when it came to statements about the degree of influence and participation in decision-making, employees seemed to disagree. The mean scores for statements like having a degree of influence in decisions affecting them (mean=2.79) and participating in decisions made in the institution (mean=2.64) indicated a lower level of agreement among the respondents.

These results have significant implications for the higher education sector. The findings suggest that employees perceive a lack of shared responsibilities and effective consultation during decision-making processes within the university. In the higher education sector, where collaboration and inclusivity are crucial, institutions need to address these concerns and foster a culture of shared decision-making and employee involvement.

The data collected from employees about their perceived CS is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Career success**

Item description	Mean	Std. deviation
1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career	3.54	1.135
2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals	3.62	1.035
3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income	3.16	1.202
4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for advancement	3.36	1.084
5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for the development of new skills	3.57	1.031

Upon analysing the data, it is evident that employees generally tend to agree with the statements regarding their satisfaction levels in various aspects of their careers. Specifically, the mean scores indicate that employees are satisfied with the success they have achieved in their careers (mean=3.54), the progress they have made towards meeting their overall career goals (mean=3.62), and the progress they have made towards meeting their goals for the development of new skills (mean=3.57). However, when it comes to goals related to income and advancement, respondents expressed a neutral stance. The mean scores for satisfaction with progress towards income goals and advancement goals were 3.16 and 3.36, respectively. These results have significant implications for this institution. It suggests that while employees feel content with their current level of success and progress in their careers, there may be a need for further support and opportunities for growth in terms of income and advancement. This institution has to consider offering programs and resources that address these specific areas to enhance employee satisfaction and motivation.

## Correlation results

**Table 3: Correlations between DPDM and CS**

		DPDM	CS
DPDM	PC	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
CS	PC	.293**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

PC= Pearson correlation; Sig= significant; \*Sig at  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* Sig at  $p < 0.05$

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient, which indicates a statistically significant correlation between DPDM and CS. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.293, with a significance level ( $p$ ) of 0.01, suggesting a positive linear relationship between the two constructs. In terms of effect sizes, the correlation demonstrates a medium effect (as the coefficient is nearly equal to 0.3) in practical significance. These findings suggest that employees with higher levels of DPDM are more likely to perceive their careers as successful. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Zainnudin and Isa (2011), who emphasised the importance of DPDM in the effective implementation of new management practices and its impact on employee CS.

## Regression results

**Table 4: Regression model**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
DPDM & CS	.293a	.086	.082	.9144

Predictors: (Constant), DPDM

Dependent variable: CS

\*\* significant at  $p < 0.05$

The researchers employed linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between DPDM and participants' ratings of their perceived CS. The findings revealed that DPDM had a significant impact on the perceived CS, as indicated by the adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.082. This suggests that approximately 8% of the variability in CS can be explained by DPDM within the university setting. These results are crucial for understanding the factors that influence

participants' perceptions of CS. While DPDM only accounts for a small portion of the variance in CS, it still plays a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions. Hence, it can be concluded that the more an institution engages employees in decision-making at the departmental and/or faculty level(s), it has a significant effect on their perceived CS. Similarly, Verma (2017) reported that increased participation enhances individuals' sense of authority and respectability, reducing the need to exert control by opposing managers and leading to a perception of career success. These results highlight the significance of fostering DPDM as part of the successful management practices among employees to promote CS.

### **Limitations and recommendations**

The limitations of this study are a crucial aspect that needs to be thoroughly discussed.

While this study successfully examined the fundamental factor contributing to CS within a Higher Education Institution (HEI), which is direct participation in decision-making at one point in time, the researcher could have further enhanced the study's findings by adopting a longitudinal approach. By utilising a longitudinal design, future researchers would have been able to track changes in CS over an extended time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Another significant limitation of this study was the issue of sample size. Due to various constraints such as time, resources, and accessibility, the researchers had to work with a limited number of participants or subjects. This could have potentially affected the generalisability of the findings, as a small sample size may not accurately represent the larger population. Thus, this study will only be generalised to some extent. Future studies may consider using a bigger sample and include more institutions.

Additionally, only one institution was included as a sample in this study; including multiple HEIs would have allowed for a broader representation of the diverse contexts and experiences within the HES, enhancing the generalisability of the study's findings. Another potential solution could involve conducting comparative studies across different HEIs. By comparing employees' level of direct participation in decision-making of the institution and the effect on CS levels across various institutions, researchers can identify similarities

and differences that may exist. This approach would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the DPDM and CS within the HES.

