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The participation of academic staff in the university management - a rapid literature review

Abstract

Research background and purpose: Research and publications on academic staff participation in the university management remain limited, despite the recognized benefits of employee involvement in decision-making processes, particularly when employees are specialists (knowledge workers), as is the case with academics. The aim of the study is to identify the issues related to the participation of academic staff in the university management examined and presented in the literature, and to determine whether they concern the key areas of university activity: student education, the development of science, and the formation of relations with the external environment.

Design / methodology / approach: First, the paper explains the essence of employee participation in organizational management, its types, forms, and distinguishing features, as well as the benefits it brings to both organizations and employees. The possible manifestations of such participation in a university context are then discussed. Next, a rapid literature review of the Scopus and Web of Science databases, combined with an analysis of selected publications, was used as the research method. On this basis, key issues concerning academic staff participation in the university management addressed in the scientific literature were identified.

Findings: Published research findings focus primarily on the benefits for the university, such as knowledge sharing, improved institutional performance, and the engagement of academic staff in its development and improvement through increased satisfaction with participation. This satisfaction is shaped by ethical leadership, support for employees' professional development, encouragement to participate from supervisors, as well as human resource management strategies and tools.

Value added and limitations: Key areas of academic staff participation in the university management were identified, together with research gaps and directions for future studies. It is recommended that universities' authorities consider increasing academics' direct participation in the university management, as knowledge workers can contribute their expertise and external relations to institutional development and adaptation to the modern economy. The main limitation of this study is its reliance on a rapid literature review and limited access to some full-text articles.

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1. Introduction

Employee participation (EP) is a subject of interest in various academic fields (e.g. law, economics, ethics, social science) and is defined differently in them (Moczulska, 2011). Research considerations in the management sciences are focused on EP in the organizational management and are concerned with providing information, and the broad spectrum of their individual and group participation in organizational initiatives, decisions and outcomes, including financial ones (Armstrong, 2000).

Employee participation in organisational management comes in various forms: indirect (representative), direct and financial (Cierniak-Emerych, 2012), as the employee voice (Wilkinson et al., 2014; Maynes et al., 2024; Wilkinson et al., 2018; Gan, 2020), the participation of persons employed in various forms (employment, civil law, contractual and temporary contracts) as well as executive and lower management positions (Cierniak-Emerych, 2012; Cierniak-Emerych & Gableta, 2022), a manifestation of the organisation's social responsibility towards internal stakeholders (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018a), an instrument for motivating employees (Piwowarczyk, 2006) and a way of involving them in organisational change (minimising their resistance to change) (Westhuizen et al., 2012; Oparanma & Zeb-Obipi, 2012; O'Brien, 2002; Ignyś, 2014; Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018b). Salamon (1998) adds that EP is definitely evolving towards greater employee participation in decision-making at both operational and strategic levels.

Employee participation is not a new phenomenon (Gładoch, 2008). But it is gaining importance (Rudolf & Skorupińska, 2012) according to employees and managers (Summers & Hymen, 2005) because it provides numerous benefits to the organisation and employees. Among other things, it improves a company's efficiency, productivity, innovativeness, customer value and competitive position in the environment, as well as its organisational climate, employees' motivation and commitment, and their job satisfaction (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2016). Employee participation is developing particularly in enterprises (Chandler et al., 2000; Summers & Hyman, 2005; Cierniak-Emerych & Gableta, 2022).

The scientific problem addressed in this article arises from an identified research gap. This gap concerns a lack of research and publications on the participation of academic staff in university management, including in the key areas of its activity, namely student education, the development of science, and the shaping of relations with the external environment (stakeholders).

The identified research gap and the resulting scientific problem led to the formulation of the following research questions: RQ1: What issues concerning the participation of academic staff in university management are addressed in scientific publications?, RQ2: Do these issues refer to the key areas of university activity, namely student education, the development of science, and the formation of relations with the external environment (stakeholders)?

The aim of the study is to identify the issues related to the participation of academic staff in university management examined and presented in the literature, and to determine whether they concern the key areas of university activity: student education, the development of science, and the formation of relations with the external environment (stakeholders).

To address the research question and achieve the study objective, a rapid literature review of the Scopus and Web of Science databases was conducted, followed by a critical analysis of the collected material (nineteen articles). The paper then presents the theoretical framework, research methods, key results of the review, as well as the discussion, conclusions, directions for future research, practical implications and limitations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Employee participation – essence and varieties

Employee participation in the organizational management refers to "the process of taking over by executive level employees, directly or through their representatives, at least some of the functions, tasks and powers that, according to the principle of separation of powers, belong to the management level parties in the enterprise" (Piwowarczyk, 2006, pp. 82-83).

