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## Effects of Employee Participation on Minimum Wage Determination: A Study of the Nigerian Labour Congress

Ikechukwu Dialoke (Ph.D) & Chidinma Charity Kalu  
Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management  
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike  
samsonchijindu@gmail.com

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### **Abstract**

*This study focused on the effects of employee participation on minimum wage determination, with reference to the Nigerian Labour Congress. The specific objectives are to: ascertain the mode and level of Nigerian Labour Congress members' participation in minimum wage determination, and examine the impact of employee participation in minimum wage determination on the performance of members of Nigerian Labour Congress. The researchers adopted a survey research design. The population of the study is one thousand eight hundred and forty six (1846) being top official members of the Nigerian Labour Congress in the South Eastern States of Nigeria. Using Taro Yamen's formula, the sample size was; three hundred and thirty (330) respondents which was sampled from different branches and units of Nigerian Labour Congress in the South Eastern States of Nigeria. This was done using purposive sampling technique, Descriptive statistics, and Logistic Regression analysis to analyse the objectives. The major findings revealed that meetings with government representatives, collective bargaining process, exerting upward pressure on the government and advising government are the major ways that the members of Nigerian Labour Congress actively participate in minimum wage determination in Nigeria. Furthermore, the result revealed that bargaining process, bringing low wages up to standard, eliminating unfair competition and advising government which are modes of participation in minimum wage determination are positive and significantly related to the performance of members of Nigerian Labour Congress. The researchers concluded that government in trying to reduce the pressure it gets from the Nigerian Labour congress should make positive response to the needs of Nigerian employees, and recommended that government should embark on and stick to adequate policy implementation as regards minimum wage determination.*

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**Keywords:** *Employee Participation, Minimum Wage Determination, Nigerian Labour Congress.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

It could be said that employees' participation in decision making in Nigeria is usually representative, following the fact that all employees in the country may not appear at the round table when strategic issues such as minimum wage determination, is being discussed but are represented by their respective union leaders. Summers *et al.*, (2005) has it that employee's participation includes; project teams in which employees work on projects with considerable participation. It also involves consultation exercises and meetings involvement, whereby employees are encouraged to share new ideas. Arthur (1994) opines that employee participation encompasses such terms as; wide ranging industrial democracy, cooperation, employee high commitment work practices, collective bargaining and employee empowerment. Therefore, trade

unions(in this case; the Nigerian Labour Congress) continues to lead a defined role of protecting and advancing the interests of employees in Nigeria and in so doing, participate actively in decision making, particularly in minimum wage determination.

In line with the policy of five yearly review of the national minimum wage,the leader of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Mr. Ayuba Wabba observed that the organized labour (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) made a formal demand to the federal Government of Nigeria on the need to raise the national minimum wage from eighteen thousand Naira (₦18,000) to fifty six thousand Naira (₦56,000). According to him, the logic behind the clamour for an upward review of the existing minimum wage was to ensure that no worker earns below what could sustain him or her for a period of thirty days (Udoh, 2015). Also, the plight of an average Nigerian worker is compounded by high inflation rate. Today, with inflation rate at 18.48 percent and the widening gap of purchasing power of the ordinary Nigerian, Ayuba insists that ₦18000 is unrealistic (*Ibid*). Also the impact or usefulness of minimum wage does not only depend on its payment, as Therasus (2016) would want us to believe but on whether the minimum wage payable, can sustain the overall welfare of the ordinary worker?

Furthermore, there is a need to evaluate the efficiency of the Nigerian Labour Congress, as regards its participation in minimum wage determination. Thus the Nigerian Labour Congress in achieving the objective for which it was formulated (as a pivot between the government and employees), needs to adopt workable strategies to improving its mode, level and method of participation in determining a sustainable minimum wage for Nigerian employees. Hence, the overall objective is to enhance the welfare of workers and their performance. Thus, against this background, the researchers deem it imperative to embark on the research: Effects of Employee Participation on Minimum Wage Determination, with particular reference to the Nigerian Labour Congress. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Ascertain the mode and level of Nigerian Labour Congress members' participation in minimum wage determination.
- ii. Examine the impact of participation in minimum wage determination on the performance of Nigerian Labour Congress members (employees).

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Conceptual Framework

**Minimum wage;** also referred to as “living wage” is the Wage paid or permitted to be paid, specifically to certain category of employed persons, a wage fixed by a legal authority or by contract as the least that may be paid either to employed persons generally or to a particular person.(Webstar;2016). It was first proposed as a way to control the proliferation of sweat shops in manufacturing industries (ILO; 2009). Minimum wage has also been defined as “the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for a work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract. This definition refers to the binding nature of minimum wages, regardless of the method of fixing them. Minimum wages can be set by statute, decision of a competent authority, a wage board, a wage council, or by industrial Labour Courts or Tribunals. Minimum Wages can also be set by giving the force of law to provisions of collective agreements. The purpose of minimum wage is to protect workers against unduly low pay. It helps to ensure a just and equitable share of the fruits of progress to all and a minimum living wage to all who are employed and in need of such protection. Minimum wages could also be one element of a policy

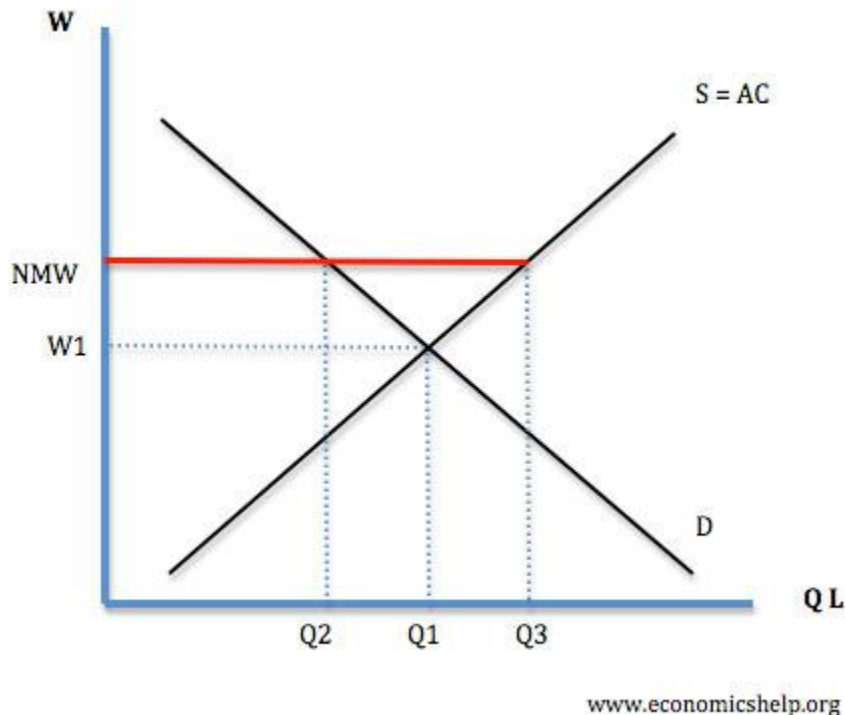
to overcome poverty and reduce inequality, including those between men and women, by promoting the right to equal remuneration for work of equal value, (Therasus; 2016). Initially minimum wages covered relatively few categories of workers and sought to protect those considered as vulnerable. Newzealand was the first country to implement minimum wage in 1894, followed by the Australian state of Victoria in 1896 and United kingdom in 1909 (Neumark *et al.*,2008).

### **Legislations and Minimum Wage Reviews in Nigeria**

The International Labour Organization's Constitution of 1919 emphasized the provision of an adequate living wage as a major improvement in the Labour market conditions (Stair, 1981). This was re-affirmed by the ILO 1944 Philadelphia Declaration, where it was reiterated that Countries should adopt a minimum wage to protect the poor employed workers. Based on this premise The Nigerian Minimum Wage Act was made to govern minimum wages in Nigeria. There is only one minimum wage Act that governs both public and private sectors. It also covers workers at Federal, State and Local Government levels. Minimum wage is calculated on monthly basis with an average working period of 8 hours daily and 5 days weekly. The current national minimum wage of eighteen thousand Naira (₦18000) was calculated by Trade Unions based on the cost of living, inflations and statistical data from the National Bureau of Statistics and other related bodies. The parties to minimum wage setting in Nigeria are; The Trade Union Centres (Nigerian Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress),The employers Agency(NECA),the Federal Government, the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity. Minimum wage review in Nigeria is irregular though the law stipulates five yearly reviews. The last update was in 2010 after a year of collective bargaining between Trade Unions, Government and Private Sector Employers (2008-2009) with a full revision in 2011(wage indicator 2016).