Moreover, the sample approach, which was mostly based on convenience, was a weakness. Although the researcher made an effort to select a sample that was diverse in terms of the sample's gender, age, work experience, position level, and educational level, it does not accurately reflect the current employment state of this institution. However, it can be said that the sample size selected in this study, provided an adequate foundation for at least some generalisation of the results.

Additionally, self-assessment instruments often introduce an approach bias when collecting data. This bias occurs due to the inherent subjectivity and potential for self-enhancement in self-assessment. However, to mitigate this bias and obtain more reliable and comprehensive data, future researchers can employ multiple data sources in future studies. By incorporating various sources such as observations, interviews, and objective measurements, they can gather a more diverse and well-rounded set of data. This approach not only helps to minimise the limitations of self-assessment instruments but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of DPDM and CS.

Future research should consider these limitations and explore the potential solutions discussed to enhance the understanding of DPDM and CS within the HES.

### **Management implications**

This study has some significant management implications for institutions of higher learning. It denotes that for employees to perceive their careers as successful, they must demonstrate a high level of participation in decision-making. However, the problem statement section stipulated that the ability of academics to express their viewpoints and exert influence on decision-making processes may be impeded by the hierarchical framework they operate within. Furthermore, the presence of a wide array of academic disciplines and research interests within departments and faculties could pose a challenge in reaching consensus and making decisions that cater to the interests of all stakeholders involved. To overcome these obstacles, it is crucial to devise strategies that address these challenges and ensure that the valuable insights and expertise of

academics are effectively utilised in decision-making processes. This study recommends that institutions should increase employee awareness of participation programs, especially in decision-making, to increase CS.

One way to address these challenges is by fostering a more inclusive and participatory decision-making culture within academic institutions. This can be achieved by promoting open dialogue and creating platforms for meaningful engagement between faculty members, administrators, and other stakeholders. Managers will benefit by moving away from systemic structures to adopt system thinking approaches in the organisation, which will help them promote an open culture of communication. This entails creating a setting where team members may express their thoughts and worries without worrying about repercussions. Furthermore, managers may ask for feedback from staff in regular surveys; they might conduct a survey on paper or online to learn about people's opinions, thoughts, and levels of satisfaction using the surveys to ensure that they have a positive perception of their career. By encouraging diverse perspectives and actively involving academics in decision-making processes, institutions can tap into their wealth of knowledge and expertise, leading to more informed and effective decision-making and CS.

Additionally, it is important to establish transparent and streamlined processes for decision-making within academic institutions. This can help mitigate the influence of power dynamics and bureaucratic hurdles that often hinder the autonomy of academics. By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making procedures, institutions can create an environment that fosters collaboration and ensures that decisions are made fairly and efficiently and will stimulate CS. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration and communication should be encouraged to bridge the gaps between different academic disciplines and research interests. This can be achieved through interdisciplinary research projects, joint committees, and interdisciplinary forums where academics from various fields can come together to exchange ideas and perspectives. By promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration, institutions can facilitate consensus-building and decision-making processes that take into account the diverse range of interests and expertise within their academic community to foster CS.

Lastly, it is crucial to provide adequate support and resources to academics to enable their active participation in decision-making processes. This includes providing training and development opportunities to enhance their skills in areas such as leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Additionally, institutions should create a supportive environment that values and recognises the contributions of academics in decision-making, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their insights are valued and opening up avenues for open, two-way communication, managers may foster a culture of transparency and trust inside their organisations. High levels of respect for employees' points of view should be shown, allowing team members to voice their thoughts and make queries, which can result in more fruitful discussions and improved decision-making.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these strategies, academic institutions can harness the full potential of their faculty members, enhance the effectiveness of their decision-making processes and improve the perception of their CS.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this investigation was to pinpoint and analyse DPDM and CS in HES and their relationship based on the participative management theory as the theoretical and fact-based foundation enabling academics' positive perceptions of their CS when exposed to decision-making. Employee-centeredness is a requirement for organisations to succeed in today's cutthroat marketplace. With this in mind, it is feasible to conclude that DPDM benefits both the employees and the organisations as employees can perceive their careers as successful. From the results, there was a positive relationship between DPDM and CS, indicating that 8% of CS is explained by DPDM. The means scores of the descriptive analysis reported that employees perceive a lack of shared responsibilities and effective consultation during decision-making processes within this institution. This is confirmed by the weak correlation between the variables; this shows that academics attach importance to DPDM and CS. Thus, this study concludes that by increasing employees' level of DPDM, their perceptions of CS can also be improved. From the findings, it is recommended that institutions foster a more inclusive and participatory decision-making culture within academic institutions through the promotion of open dialogue and the creation

of platforms for meaningful engagements between management and employees.

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