Employee participation indicates the empowerment of employees in the organisation (Stocki et al., 2008). Thanks to EP employees are treated as social partners (stakeholders) of the organisation. It enables employees and their representatives to participate in decision-making processes concerning employees and the organisation, as well as operational, tactical and strategic issues (Knudsen, 1995), at different levels of the organisational hierarchy (Blaszczyk, 2013; Juchnowicz, 1999; Piwowarczyk, 2006). It means creating opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and initiatives and to take responsibility for them in the process of managing the organisation (Beck-Krala, 2008; Ignyś, 2014). It requires building mutual trust (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003; Rees et al., 2013; Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018b), tolerance, respect, cooperation and a subjective approach to employees. It corresponds to their actual level of influence on decisions and leads to organisational development (Kozłowski, 2019). The essence of EP is interaction, co-determination and taking responsibility for the consequences of decisions in which employees participate (Cabrera et al., 2001).

The main varieties of EP in the organisational management are: financial, indirect and direct participation (Cierniak-Emerych, 2012; Bar-Haim, 2002). Financial participation offers the chance for employees to acquire a stake in the ownership of the company for which they work, mainly through such forms as profit-sharing and employee share-ownership. Indirect participation means involvement of employees in managing the organisation

through their representatives and takes place through the intermediary of works councils, employee representations on the supervisory boards and union representatives. Direct participation involves the direct participation of individuals or groups of employees in decision-making regarding their workplace. It applies to all stages of the decision-making process concerning various areas of the organization's activities, and employees and their functioning in the organization. It includes group problem solving, reporting of improvements, new products, improvement of processes and procedures that can lead to the creation of innovation and innovativeness in the organisation (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2016). Direct EP is characterised by various qualitative features (content, intensity, scope, organisational level, degree of formalisation, reality of impact). It can take the form of real participation or perceived participation - pseudo participation (when employees only imagine that they are involved in decision-making) (Mendel, 2001). It can be used in a variety of group and individual management techniques and methods (Moczulska, 2011). Its development is the result of the rapid development of management science and the increasing demand for knowledge in today's global economy (Summers & Hymen, 2005; Gładoch, 2008).

An important factor in the development of employee participation (mainly direct) in the organisational management is the management (leadership) style. It indicates the manager's selection of such a way of influencing subordinates that will ensure the realisation of the organisation's goals. Through the leadership style, supervisors actively shape employees' attitudes and behaviour (Rutka, 2012) as well as their participation in the decision-making process. The leadership styles most conducive to EP are the participative (group) style and the consultative style (Oparanma & Zeb-Obipi, 2012). A manager using a participative style makes decisions together with subordinates. He or she appreciates their substantive competence, especially when they are knowledge workers – individuals with a high level of expertise, education, experience used to create new knowledge – who share it and apply it in their work (Davenport, 2007; Drucker, 2010). A consultative style implies EP in the initial stages of the decision-making process. The final decision is made by the manager alone. He or she is also responsible for the results achieved. EP does not occur when the manager uses an autocratic style (autocratic-despotic, autocratic-paternalistic) (Kożusznik, 2005) and makes decisions himself (Moczulska, 2011).

Associated with employee participation is employee voice (EV). It implies employee participation in organisational matters, in the formulation of goals and decision-making (Wilkinson et al., 2014; Freeman et al., 2007; Inanc et al., 2015) and leads to improved organisational performance (Wilkinson et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2013; Kaufman et al., 2020). EV comes in representative (e.g. union membership) and direct (based on the employees themselves) forms (Prouska & Kapsali, 2020). Glew, O'learly-Kelly, Griffin & van Fleet (1995) are of the opinion that without EV there would be no EP. In turn, Wilkinson et al. (2018), and Strauss (2006)

believe that EV is weaker than EP because it does not imply employee influence or power sharing between managers and employees. Sometimes it can simply be a voice that is not taken into account at all by managers. Employee silence (ES) may also occur if employees deliberately refrain from expressing their opinions, ideas, information and knowledge, even though these could be used to solve problems in the organisation (Lotfi Dehkharghani et al., 2023). ES can occur for a variety of reasons, including self-protective behaviour based on fear of superiors or sharing knowledge and information with colleagues, or disengaged behaviour based on resignation (cf. Van Dyne et al., 2003).

2.2. Employee participation in the university management

HEIs are divided into various types of public and private academic (and vocational) institutions (European Commission, Eurydice, 2019). All of them have wide autonomy in individual, key areas of activity: the education of students, the development of science, the formation of relations with the environment (stakeholders) (university's "third mission"). This autonomy stems from the university's almost millennia-long history perpetuated in academic tradition and legislation (Leja, 2013).

The traditional collegial model of the university management - wherein universities are "communities of scholars" based on academic ethos and culture (Olsen, 2007; Bowen & Schuster, 1986) - is an example of the indirect participation of academics in the university management (Antonowicz, 2005). It is characterised by the specific power of collegiate bodies representing, in appropriate proportions, academics, administrative staff, as well as students and doctoral students. Collegial bodies, e.g. senate, academic councils, faculty councils, are informed and consulted by the single-member bodies (rector, dean, chancellor) and participate in decision-making regarding organisational units (e.g. faculties) and the university to the extent required by laws and university statutes (Manning, 2013; Jastrzębska, 2011).

Based on academic autonomy (Sztompka, 2017), academic staff, as knowledge workers (Drapińska, 2011), create knowledge and develop it (Morawski, 2013) using their own research. They share this knowledge with students and other scientists from home and abroad. As part of their "third mission", they cooperate with various organisations (enterprises, local government units, NGOs). They use this knowledge to solve their problems and find new applications for it (Mora et al., 2012; Kwiek, 2015; Geuna & Muscio, 2009).

In HEIs there is also DEP in the university management (cf. Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2019). "The content of direct participation of academics may refer to submitting proposals for modifications and facilitations of educational process, implementation and development of new educational methods in cooperation with the university environment (employers); proposing new subjects, specializations and even fields

of study, meeting the needs of economic practice and resulting from the conducted scientific research. It may involve establishing scientific and research cooperation with researchers from other universities in the country and abroad, establishing interdisciplinary teams, joint application for external funding for research, and joint preparation of publications in the main scientific journals. It may also involve the participation of academics in designing and implementing university strategies resulting from the identification of needs and expectations of its internal and external stakeholders" (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018a, p. 493).

3. Methods

A rapid literature review (RLR) of the Scopus and WoS databases was used to collect data – publications, in order to identify the dominant streams of research in them and to fulfil the aim of the study (Hensel, 2020). Critical analysis was used as the research method (Czakon, 2015). A rapid literature review is "a type of systematic review in which components of the systematic review process are simplified, omitted or made more efficient in order to produce information in a shorter period of time, preferably with minimal impact on quality. Further, they involve a close relationship with the end-user and are conducted with the needs of the decision-maker in mind" (Haby et al., 2016, p. 8). It requires a clearly defined, abbreviated procedure (steps: design, conduct, data analysis, study report), which leads to a simplified synthesis of knowledge (Tricco et al., 2015, p. 2). Nevertheless, the RLR retains the characteristics of a rigorous review (Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 45). The selection of methods and analytical tools applied, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria, must be tailored to the research problem under investigation and the research questions posed (Mazur & Orłowska, 2018, p. 241; see also Lisiński & Szarucki, 2020, p. 95). Notably, unlike a systematic review, it can be conducted by a single researcher and requires less time (Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 45; Haby et al., 2016, p. 2; Tricco et al., 2015, p. 2). It is also permissible to "adapt established methodological approaches by accelerating one of the common stages of a systematic review in some way (for example, database search) or by leaving out a stage altogether (for example, quality assessment)" (Haby et al., 2016, p. 3). The aforementioned characteristics of the RLR, namely the possibility of simplifying elements of the review process, conducting the study by a single researcher, and completing it within a shorter time frame, determined the choice of this method in the present study. The aim of the study is to identify the issues related to the participation of academic staff in university management examined and presented in the literature, and to determine whether they concern the key areas of university activity: student education, the development of science, and the formation of relations with the external environment (stakeholders).

In accordance with the guidelines proposed by S. Wollscheid & J. Tripney (2021, Table 1, pp. 4–5) concerning the stages and conduct of research using an RLR, the present study:

- focuses on an identified research gap and a scientific problem located within a single scientific sub-discipline, namely Human Resource Management;
- seeks to answer two narrowly defined research questions: RQ1: What issues concerning the participation of academic staff in university management are addressed in scientific publications?; RQ2: Do these issues refer to the key areas of university activity, namely student education, the development of science, and the formation of relations with the external environment (stakeholders)?
- covers a defined time period, i.e. the years 2000–2025;
- utilises electronic, well-indexed bibliographic databases that are most highly regarded by Polish researchers, namely Scopus and Web of Science; for these reasons, these two scientific databases were selected for the purposes of this study;
- omits a detailed quality appraisal of the studies selected for analysis based on keywords as eligibility criteria and instead focuses on their key findings (Tables 2 and Tables 4).

A rapid literature review "provides an overall assessment of the quality or strength of the evidence and the presentation of an overall summary of the results and conclusions", also in tabular form (Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 45), which was employed in this study. "There is no evidence available to suggest that rapid literature reviews should not be done or that they are misleading in any way" (…). But "there is always a trade-off between time and resources to conduct a review, and the comprehensiveness of the final product" (Haby et al., 2016, pp. 1, 4).

4. Results

A rapid literature review of the Scopus and WoS databases was conducted in November 2025. The analysis was limited to publications from the years 2000–2025. The following keywords were used as admissibility criteria (Klimas et al., 2020): employee participation, employee voice, university, higher education institution, HEIs, academic collegiality, university management. Boolean logical operators OR, AND were used (Table 1 and Table 3). The exclusion criterion applied in the analysis was the absence, in the abstract, of information on EP or EV of academic staff in university management. