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Original Research

Secondary School Teachers' Participation in School Level Decision-making Processes and its contribution to their Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

The involvement of teachers in the decision-making process has gained significant attention from researchers regarding its connection to job satisfaction. Consequently, this research aimed to examine how participation in decision-making relates to teachers' job satisfaction levels. A correlational research design was utilized for this investigation. The questionnaire used for data collection included sections on demographic information, decision-making involvement, and job satisfaction levels. The sample consisted of 340 teachers. Descriptive statistics (including percentage, mean, and standard deviation), as well as correlation and regression statistics, were analyzed. Findings revealed that teacher participants had minimal involvement in decision-making activities. The research also found that the participating teachers lacked satisfaction in their jobs. Furthermore, a significant link was observed between teachers' minimal level of job satisfaction and their limited involvement in decision-making in the study. These results emphasize the necessity for school leaders to improve teachers' participation in decision-making processes both in classroom-related decisions and broader school-wide issues, specifically in those that have a direct impact on teachers by deligating responsibilities, and keeping teachers informed about school rules, objectives, and difficulties.

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INTRODUCTION

Decision-making is a crucial process within an organization, where various options are evaluated to address problems. This process is commonly regarded as the foundation of organizational and managerial activities, as it upholds current standards and encourages necessary changes (Berkovich, 2016; Cross & Carbery, 2013; Smith et al., 2013). Educational institutions exhibit a dynamic and developing ground that provides a near-constant variety of decision-making circumstances. Consequently, educational - - leaders must include staff members actively in the decision-making process to address challenges and ensure the continuous successful running of the organization. Furthermore, PDM, an important element that has been widely cited as playing a major role in job satisfaction in different professional fields, has been recognized in the field of education.

In secondary education institutions, where teachers are pivotal in shaping educational

outcomes, their involvement in decision-making processes can greatly influence their morale, motivation, and overall job satisfaction (Somech, 2010). Studies demonstrate that allowing teachers to participate in choices develops a feeling of belonging and strengthens their commitment to institutional objectives (Ingersoll, 2001).

Multiple theoretical models give insightful perspectives on the link between PDM and job satisfaction. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Abdi & Gikandi, 2024; Arusei & Okoth, 2022) suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by intrinsic drives ("achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself"), while dissatisfaction stems from extrinsic factors ("company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions"). PDM directly addresses the demand for intrinsic motivation by empowering instructors and offering them a feeling of ownership and control over their work (Abdi & Gikandi, 2024; Brezicha et al., 2020). By incorporating teachers in choices that influence their job, schools may tap into their knowledge, promoting a sense of success and improving their emotions of duty and importance (Tijani, 2020). This corresponds with Herzberg's focus on internal variables as primary determinants of work happiness.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Abdi & Gikandi, 2024) presents a parallel theory, arguing that people are driven by a hierarchy of needs, going from fundamental physiological demands to self-actualization. Meaningful engagement in decision-making processes may satisfy higher-order wants, such as esteem and self-actualization (Arusei & Okoth, 2022). When instructors feel appreciated and respected, and their ideas are sought and taken into account, they are more likely to have a feeling of worth and satisfaction (Akiba et al., 2023). An increased sense of self-esteem and independence is linked to higher job satisfaction levels (Bahtilla & Hui, 2021). The opportunities for career advancement often connected to PDM, also foster self-actualization (Stauffer & Mason, 2013).

According to the Job Characteristics Model (Arusei & Okoth, 2022), the aspects that may cause job satisfaction are explained. This model specifies five main work dimensions: task identity, task relevance, task autonomy, task feedback, and skill diversity. PDM directly helps promote autonomy through the increased ability of instructors to control their work and decision-making activities (Park et al., 2020). It also leaves room for feedback as instructors can hear back from their peers and administrators. Autonomy and feedback for work can be given with the promise of more responsibilities, success, and recognition, and such can result in higher emotions of responsibility, success, and recognition, which contribute to work satisfaction (Bahtilla & Hui, 2021). Moreover, PDM might increase teachers' perceived value of their job, since they perceive their contributions through school results (Brezicha et al., 2020).

However, different studies have investigated the relationship between PDM and teacher job satisfaction, and the results are contradictory. Abdi and Gikandi (2024) find in Kenyan public secondary schools that a positive, strong link exists between teacher engagement in decision-making and job satisfaction. Their use of a mix of quantitative and qualitative data increased the validity of the results. Engagement also had a favourable influence on teachers' feelings of belonging

(Abdi & Gikandi, 2024). Educators who play the role of contributing to the creation and execution of major educational decisions are usually more satisfied and fulfill their professional responsibilities.

In primary and secondary schools across the United States, Park et al. (2020) conducted an extensive analysis and found that teacher involvement in instructional decision-making is significantly more strongly correlated with their commitment to the profession than it is with their job satisfaction. If the supposed benefits of PDM upon job satisfaction are weak, this finding also implies that, on the contrary, such beliefs are important for shaping teachers' professional identity and their commitment to positions. Therefore, this result points out the relevance of separating job satisfaction and the more general understanding of professional commitment.

Such qualitative research is of foremost importance for understanding how the variable of participatory decision-making (PDM) affects job satisfaction, supplementing merely correlations. Research in Botswana revealed that the limited participation of teachers in decision-making processes decreased job satisfaction and commitment on the teachers' side (Wadesango, 2012). Those educators were left alienated and disempowered, and morale and enthusiasm for their work were down. This shows that the engagement of teachers in decisions that pertain to their work needs to be genuine instead of phoned in.

A study in Hong Kong's secondary schools stressed the relevance of teacher engagement in curriculum and administrative choices for boosting work satisfaction and commitment (Keung, 2008). The results imply that the kind of decision-making engagement mattered; teachers' involvement in choices directly influencing their teaching practice (instructional decisions) and the overall operation of the school (managerial decisions) greatly influenced their work satisfaction. This is congruent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, highlighting the relevance of intrinsic motivators.

The complexity of the educational environment necessitates that schools satisfy performance standards, adjust to policy changes, and meet the varied needs of both teachers and students. These challenges highlight the value of including teachers in decision-making processes because their firsthand knowledge could enhance institutional functioning and promote an atmosphere of collaboration (Tschannen, 2001).

Teachers' perceived level of influence in their workplace significantly affects their dedication, morale, and instructional effectiveness (Abdi & Gikandi, 2024; Tijani, 2020). Research has shown that the absence of participatory structures in school governance is linked to reduced teacher commitment and higher attrition rates (Tareke et al., 2024). Understanding the relationship between participatory decision-making (PDM) and job satisfaction is crucial for creating a more supportive and effective learning environment. Beyond its impact on individual teachers, PDM influences organizational commitment, school climate, and ultimately, student achievement (Ogal et al., 2015). When teachers are excluded from decision-making processes, they may experience low morale, increased turnover rates, and a sense of powerlessness (Wadesango, 2012), all of which negatively impact the quality of education.

In Ethiopia, some studies suggest that teacher involvement in school decision-making is limited and, as a result, it

contributes to lower job satisfaction and motivation (Bademo & Tefera, 2016; Gemechu, 2014; Getahun et al., 2016; Yismaw & Bekalu, 2016; Yohannes & Wasonga, 2021). There is limited evidence on the extent to which PDM affects secondary school teachers' job satisfaction in the East Wallaga Zone. Given the critical role of teacher satisfaction in overall school performance and student outcomes, this study is particularly significant for this region, where political instability has been disrupting the normal functioning of schools.

Statement of the problem

Job satisfaction, employee performance, and even overall well-being appear to be closely intertwined with the teaching profession. At the same time, teachers' job satisfaction is strongly linked to motivation, productivity, and the will to work to give the best they have during education for the students (Murillo-Zamorano et al., 2019). It is found that participation in decision-making processes is an important determinant of job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). However, empirical research into how secondary school teachers are affected by their involvement in decision-making, particularly in the local context, is inadequate.

Teaching is primarily a collaborative undertaking, mandating that educators engage actively in decision-making processes at both the classroom and institutional levels. When teachers are sidelined in important decision-making, they may feel undervalued and detached from their professional context, which could result in lower work satisfaction and higher turnover rates (Karatepe, 2013). Studies suggest that involving teachers in decision-making cultivates a feeling of ownership, raises their moral commitment, and promotes their overall performance (Somech, 2010).

Studies indicate that when teachers engage actively in decision-making processes in areas such as curriculum development, school policies, or resource distribution, they generally report higher levels of job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001; Somech, 2010). Nonetheless, due to the ongoing political instability in the region under study, there is a lack of up-to-date information on the extent of teachers' participation in school decision-making and their level of job satisfaction. Therefore, the findings of this study may draw the attention of relevant authorities, prompting them to take appropriate action once relative stability is restored in the area.

Research questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the extent of teachers' involvement in decision-making within East Wallaga Zone secondary schools?
2. What is the level of job satisfaction of secondary school teachers in East Wallaga Zone?
3. How does participation in decision-making relate to the level of job satisfaction of secondary school teachers in the East Wallaga Zone?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

To accomplish the intended objectives as well as answer the research questions, correlational research was employed. This design allows for an evaluation of the degree of relationship between the independent variable (involvement in decision-making) and the

dependent variable (job satisfaction). In addition, rapid data collection from natural environments allows for generalizing findings to real-world environments with acceptable levels of external validity (Curtis et al., 2016; Sheskin, 2004).

Sample and sampling techniques

A sampling design refers to the strategy developed for the selection of participants from a given population. One of the key aims of sampling design is to achieve a representation of the population (Tobi & Kampen, 2017).

Teachers working in the secondary schools of the East Wallaga zone were the population of the study. In the 17 woredas of the zone, there were 71 secondary schools. In these secondary schools, 1703 teachers were the population of the study. Then, a sample size determination formula (Osahon & Kingsley, 2016) was employed to determine the sample size of the investigation. Accordingly, it was planned to distribute the data collection tool to 380 samples, including 56 extra cases for incomplete responses that may exist.

Then, the 17 districts found in the zone were clustered into five groups: North, South, East, West, and Center. From the clusters, 5 districts (Gida Ayana, Jima Arjo, Wama Agalo, Sasiga, and Nekemte Town) were randomly selected. From these categories, three secondary schools from each, and in total 15 schools, namely Bata Wenni, Sasiga, Biftu Angar Didessa, Balo, Bakalcha Bareda, Jimata Gumbi, Ayana, Angar Gute, Lalistu Angar, Mokonen Demisew, Gombo, Bikiltu Leka, Biftu Nekemte, and Dalo, were randomly nominated. Lastly, the proportionate technique was employed to obtain the desired sample size.

Data gathering tools

Data were gathered through a questionnaire that consisted of three distinct sections: participation in decisions, job satisfaction, and background information. The background information helped obtain the sex, age, qualifications, and work experience of the participants. The instrument used to measure the level of teachers' participation in decision-making was adapted from Gamji (2014) and was used to measure employees' level of involvement in decision-making. The instrument demonstrates a high level of reliability, exceeding 0.80. Certain items were subsequently adjusted to better align with teachers' involvement in the decision-making process. Also, two items were deleted as they did not correspond to the scope of this study. Consequently, nine items that yielded sufficient reliability were used to gather information on teachers' level of participation in decision-making processes.

In the same context, the quantitative instrument, the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (9 items), known as TJSS-9, was utilized to measure the extent of the level of job satisfaction of teachers. The nine items in this scale have been proven reliable and highly consistent internally when used in several countries and educational settings. The measurement tool is of good methodological quality and also captures the multiple facets of teachers' job satisfaction in different educational settings. In addition, the TJSS-9 has persistently shown excellent psychometric characteristics, supporting the validity and reliability of this instrument. Thus, there is adequate information that TJSS-9 can systematically and empirically assess the level of job satisfaction among teachers.

Furthermore, before the tool was used to gather the final data for the study, several assessments were conducted to verify its

validity and reliability. The instrument was examined for its usefulness in mapping teachers' participation in decision-making. Then, by including the necessary revision, it was pilot-tested on 120 teachers. Its reliability was then calculated and found as indicated in Table 1.

Likewise, teachers' job satisfaction was measured with the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS-9) (Uçar & Bagatarhan, 2022). The instrument includes nine items and demonstrated favourable reliability and internal consistency across a range of countries. The tool also passed through a pilot test similar to the previous one. The TJSS-9 scale was found to be valid and reliable in assessing the level of job satisfaction among teachers. The reliability coefficient alphas of the two instruments are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability of the measuring instruments

Variables	No. Items	Cronbach Alpha reliability
Participation in decision-making	9	0.86
Job satisfaction	9	0.88

Table 1 demonstrates the reliability measure of the two assessment tools (participation in decision-making and job satisfaction). The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the measures were 0.86 for a level of participation in decision-making and 0.88 for a level of job satisfaction. Thus, the reliabilities of the instruments indicate satisfactory internal consistency of the questionnaire items for the measuring tools.

Techniques of data analysis

After the questionnaires were collected from the respondents, the data cleaning process was done before the analysis. The process involved finding errors and omissions and checking the data for completeness and consistency through a rigorous review of the collected questionnaires. Then, the questionnaires were coded and entered into computer software.

Analyses of the data were conducted utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25). Tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to conduct descriptive analysis. Additionally, correlation and linear regression were computed to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, as well as to evaluate the extent to which the independent variables contribute to the dependent variables.

Ethical considerations

Regarding ethical issues, participants were promised that their names would be kept anonymous in both the survey and the final study report. Before the commencement of the survey, participants were presented with a full oral and written summary of the proposed research, along with an informed consent form. In exchange for their participation, individuals were guaranteed that their responses would be treated anonymously and used solely for the research aims of this study, with a firm commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of their responses and exclusive utilization for the designated purpose of this investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

After the distributed questionnaires were returned, they were scanned for complete responses. Of the 380 distributed questionnaires, 659 were returned, and 340 of them were found to be complete and appropriate for data entry. The analysis of the data was supported by SPSS version 25. Table 1 illustrates the respondents' demographic background.

Table 2

Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Fr	%
Sex	Male	288	84.7
	Female	52	15.3
	Total	340	100
Age	21-30	38	11.2
	31-40	153	45.0
	41-50	128	37.6
	51 and Above	21	6.2
	Total	340	100
Educational level	BA/BSC	233	68.5
	MA/MSC	107	31.5
	Total	340	100
Teaching Experience	1-5	4	1.2
	6-10	32	9.4
	11-15	113	33.2
	16-20	102	30.0
	21 and Above	89	26.2
	Total	340	100.0

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents (84.7%) were males, and the remaining (15.2%) were females. The overwhelming majority (89.4%) of the respondents were over 31 years of age. Only 11.2% were aged less than 31 years. Thus, mature responses could be obtained from the respondents. As shown in Table 2 above, 68.5% have a Bachelor's degree, while 31.5% have a Master's degree. This indicates that the secondary schools in which this study was conducted were more occupied by Bachelor's degrees.

Work experience helps objectively judge one's feelings toward a profession. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of the respondents (88.8%) had served for more than ten years. Only 1.2% and 9.4% of the teachers had served for less than five years and 10 years, respectively. Thus, the work experiences of the respondents could help them reflect on their views of their profession.

Participation in Decision-Making Process and Job Satisfaction

Participants were asked to indicate their level of involvement in the decision-making process and job satisfaction on a five-point scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for the variables in the study (N = 340)

Variables	Number of items	Mean	SD	Evaluation
Participation in decision-making	9	2.40	0.40	Disagree (limited participation)
Job satisfaction	9	2.28	0.40	Low-level satisfaction

Note: "1.00 - 1.80 = strongly disagree/not at all satisfied, 1.81 – 2.60 = disagree/dissatisfied, 2.61 – 3.40 = neutral/Ok, 3.41 – 4.20 = agree/satisfied, 4.21-5.00 = strongly agree/very satisfied" (Sözen & Güven, 2019)

Table 3 delineates the mean rating scores for two evaluative metrics: engagement in decision-making and job satisfaction. The mean score for participation in decision-making (M = 2.40, SD = .40) suggests that the teacher respondents exhibited disagreement regarding their involvement in decision-making processes. The result shows that the secondary school teachers of this study area experienced limited opportunities for participation in decision-making in their respective schools showing that their involvement in decision-making processes was low. Likewise, the average score for job satisfaction (M = 2.28, SD = .40) reveals that teachers had a low level of satisfaction with their jobs.

Table 4

Relationship between teachers' participation in decision-making and their job satisfaction (N =340)

Variables	Participation in school decision-making	Job satisfaction
Participation in school decision-making	1.000	.82**.
Job satisfaction	.82**.	1.000

Table 4 illustrates the examination of the link between teachers' involvement in decision-making processes and their job satisfaction levels. Before the Pearson correlation was computed, its assumptions were checked. Following Sözen and Güven (2019), the scoring range of the five-point response scale (1.00-2.40 = negative/weak, 2.41-3.40 = neutral/moderate, and 3.41-5.00 = positive/strong), the data obtained on the Likert scale were considered as interval. Additionally, the two variables (participation in decision-making and job satisfaction) scores showed linearity of scatter plots. In addition, as indicated in Figure 1 (participation in the decision-making process) and Figure 2 (job satisfaction scores), histograms indicate no significant outliers. Thus, the variables fulfill the normality characteristics.

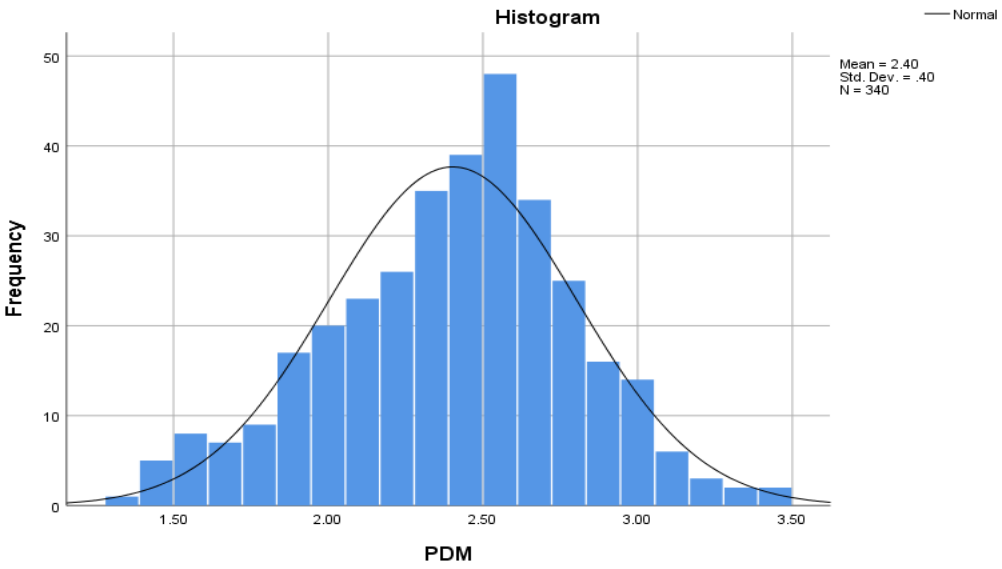

Figure 1. *Histogram for participation in the decision-making process*

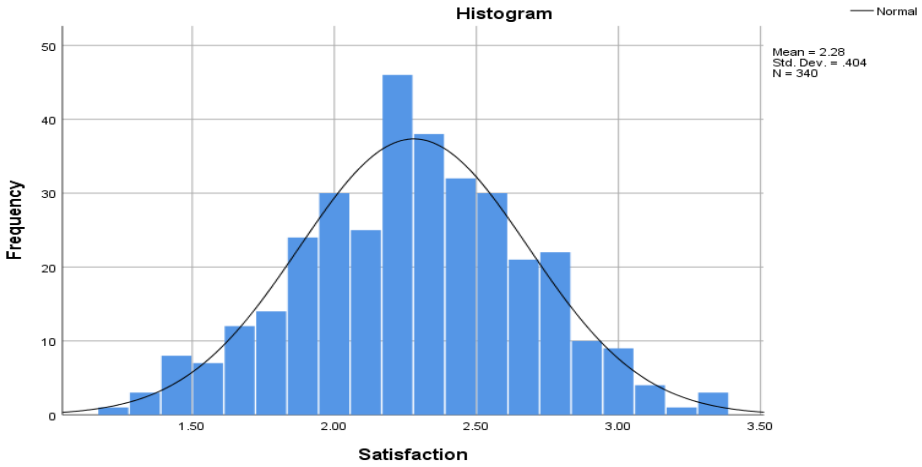

Figure 2. *Histogram for job satisfaction scores*

As shown in Table 4, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.82, p < .01) indicates a statistically significant relationship between PDM and job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. This finding suggests that a limited level of participation in decision-making is closely linked to a low level of job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in the study area. Table 4 supports this conclusion by showing that teachers with limited involvement in decision-making tend to experience higher levels of job dissatisfaction. Besides, for the two variables of the study, eta-squared (sum of squares between groups divided by total sum of squares) was computed and resulted in 0.68, showing a large effect.

Table 5

Model summary of linear regression

Model Summary					Durbin-Watson	df	F	Sign
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate				
1	.823a	0.677	0.658	0.68549	1.828	1	70.144	.00
a. Predictors: (Constant), Participation in decision								
b. Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction						338		

Prior linear regression computed, assumptions for normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and outliers have been scrutinized. Hence, as presented in Table 5, the model summary fit ($F(1,338) = 70.144$, $p < 0.001$) shows the importance of the independent variable (participation in decision-making) in explaining the dependent variable (job satisfaction). Likewise, the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.823$) signifies a statistically significant positive association between the independent variable of participation in decision-making and the dependent variable of teachers' job satisfaction. The coefficient of determination denoted as $R^2 = 0.677$, indicates that 67.7% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction was attributed to the teachers' participation in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the standard deviation of the residuals of 0.68549 suggests a favourable model fit. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic, which measures autocorrelation in the residual, is 1.828, a figure that is close to 2, indicating minimal autocorrelation. The results therefore indicate a strong link between low level of job satisfaction and minimal participation in decision-making processes.

Discussions

This study aimed to examine the relationship between teachers' involvement in decision-making and their job satisfaction in secondary school settings. Regarding the extent of participation in the decision-making process, the findings of the study indicated that teachers had limited participation. That is, teachers perceive their perspectives have seldom been taken into consideration in the decision-making processes at the school. The findings are consistent with prior studies that teachers are sometimes sidelined in the decision-making arenas of educational settings, and this finding is suggested by studies already in the literature that indicate teachers are cut out from the educational decision-making frameworks (Doyle, 2004; Imhangbe et al., 2018).

In Ethiopia, studies also indicate the low participation of teachers in the decision-making process. Yismaw and Tefera (2016) conducted a study assessing the desired and actual levels of teachers' participation in decision-making in secondary schools within the Assosa Zone, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. Their findings revealed significant differences between the levels of participation teachers desired and what they experienced. Specifically, teachers expressed a strong desire to be involved in decision-making processes, but their actual participation was limited. This suggests that school management's efforts to empower

teachers were not satisfactory, leading to a lack of participatory decision-making in the studied schools. Similarly, a study by Gemechu (2014) investigated teachers' involvement in decision-making in government secondary schools in Jimma Town. The study found that teachers' participation was predominantly limited to classroom-related decisions, with minimal involvement in broader school-wide issues. This limited scope of participation indicates that teachers' perspectives were often overlooked in significant decision-making processes. Thus, when school management excludes teachers from discussions on policies, curricula, and operations, it can reduce their engagement (Arya, 2017). This disconnect may make teachers feel detached and less responsible for institutional goals, which can lower their morale and commitment to their work.

Concerning the level of job satisfaction, the findings of the study indicated that secondary school teachers experienced low levels of job satisfaction. This result supports Yohannes and Wasonga's (2021) finding that indicated a low level of teacher job satisfaction. Similarly, a study conducted on secondary school teachers in Addis Ababa reported job dissatisfaction experiences among teachers (Mengistu, 2012). The result indicated that teachers were particularly dissatisfied with their salaries and benefits, administrative support, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships, which were reported to collectively contribute to a demotivated teaching workforce. Likewise, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) emphasized that job dissatisfaction among teachers not only diminishes their performance but also leads to increased turnover rates. Additionally, a lack of involvement in decision-making can leave teachers feeling unappreciated, negatively affecting their productivity and engagement (Jin et al., 2009).

Regarding the relationship between participation in the decision-making process and the level of job satisfaction, the study indicated there was a strong positive relationship between teachers' limited participation in decision-making and their low job satisfaction in secondary schools. This result aligns with the findings of Somech (2010), who emphasized that when employees are excluded from key decisions, their sense of value within an organization diminishes, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Similarly, a study by Yohannes and Wasonga (2021) found that Ethiopian teachers felt disempowered due to top-down administrative structures that restricted their involvement in school governance. This lack of participation resulted in frustration, decreased morale, and lower job satisfaction. Furthermore, research by Getahun et al. (2016) revealed that Ethiopian teachers who perceived themselves as having little influence over curriculum design and policy implementation were more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their work environment and were more inclined to leave the profession.

These findings align with the theories of organizational justice, such as Adams' Equity Theory. This theory suggests that individuals become dissatisfied and unstable when they perceive unfairness in decision-making processes (Bolton & Ockenfels, 2000). In the context of education, teachers who are marginalized in critical organizational processes may feel deeply disconnected and alienated. This disconnection arises from the disparity between their high levels of effort and the limited rewards or recognition they receive. As a result, their job satisfaction

declines, and their morale weakens, negatively impacting both their performance and the overall educational environment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the relationship between teachers' involvement in decision-making and their job satisfaction in secondary schools. The findings highlight a critical gap in participatory decision-making within educational settings, where teachers' perspectives are often overlooked. The evidence from this study aligns with prior research indicating that teachers in Ethiopia and beyond have limited roles in decision-making processes, which affects their sense of professional agency and engagement. The study further revealed that secondary school teachers experience low levels of job satisfaction, a finding consistent with existing literature. Additionally, the results confirm a significant positive relationship between restricted teacher participation in decision-making and lower job satisfaction levels.

Recommendations

The study underscored the problem that marginalizing teachers in the decision-making process has on the job satisfaction level and professional well-being of teachers. Thus, school management and policymakers must foster inclusive decision-making structures that empower teachers. Educational institutions can enhance teacher satisfaction by promoting participatory governance that could create a more motivated and engaged teaching workforce.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

The author confirms the sole responsibility for the conception of the study, presented results, and manuscript preparation.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement

The data that has been used in this research is available to the authors upon request.

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