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Democratic Leadership Style And Employee Engagement Of General Hospitals In Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study investigates the relationship between democratic leadership style and employee engagement in selected general hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examines how the dimensions of democratic leadership, open communication and participative decision-making, affect behavioral engagement among hospital employees. The study adopts a quantitative approach, employing a survey research design. A structured questionnaire was administered to employees across selected general hospitals, with the sample size of 255 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. The data were analyzed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation to test the hypothesized relationships. Findings reveal a significant positive relationship between democratic leadership style and employee behavioral engagement. Both open communication and participative decision-making were found to positively influence the extent to which employee's exhibit engaged behavior in the workplace. The study concludes that democratic leadership practices foster an environment conducive to higher levels of behavioral engagement among hospital staff. It recommends that hospital management adopt more democratic leadership approaches to enhance employee involvement, motivation, and overall organizational performance.*

***Keywords**:* Democratic Leadership, Employee Engagement, Open Communication, Participative Decision-Making.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone agrees that employee engagement is the key to a successful business and happy workers. It is a complex idea that includes people's mental, emotional, and behavioral investments in their jobs (Kisi, 2024). Workers that are emotionally invested in their work are enthusiastic and passionate about what they do; those who are intellectually invested are completely engrossed in what they're doing; and those who are behaviorally invested go above and above what is required of them. All of these factors add up to a picture of how committed workers are to the vision, values, and mission statement of their company. Patient safety, happiness, and clinical results are all impacted by the quality of services, making employee involvement in the healthcare industry all the more crucial. Working in high-pressure, low-resource settings is common for healthcare workers, particularly those in general hospitals. Their ability to work together with coworkers, handle stress, meet patients' demands, and provide treatment in an ethical manner is greatly affected by their level of involvement (Ajayi & Udeh, 2024). Achieving patient-centered care and organizational sustainability requires highly engaged personnel who are more likely to show resilience under pressure, participate in team-based problem-solving, and have a positive attitude. A number of favorable organizational outcomes have been associated with engaged employees, according to the research (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2020). These include increased productivity, decreased attrition, enhanced patient experiences, and better financial performance. Employees who aren't invested in their work show symptoms of emotional burnout, such as less initiative, absenteeism, and a failure to uphold company principles. This kind of disengagement has serious consequences in healthcare, including lower quality treatment, more medical mistakes, and the worldwide problem of healthcare worker burnout (Eze et al., 2021). Optimal service delivery is hindered by structural difficulties such as low budget, personnel shortages, and poor leadership practices in public healthcare facilities in Nigeria, including those in Rivers State. As a result, there is an urgent need to boost employee engagement.

In a wide variety of organizational settings, leadership remains a critical factor in determining employee engagement, motivation, and performance. Leadership in healthcare, particularly in public institutions, has a significant impact on staff conduct, patient care, and the efficiency of healthcare delivery systems as a whole. To shape the workplace, coordinate employee activities with organizational objectives, and cultivate a spirit of responsibility and creativity, strong leadership is essential. Academics are beginning to take notice of democratic leadership, sometimes called participatory leadership, as a viable leadership style with the potential to boost institutional performance and employee engagement. Inclusivity, collaborative decision-making, and open communication are the hallmarks of this kind of leadership. Democratic leaders create an environment where workers feel respected, heard, and empowered by incorporating them in planning and problem-solving procedures (Okeke et al., 2022). Maintaining great performance in challenging contexts, such as public hospitals, requires such engagement because it increases psychological ownership, reinforces organizational commitment, and raises morale (Akanbi & Salawu, 2021).

Healthcare workers' engagement is crucial for better performance, staff retention, and health outcomes; it's also the right thing to do from a strategic and moral standpoint. According to Chukwuemeka and Olanrewaju (2023), one of the most important factors in employee engagement is strong leadership, particularly democratic leadership, which encourages team members to be open, respectful, and work towards a common goal. There is a growing list of problems plaguing public healthcare facilities in Nigeria,

and more especially in the state of Rivers, including a lack of staff, poor morale, outdated facilities, and dwindling patient confidence (Eze et al., 2021). Nwachukwu et al. (2023) notes that ineffective leadership approaches, such as command-and-control, secrecy, and excluding frontline employees from important decision-making, make these problems worse. A game-changing approach to re-engaging staff and reviving hospital performance might be to use democratic leadership principles in this setting. Democratic leadership promotes trust, shared accountability, and professional growth, which in turn increases employee engagement, according to studies in a variety of industries (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2020). According to Chukwuemeka and Olanrewaju (2023), this kind of leadership in healthcare inspires employees to speak out, be creative, and support the hospital's goals. Additionally, individual and organizational results are favorably impacted by workers' increased emotional and cognitive engagement when they feel heard and participated (Singha & Singha, 2024). Few studies have examined democratic leadership in public hospitals in Rivers State, despite mounting evidence that leadership style matters for staff engagement. The majority of the current research either ignores involvement altogether or only looks at institutions in the private sector, failing to distinguish between the two. Because of this void, research on the effects of democratic leadership on staff participation in publicly-funded healthcare institutions is urgently needed. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to look at how certain general hospitals in Rivers State do when it comes to democratic leadership and staff participation.

Statement of the problem

An increasingly important component of healthcare organizations' success is employee engagement, which has a direct impact on staff performance, the quality of patient care, and the efficiency of the hospital as a whole. poor staff morale, high employee turnover, diminishing service performance, and poor patient satisfaction are some of the operational difficulties that general hospitals in Nigeria, and more specifically in Rivers State, continue to confront. A lack of engagement, indifference, or autocracy on the side of leaders may make these problems worse. Rigid, top-down leadership systems restrict worker input and autonomy in many public hospitals, even as the advantages of employee participation and motivation are becoming more widely recognized. Workers are more invested, loyal, and productive under democratic leadership, which is defined by shared decision-making, transparent communication, and mutual regard. Nevertheless, its implementation in public healthcare is either lacking or administered inconsistently. Given that healthcare staff engagement affects both organizational performance and patient satisfaction and health outcomes, this discrepancy is quite worrisome. Disengaged healthcare personnel may lead to worse patient care, more mistakes, and more stress for everyone involved.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the connection between democratic leadership style and employee engagement of selected General hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are:

i. To examine the correlation between Open Communication and behavioral engagement of employees in selected general hospitals in Rivers State.
ii. To examine the relationship between Participative decision-making and behavioral engagement of selected General; hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

i. What is the correlation between Open Communication and behavioral engagement of employees in selected general hospitals in Rivers State?
ii. How is the correlation between Participative decision-making and Behavioral engagement of selected General; hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

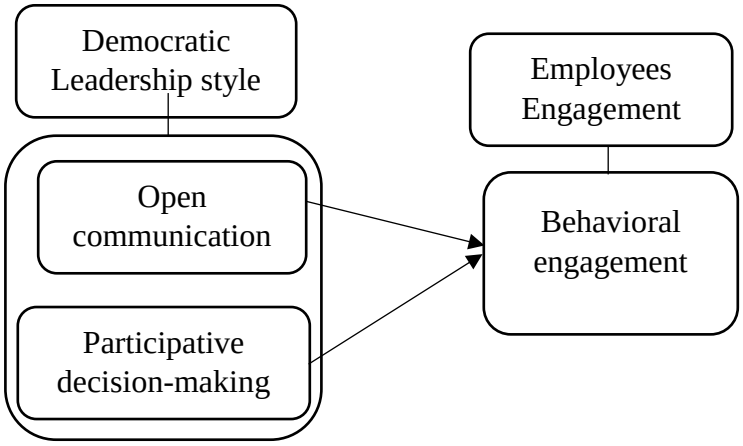
Research hypothesis

Ho_1 There is no correlation between Open communication and Behavioral engagement of employees in selected general hospitals in Rivers State

HO_2 There is no relationship Participative decision-making and Behavioral engagement of employees in selected general hospitals in Rivers State.

2 Literature Review

Conceptualized framework for Democratic leadership style and employees engagement of General hospital in Rivers



Dimension of Democratic Leadership style Adopted from (Okeke et al., 2022). while the measure was adopted from**:** Richman (2006); Frank et al. (2004); CIPD (2007).

Democratic tic leadership style

In democratic leadership, often called participatory leadership, the leader maintains ultimate decision-making power but encourages team members to have an active role in the process. Cooperation, tolerance, candor, and shared accountability are hallmarks of this approach. Unstop (2023) argues that when leaders promote team members' engagement and ownership in debates that impact company objectives, it creates a feeling of belonging and ownership. Leaders who adopt this stance create a welcoming space where many viewpoints are valued and seen as crucial for making good decisions. According to Emeritus (2024), a leader practicing democratic leadership encourages a culture of openness and empowerment by soliciting input from all team members. Team morale and innovation are boosted since everyone has a chance to make a difference, even if the leader still has the last say. According to Northwest Education (2023), democratic leaders place a high priority on their teams' knowledge and expertise, which fosters trust and creativity via open communication and flexibility. Hilal et al. (2023) asserts that democratic leadership has a good effect on employee productivity because it fosters an inclusive and harmonious workplace in which workers feel appreciated and have the ability to make a difference. As an example, Obeng-Asare and Korang (2024) discovered that administrative staff performance in higher education institutions is much enhanced by democratic leadership, which fosters collaboration and shared decision-making. Creating a favorable organizational atmosphere is one way in which democratic leadership, according to Nazneen et al. (2024), increases professional dedication among workers. This is especially true in educational situations. This is corroborated by Uwamahoro et al. (2024), who state that democratic leadership improves teacher performance via encouraging collaborative engagement and participatory practices.

Open communication

When people in the banking industry talk to one another, it means they are sharing information in a way that is clear, open, and reciprocal. It is a way of talking about things that encourages everyone in the company to be forward and honest. Open communication is culturally and strategically essential in the banking business due to the need of accuracy, trust, and regulatory compliance. Open communication in banks is defined by Nagachevska, Dzhereleiko, and Kushka (2023) as an internal communication process that tries to structure and organize the transfer of information between parties efficiently. To ensure that corporate objectives are understood and achieved cooperatively, their research highlights that such communication should favorably impact the knowledge, attitudes, and actions of managers and workers. The alignment of a bank's internal environment with its exterior difficulties and client expectations is greatly aided by this style of communication. From a practical standpoint, banks that prioritize open communication are better able to disseminate critical operational and regulatory information, integrate new technology more easily, and increase staff collaboration, all of which lead to better customer service. The authors argue that in order for banks to have successful internal communication frameworks, it is necessary to remove typical obstacles that impede the receiving and understanding of messages, such as personal views, social hierarchies, and cultural misalignments. Institute of Society Transformation research from 2023 adds to the growing body of evidence showing that transparent cultures in financial institutions are the result of open communication policies that let workers feel comfortable raising issues, offering suggestions, and offering criticism without fear of retaliation. In a highly competitive financial industry, increasing service quality and responsiveness need a trust-based environment that promotes increased employee involvement. Additionally, open communication is now more dynamic and accessible because to the use of digital communication technologies in contemporary financial organizations. Technology like intranets, IM, and cloud storage allows for the rapid dissemination of data among geographically dispersed teams, breaking down informational barriers and increasing organizational responsiveness. The capacity of the organization to control the flow of information and make sure that messages are understood and taken action upon is crucial to the effectiveness of these systems, as pointed out by Nagachevska et al. (2023).

Participative decision-making

An method to management known as participatory decision-making (PDM) encourages workers to have an active role in making decisions for their business. Instead than relying just on the opinions of senior executives, PDM promotes input from all levels of the team, enabling their expertise, viewpoints, and experiences to shape the final product. The idea behind this strategy is that those directly involved with operational difficulties frequently have great insights that help make choices better and more widely accepted. Incorporating employee feedback via mutual respect and trust in participatory decision-making creates a more welcoming and psychologically secure workplace, which is good for business and workers alike (Kim et al., 2023). Beyond the quality of decisions, the effects of participatory decision-making are far-reaching. Employees report far higher levels of ownership, dedication, and pleasure when given substantial opportunities to participate to choices that impact their job, according to research. Participation in decision-making increased emotional and normative commitment in the banking industry, according to Nwagbala et al. (2023), since workers felt more personally invested in the success of the company. The research shows that when employees are actively involved, morale goes up and the gap between employee actions and organizational goals closes. Additionally, there is evidence that suggests a correlation between participatory decision-making and increased creativity and adaptability. Regular decision-making by workers increases their cognitive flexibility, which in turn enhances their response to complicated and changing work situations (Kim et al., 2023). Quick but well-considered judgments are often required in highly regulated and ever-changing industries like banking, where this adaptability is crucial.

Employees Engagement

Workers that are emotionally engaged have a strong sense of belonging to their job, their coworkers, and the company overall. Employees are motivated to go above and beyond in their work when they experience a range of positive feelings, such as excitement, pride, passion, and loyalty (Aquino & Galvez, 2024). An integral part of employee engagement, this emotional link has a major impact on the success, culture, and performance of a firm (Singha, 2024). According to Putra and Kudri (2024), employees' motivation, dedication, and output are all boosted by emotional involvement at work. Ajayi and Udeh (2024) found that companies with an emotionally engaged culture had employees who were more likely to be resilient, creative, and able to handle long periods of development. According to Kişi (2024), workers who have a personal investment in their work are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty, take the initiative to help achieve company objectives, be happier in their jobs, and stay put. According to Singha and Singha (2024), a flourishing workplace climate that promotes individual and organizational success requires a prioritization on emotional involvement. A psychological and emotional condition known as employee engagement occurs when workers have a strong sense of belonging to their job, their team, and the organization's larger objectives. This metric shows how enthusiastic and dedicated workers are to their jobs, how seriously they take their obligations, and how much they are prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty to help the company succeed. When workers are emotionally and mentally invested in what they do for a living, in their team, and in the company they work for, we say that they are engaged (Quantum Workplace, 2024) in their job. Employees' motivation, output, and long-term retention intentions are all impacted by this link.

According to Culture Amp (2024), there are three main elements that make up employee engagement: passion for the business, an inclination to go beyond official work responsibilities, and a strong desire to remain with the firm. Therefore, engaged workers care about more than just getting their work done; they're also motivated by a feeling of purpose, a connection to the organization's principles, and the conviction that their work makes a difference. Worker happiness, productivity, and loyalty to the company all take a nosedive when employees are thus invested in their work. As businesses have come to understand the correlation between engaged employees and increased output, creativity, happiness on the job, and loyalty to the company, the value of employee engagement has skyrocketed. Cohesive teamwork, openness to new ideas, and constructive contributions to company culture are all indicators of an engaged workforce. Whereas engaged workers are more likely to go above and above in their work, disengaged workers are more likely to miss work or leave their jobs altogether.

Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement is the level of dedication and interest that employees show in their job as seen via their outward behaviors and extracurricular activities. Displaying initiative, showing inventiveness, and going above and beyond the call of duty are all examples of proactive actions that characterize this kind of involvement. These activities show that the individual is ready to go above and beyond, which helps the company succeed. Behavioral engagement is defined by Macey and Schneider (2008) as an employee's overt demonstration of passion and commitment to their work, as shown when they go above and beyond what is expected of them. Among these actions are "organizational citizenship" initiatives, in which workers willingly provide a hand to coworkers, rally behind company goals, and help make the office a better place to be. In addition to improving individual performance, this proactive strategy promotes a culture of collaboration and productivity inside the firm. According to another study by Shuck et al. (2017), an employee's intrinsic motivation to support corporate objectives drives behavioral engagement. An individual's dedication to the success of the business is shown via their constant and persistent efforts, which go above what is required by their job description. For a workforce that is innovative, adaptable, and resilient, this kind of involvement is essential. An increase in work satisfaction, a decrease in intentions to leave, and an improvement in overall performance are all good organizational outcomes linked to behavioral engagement. Employee morale and output tend to rise in companies that foster an atmosphere that rewards behavioral involvement. This is accomplished by cultivating an environment of trust and empowerment, offering chances for professional development, and acknowledging and rewarding proactive actions.

Theoretical Framework

Participative Leadership Theory

An approach to leadership known as "Participative Leadership Theory" places an emphasis on team members' active engagement in making decisions. It implies that superiors shouldn't make calls without consulting their subordinates, listening to their feedback, and incorporating their suggestions when possible. The idea behind this hypothesis is that workers will be more invested in the success of the company and their own sense of worth as a whole if they have a say in matters that directly impact their job. Through participative leadership, leaders and their teams are able to communicate openly, respect one another, and work together to achieve common goals. Your research on democratic leadership styles and employee engagement is very pertinent to Participative Leadership Theory. Collaboration and group decision-making are important activities in democratic leadership, which is based on the concepts of participatory leadership. Your study can provide light on how democratic leaders foster trust and participation via the promotion of openness and the encouragement of employee involvement by relying on Participative Leadership Theory. In keeping with the idea of employee engagement, this participation raises workers' mental and emotional interest in their jobs. Applying Participative Leadership Theory to your study can help shed light on how democratic leadership practices boost employee engagement, particularly in banking firms where accountability, responsiveness, and teamwork are crucial. Engagement is measured by important characteristics like as dedication, motivation, and discretionary effort; when employees feel heard and involved, they are more likely to display these traits. This theory serves as the foundation for this research due of its relevance to this theory.

Kahn's Psychological Conditions Theory

The Psychological Conditions Theory put forward by Kahn A seminal paradigm for understanding employee engagement, William Kahn's Psychological Conditions Theory (Kastrin, 1990) zeroes focused on the mental states that allow people to give their all to their jobs. When workers invest their "whole selves"—mental, emotional, and bodily—into their work, says Kahn, that's when engagement happens.

Meaningfulness, safety, and availability are the three critical psychological variables that Kahn outlined as essential for this complete involvement to take place. What makes a job important is how much of an impact it has on workers' lives; when people believe what they're doing matters, they're more invested in giving their all. When workers have psychological safety, they are more inclined to engage freely and take interpersonal risks, which is defined as the ability to express oneself without fear of retaliation or scorn. Workers' ability to participate in their task decreases when they are emotionally, physically, and mentally fatigued or distracted, which is why availability is a measure of these resources. The idea stresses that these mental states determine whether workers would emotionally invest in their jobs or emotionally distance themselves. By stressing the significance of establishing a meaningful and supportive work environment that enables workers to participate completely, Kahn's model has long been influential on follow-up studies and practices pertaining to employee engagement.

Empirical Review

Webometric Analysis of the Empirical Review

Authors & Year	Location	Focus	Methodology	Findings
Chen (2024)	China	Investigated the impact of different leadership styles on employee engagement and satisfaction in start-ups.	Descriptive research with quantitative surveys of 303 employees in Hunan Province.	Participative leadership significantly enhances personal growth, recognition, and communication, leading to higher employee engagement and satisfaction.
Fatoki (2023)	South Africa	Examined the relationship between participative leadership and employee job satisfaction in small enterprises.	Quantitative cross-sectional survey; data analyzed using PLS-SEM.	Participative leadership positively influences job satisfaction, with psychological empowerment and work engagement serving as mediators.
Rasheed et al. (2025)	Pakistan	Explored how leadership attributes affect employee engagement through psychological empowerment in the pharmaceutical industry.	Survey of 296 employees; data analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM).	Leadership attributes like feedback and delegation positively impact psychological empowerment, which in turn enhances employee engagement.
Quadri et al. (2024)	Pakistan	Studied the influence of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee engagement and performance in the public sector.	Quantitative research with surveys of 568 public sector employees; data analyzed using PLS-SEM.	Transformational leadership has a stronger positive effect on employee engagement and performance compared to transactional leadership.

Authors & Year	Location	Focus	Methodology	Findings
Hilal et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Assessed the impact of democratic leadership and work environment on employee productivity in a regional government office.	Verification research using multiple linear regression; data collected via questionnaires.	Democratic leadership and work environment both positively and significantly affect employee performance.
Hendrayanti et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Evaluated the influence of democratic leadership, motivation, and organizational culture on employee performance, with loyalty as a moderating variable.	Quantitative study with 98 employees; path analysis.	Democratic leadership indirectly affects performance through employee loyalty; direct effect is not significant.
Auliyah & Andriani (2023)	Indonesia	Investigated the effect of democratic leadership, compensation, and work motivation on job loyalty, with job satisfaction as an intervening variable.	Quantitative survey with 100 respondents; data analyzed using SPSS.	Democratic leadership positively influences job satisfaction and loyalty; job satisfaction mediates the relationship between leadership style and loyalty.
Nurjannah & Andriani (2023)	Indonesia	Explored the impact of democratic leadership, teamwork, and work discipline on employee morale.	Quantitative approach with 100 respondents; multiple linear regression analysis.	Democratic leadership, teamwork, and work discipline significantly affect employee morale.
Siahaan et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Investigated the effects of democratic leadership style and compensation on civil servants' performance.	Quantitative study; data analyzed using statistical methods.	Democratic leadership and compensation both positively influence employee performance.
Arisandi & Sugiarto (2023)	Indonesia	Analyzed the influence of democratic leadership style and work motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction.	Quantitative approach with data analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS).	Democratic leadership style has a significant effect on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction.
Alarifi & Adam (2023)	Saudi Arabia	Investigated the mediating effect of participative leadership on the relationship between employee innovative behavior and SME endurance during COVID-19.	Survey of 390 managers from 114 medium-sized enterprises; Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).	Participative leadership positively influences employee innovative behavior and SME endurance; it partially mediates the relationship between innovative behavior and SME survival.
Sherovska (2023)	North Macedonia	Examined the impact of participative leadership on employee innovation behavior in multinational enterprises, considering the moderating role of workplace culture.	Survey of 96 employees and their supervisors; data analyzed using SPSS.	Participative leadership positively affects employee innovation behavior; workplace culture moderates this relationship.
Mwaisaka et al. (2023)	Kenya	Studied the influence of participative leadership style on employee job satisfaction in commercial banks.	Descriptive correlation research design; survey of 389 employees across 43 commercial banks; data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.	Participative leadership style positively influences employee job satisfaction in the banking sector.
Mpuangnan et al. (2024)	South Africa & Ghana	Explored the impact of motivation and participative leadership style on employee performance, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable.	Survey-based study; data analyzed using appropriate statistical methods.	Participative leadership and motivation positively impact employee performance; job satisfaction mediates this relationship.

Nabi & Akter (2023)	Bangladesh	Investigated the effects of participative leadership on followers' radical creativity, considering the roles of creative process engagement and supervisor support.	Empirical study; data analyzed using relevant statistical techniques.	Participative leadership enhances followers' radical creativity through creative process engagement and supervisor support.

Methodology

The researchers in this study used a survey research strategy, which is ideal for gathering information from a targeted population in a methodical way via the use of questionnaires. In order to investigate the connection between a democratic leadership style and employee engagement among junior nurses working in general hospitals in Rivers State, the researcher used a survey methodology to collect empirical data on relevant factors. Seven hundred trainee nurses from several general hospitals in Rivers State made up the study's intended group. Their vital role in healthcare service delivery and frequent contact with hospital leadership led to their selection as this group of nurses. The researcher recruited nurses from community hospitals using a convenience sampling method. Because responders were readily available and easy to reach in hospital settings, this method was used. For this study, we used a structured questionnaire to gauge democratic leadership and staff engagement as our main data collection tool.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale as follows:

1 = Strongly Agree (SA),
2 = Agree (A),
3 = Neutral (N),
4 = Disagree (D),
5 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula was applied:

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

Where:
n = sample size
N = population size (700)
e = margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{700}{1+700(0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{700}{1+1.75}$$

$$\frac{700}{2.75}$$

= 254.5

Consequently, 255 responses were the rounded-down sample size. We used the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient to assess the data that we collected. For the purpose of determining the nature and direction of the relationships between democratic leadership style dimensions (such as inclusiveness and participative decision-making) and employee engagement measures (including behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement), this non-parametric test was selected. The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS, version 23.0, with a significance level of 0.05.

Table 2.3 Analyses of research questions
Response rate on Open Communication, Participatory Decision Making and Behavioral Decision making.

Variable	Strongly Disagree (4)	Disagree (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)	Total	Percent Distribution
Open Communication	14 (6.3%)	37 (16.5%)	100 (44.3%)	74 (32.9%)	225	100%
Participatory Decision-Making	31 (13.9%)	20 (8.7%)	77 (34.4%)	97 (43.0%)	225	100%
Behavioral Engagement	6 (2.5%)	43 (19.0%)	94 (41.8%)	82 (36.7%)	225	100%

The majority of junior nurses feel significant behavioral engagement in their job, active participation in decision-making, and good open communication, as shown by the high level of agreement across all three factors in the data. Nursing staff at general hospitals

in Rivers State are more invested in their work when their leaders use democratic leadership methods like open dialogue and participation.

Analysis of Hypothesis 1
Table 3: Relationship between Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction
Correlations

			Open Communication	Behavioural Engagement
Spearman's rho	Open Communication	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.728**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	225	225
	Behavioural Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.728**	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	225	225

4.3 Test of Hypotheses
Hypothesis1
H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between open communication and behavioral engagement among junior nurses in general hospitals in Rivers State.
To test this hypothesis, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the association between open communication and behavioral engagement.
Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05.
Decision: Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.
Interpretation: There is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship (rho = 0.728, $p < 0.01$) between open communication and behavioral engagement. This result indicates that higher levels of open communication are associated with higher levels of behavioral engagement among junior nurses. The implication is that democratic leadership practices, particularly those that emphasize transparent and two-way communication, are effective in enhancing the behavioral involvement and enthusiasm of nursing staff in their job roles.

Test of Hypotheses 2
Table 4: Relationship between Work Load and Job Satisfaction
Correlations

			Participative Decision-making	Behavioural Engagement
Spearman's rho	Participative Decision-making	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.795**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	225	225
	Behavioural Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.795**	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	225	225

The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between Participative Decision-Making and Behavioral Engagement is 0.795, with a p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001 and a sample size of 225.This correlation coefficient ($\rho = 0.795$) indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between participative decision-making and behavioral engagement among the respondents. In practical terms, this means that as nurses perceive greater involvement in decision-making processes (a democratic leadership behavior), they are more likely to demonstrate behavioral engagement, such as being actively involved, enthusiastic, and showing commitment to their work.The p-value (0.001) is less than the standard significance level of 0.05, confirming that the observed correlation is statistically significant, and not due to random chance.

Discussion of Findings
The results of the Spearman's rho correlation analyses are displayed in the two tables. These analyses looked at the relationship between 225 respondents (junior nurses in general hospitals in Rivers State) and two democratic leadership variables: open communication and participatory decision-making. The first table revealed a robust and significant connection ($\rho = 0.728$, $p < 0.001$) between Open Communication and Behavioral Engagement. The results show that nurses are more invested in their work when leaders keep lines of communication open and provide honest, open, and welcoming conversations. This association is not coincidental, as the statistical significance proves. With a value of $\rho = 0.795$ ($p = 0.001$), the association between Behavioral Engagement and Participative Decision-Making was even greater in the second table. It seems that when nurses are involved in

choices that impact their work, it greatly increases their engagement levels. This is especially true when it comes to their effort, participation, and tenacity in activities that are relevant to their employment.

Conclusion

The study finding enshrine the importance of democratic leadership style and employee engagement of general hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria, however it was concluded that general hospital should embrace open communication and participatory decision making in other to ascertain behavioral engagement of employees in the sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on democratic leadership style and employee engagement among junior nurses in general hospitals in Rivers State**,** particularly focusing on open communication**,** participative decision-making**,** and behavioral engagement**,** the following **recommendations** are proposed

i. General Hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria should ensure that there exist an Open Communication channel within the sector so as to have a enhance employee engagement at work
ii. Hospital should create a participatory decision making mechanism so as to bring inclusiveness and in turn enhance cordial employee engagement.

iii. Training and development programs should be designed to equip hospital leaders with democratic leadership skills. These programs should focus on developing competencies in inclusive leadership, conflict resolution, active listening, and team motivation. By strengthening leadership practices aligned with democratic principles, hospitals can enhance nurse engagement and overall organizational effectiveness.

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