## Factors That Influence the Setting of the Minimum Wage by Pettinger, (2011)

### 1. Equilibrium wages



In theory, if the minimum wage is set above the equilibrium wage rate it may cause unemployment and may also adversely affect the demand for labour. Therefore, government may seek to work out the equilibrium wage rate that Private Sectors or Firms will be willing to pay. What this means is that to avoid 'Real Wage Unemployment' minimum wages are not increased substantially above the competitive equilibrium.

### 2. Economic Growth

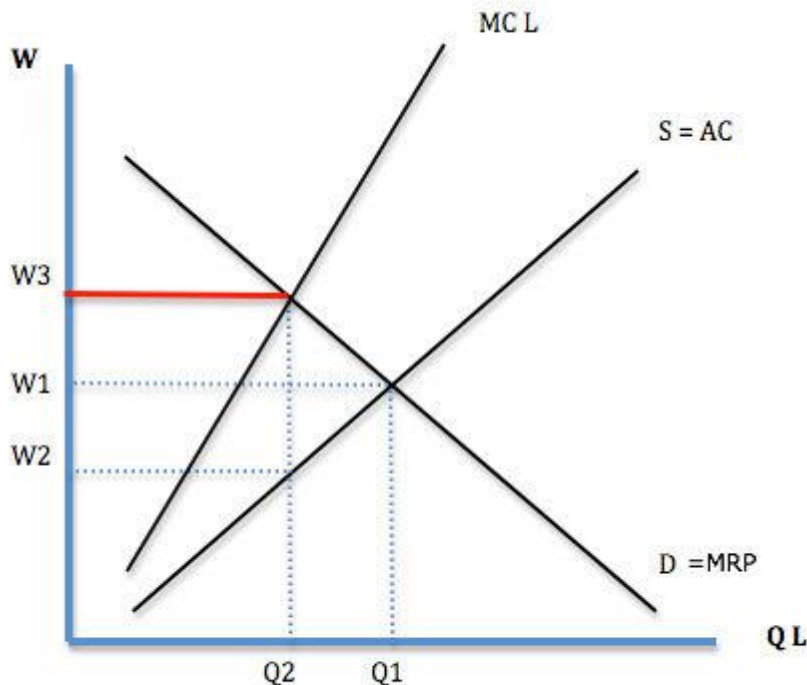
During economic expansion, firms' demand for labour increases and they will be willing to pay a higher wage. However, in a recession, there is often stagnant wage growth and firms are more reluctant to employ labour. Therefore, some have argued that, in period of recession it is a mistake to increase the national minimum wage rate as this will add to the unemployment problem. However, when the economy is growing, increases in minimum wage don't cause unemployment.

### 3. Firms Exploitation of Workers

The theory of monopsony by Robinson (1933) suggests that firms with market power can pay wages below the equilibrium level. A minimum wage can counterbalance this monopsony power and therefore, wages can be increased without causing unemployment. If firms have significant

market power in paying low wages, a minimum wage can be introduced without causing unemployment.

### Diagram of Monopsony Power



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#### 4. Age Rates

The United Kingdom sets different minimum wages for different age groups. The idea is to reflect the different equilibrium wage rates that occur for different ages. The apprentice rate is to reflect the idea that firms incur greater costs for training apprentices.

#### 5. Geographical Differences

One argument is that Nigeria, just as in United Kingdom should have different minimum wage rates for different parts of the country this hinges on the fact that the cost of living is relatively low in the North.

Therefore, there could be a higher minimum wage rate for employees in the southern part of the country where the cost of living is higher.

#### Other Factors Taken into Consideration are;

1. Wage differentials. Will an increase in the minimum wage affect over pay scales, e.g. if the lowest get paid more, will middle and high ranking workers demand higher wages to maintain a wage differential.
2. Higher minimum wage may increase incentive for increased employee performance and productivity rates.
3. Also One aim of minimum wage is to reduce wage inequality (Pettinger, 2011).

### **The Concept of Employee Participation**

Employee participation is the process whereby employees are involved in decision making rather than simply acting on orders. It is part of a process and a tool used to motivate employees. Thus when subordinates are involved in decision making at all levels, it is known as participation (Davis *et al*; 2010). Employee participation or involvement is creating an enabling environment for which people may bring impact or ideals to bear on decision and actions that affect their jobs. Locke *et al* (1979) defines employee participation as a joint decision making between managers and subordinates. Noah (2008) sees it as a special form of delegation in which the subordinates gain greater control and freedom of choice with respect to bridging the communication gap between management and workers. More-so, it refers to the degree of employee involvement in a country's strategic planning activities.

According to Sagie *et al.* (2003) One of the most comprehensive definitions of Participative Decision Making (PDM) was proposed by Heller *et al.* (1998): Participation is the totality of forms; direct (personal) or indirect (through representatives or institutions) and of intensities, ranging from minimal to comprehensive, by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests or contribute to the choice process through self-determined choices among possible actions during the decision process. Employee involvement is a philosophy practiced by companies that give their employees stake in decisions that directly affect their jobs.

### **The Effects of Employee Participation on Minimum Wage Determination in Nigeria**

Using the instrumentality of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Minimum Wage Determination in Nigeria, may prevent exploitation of the weak, ill-informed or isolated groups of individuals. Minimum wage may afford comprehensive protection than is available through the existing voluntary bargaining machinery. There are some workers who earn much less their marginal contributions to the production process. The intention of joint participatory mechanism in Minimum Wage Determination is to provide adequate and comprehensive pay-package for Nigerian Workers: low pay package makes the worker or workers insolvent. For instance, the current Minimum Wage in Nigeria which stood at ₦18,000 is not sustainable given the rising inflation as has been earlier observed. Weak bargaining system between employees and employers of Labour may be detrimental to workers welfare and performances. This affords workers representatives the opportunity of negotiating a reasonable income for their members to be able to meet the convenience of basic needs (Imobigbe, 2007). Also the effects may be expressed in terms of increased Productivity.

Employees' involvement in decision making translates directly into increased productivity. Thus with increased opportunity to determine minimum wage through the representation of the Nigerian Labour Congress, employees for their best interests, increase their roles in the company, by fostering a stronger work ethics. When employees are given a degree of independence in taking decisions, they are expected to be self-sufficient and efficient over time. This is so because they learn to shoulder responsibilities with minimal interference and/or supervisions by the managerial staff for direction.

### **Team Cohesion**

Although employee empowerment is largely designed to give each employee autonomy, it also fosters better relationships between employees on one hand and managers on the other. It is evidence that employees develop synergy and good working relationship if ensured greater independence in the workplace. To this end, each sees the other as mutually benefiting from their

working relationship. In addition, more self-governance in the workplace lessens over dependence on managers and supervisors and redirects that reliance laterally to coworkers.

### **Innovation**

Employees' empowerment to a large extent encourages or activates innovative ideas that may bring about organizational transformations or growth. Employees that share a stake in an organization offer more transformative and realistic ideas in addressing organizational challenges or obstacles as they may arise. Richason (2016) underscores the importance of the effects of employee's improvement on policies, procedures and products in the life of an organization's team work or corporate synergy in organization's overall performance. He was on point of facts when he suggests that as the employee meets particular challenges or finds improvements in policies, procedures or products, it will foster growth and driven development. This is true as employees-managers participation in decision-making is sure to activate and facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas for broader based decisions in tackling issues. It is a kind of 'two good heads are better than one'. (Richason, 2016).

### **Advantages of Employee Participation**

- i. It boosts employee's morale and enhances productivity.
- ii. Provides employees the opportunity to use their intelligence, to make better decisions`
- iii. Contributes to trust and sense of control
- iv. It is a democratic position not authoritarian
- v. Promotes team work among employees
- vi. It is a motivational technique because employees feel more involved and contribute in performing national functions
- vii. Values and dignities of employees are protected through participation
- viii. Maximizes view points and makes for diversity of perspectives, (Kemelgor, 2002).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are formulated to explain, predict and help in understanding phenomenon and in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of the critical bounding assumptions, (David, 2009). Though there may be different theories on minimum wage determination, the researchers' reviewed an underpinning theory of minimum wage determination; the market Theory of wage determination which states that, the price of labour is determined (like all prices) by supply and demand. When workers sell their labour, the price they can charge is influenced by several factors on the supply side and several factors on the demand side. What this implies is that the number of workers available (supply) and the number of workers needed (demand) determine the wage payable. In addition, wage levels are shaped by the skill sets, workers bring and employers need, as well as the location of the jobs being offered. The interplay between all of these factors will eventually cause wages to settle; the number of workers, the number of jobs, the skills involved, and the location of the jobs. These will in turn, lead workers and employers to reach series of wage agreements. If employers cannot find enough workers (demand) to meet their needs, they will keep raising their wage offers until more workers are attracted. If workers are in abundance (supply), wages will fall until the surplus labour decides to go elsewhere in search of better paid jobs. To this end, the equilibrium wage rate is established where demand and supply meet, (Shmoop, 2017). This is, to suggest that a different minimum wage may be paid to different workers based on availability of services and

willingness to pay at a given time and place. This theory is therefore adverse to the principles of collective bargain in developing economics like Nigeria and perhaps other third world countries or developing economies.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The researchers adopted survey research design; survey research design has its tools as questionnaire, oral interview and observation. Thus, these research instruments were adopted for the purpose of this research.

#### **Method of Data collection**

The researchers made use of both primary data and secondary sources of data; the primary data were obtained through well-structured questionnaire of close ended type which was administered to the members of Nigerian Labour Congress. The questionnaire was structured into two (2) sections, A, and B. Section A captures the first specific objective, while section B captured the second specific objective of the study. Secondary data were sourced through textbooks, journals, magazines, and other relevant internet materials.

#### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The population of the study consists of only the top official members of Nigerian Labour Congress in the South Eastern State of Nigeria viz: (Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States) which numbered one thousand eight hundred and forty six (1846) members (out of four million, being the total of both executive and non-executive members <https://en.wikipedia.org>) survey carried out by the researcher as at December 2016. Based on this number, a normal confidence level of 95% and error tolerance of 5% was used to deduce the actual sample size of the study. Therefore, the sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula cited in (Zhang, 2015) as:

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

Where: n = Sample size  
N = Population size  
e = level of significance 5% (0.05)  
1 = Statistical constant

The computed sample size from one thousand eight hundred and forty six (1846) top official members of the Nigerian Labour Congress in the South Eastern States of Nigeria (out of 4 million being the total of both executive and non-executive members of the Nigerian labour congress members. <https://en-wikipedia.org>) is three hundred and thirty (330) and this number was sampled from different branches and units of the Nigerian Labour Congress in South Eastern States of Nigeria using purposive sampling techniques. The researchers adopted purposive sampling techniques because the population of the study consists of only the top official members of the Nigerian Labour Congress who actively participate in minimum wage determination. Thus, these top official members of Nigerian Labour Congress were selected from different branches and units in South Eastern States of Nigeria.

#### **Method of Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data obtained from the field, the researcher used Descriptive Statistic and Inferential Statistics, Descriptive Statistics such as table, frequency and mean to analyze the first



objective, while Logistic Regression was used to analyze the second objective with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Out of three hundred and thirty (330) questionnaires sampled, two hundred and eighty five (285) questionnaires were returned and well filled, which form the basis for the data analysis.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Shows the mode and level of Nigerian Labour Congress Members' Participation in Minimum Wage Determination.

Mode of Participation	VH (5)	H (4)	N (3)	L (2)	VL(1)	$\sum x$	Mean
Meetings with Government Rep	600(120)	424(106)	105(35)	36(18)	06(06)	1171	4.1*
Collative Bargaining Process	490(98)	336(84)	126(42)	72(36)	25(25)	1049	3.7*
Bring Low Wages up to Standard	185(37)	216(54)	147(49)	156(78)	67(67)	771	2.7
Eliminating Unfair Competition	230(46)	248(62)	102(34)	164(82)	61(61)	805	2.8
Exerting Upward Pressure on the Government	420(84)	388(97)	162(54)	54(27)	23(23)	1047	3.6*
Advising Government	445(89)	368(92)	144(48)	72(36)	20(20)	1049	3.7*
<b>N</b>							<b>285</b>
<b>Total Mean</b>							<b>20.6</b>
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.4</b>
<b>Benchmark Mean</b>							<b>3.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

VH = Very High, H = High, N = Neutral, L = Low, and VL = Very Low.

Figure in parenthesis are the frequency.

Table 1, above shows the mode and level of Nigerian Labour Congress Members' Participation in Minimum Wage Determination. The Grand Mean of 3.4 is positive because it is above the Benchmark mean point of 3.0, signifying that the mode of Nigerian Labour Congress participation in minimum wage determination was captured in the model. The result further revealed that Meetings with Government Representatives with the mean score of ( $\bar{x} = 4.1$ ), Collective Bargaining Process with the mean score of ( $\bar{x} = 3.7$ ), Exerting Upward Pressure on the Government with the mean score of ( $\bar{x} = 3.6$ ), and Advising Government with the mean score of ( $\bar{x} = 3.7$ ), are the major ways that members of the Nigerian Labour Congress actively participate in minimum wage determination in Nigeria.

The Findings are in consonance with the findings of Frogatt *et al.*(2008) which specifies the effects of participation on performance varying according to form or mode. Also Bhuiyan (2010) has it that employee participation motivates employee performance because it makes them feel that their modes of involvement in decision making are important. This result is also supported by the findings of James *et al* (2006) as found in Shaed *et al* (2015).

**Table 2:** Showing Logistic Regression analysis result on the impact of participation in minimum wage determination on the performance of Nigerian Labour Congress members.

Mode of Participation	Coefficient	Std. Error	Wald	Sig	[95% Con. Interval]
Meetings with Government Rep	-3.096	0.558	30.760	0.000***	0.135
Collective Bargaining Process	0.871	0.188	21.512	0.000***	3.454

Bring Low Wages up to Standard	0.880	0.466	3.575	0.059**	6.009
Eliminating Unfair Competition	2.878	0.507	32.248	0.000***	47.998
Exerting Upward Pressure on the Govt	-1.760	0.419	17.608	0.000***	0.391
Advising Government	0.914	0.426	4.608	0.032**	5.744
Constant	-1.643	0.549	8.976	0.003***	

**Source: Field Survey, 2016**

Dependable Variable: NLC Members Performance. \*\*\*sig≤0.01\*\* sig≤0.05

Table 2, revealed the impact of participation in minimum wage determination on the performance of employees. Bargaining Process (sig≤0.01; w = 21.512), Bring Low Wages up to Standard (sig≤0.05; w = 3.575), Eliminating Unfair Competition (sig≤0.01; w = 32.248), and Advising Government (sig≤0.05; w = 4.608) which are modes of participation in minimum wage determination are positive and significantly related to the performance of Nigerian Labour Congress members. While Meetings with Government Representatives (sig≤0.01; w = 30.760) and Exerting Upward Pressure on the Government (sig≤0.01; w = 17.608) is significant but negatively related to the performance of NLC members. Thus the result signified that Nigerian Labour Congress members derive pleasure in Collective Bargaining Process, Bringing Low Wages up to Standard, Eliminating Unfair Competition, and Advising Government as mode of participation in minimum wage determination as it enhances their individual performance, thus the more they employ these modes of participation in minimum wage determination, the more their individual performance increases. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between participation in minimum wage determination and NLC Members' performance.

The result is in agreement with the findings of Ojokuku *et al.*, (2014) which affirms that employee participation in decision making has significant effect and is a predictor of organizational performance. similar to the aforementioned studies the findings of Sofyanova *et al* (2013) provides empirical support to the assumption that the application of employee involvement in decision making and problem solving practices (of which minimum wage determination is one) affect employees operational performance.

**5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusively, it could be stated that effective application of various modes of employee participation; attendance to meetings with government representatives, collective bargaining, pressurizing government to bring low wages up to standard, and advising government on what should be the minimum wage for Nigerian employees considering the economic situation in the country by the executive members of the Nigerian labour congress are ways to measure the level of employee participation in minimum wage determination. More so, government in trying to reduce the pressure it gets from the Nigerian labour congress should make positive response to the needs of Nigerian employees. Such needs may include increasing employees' purchasing power and standard of living through upward review of their wages in consonance with the contemporary economic situation in the country. However, though the Nigerian labour congress executives, representing the employees, participate actively in minimum wage determination, Government's interest always overrides that of employees. To remedy such situation, the Nigerian labour congress should be more tactful in applying their negotiation instruments such as collective bargaining and strike action. Also government should embark on and stick to policy implementation as regards minimum wage determination. Thus a more realistic minimum wage

should be determined, one that would put a versed majority of the people, above subsistence level and as well, enhance employees' performance.

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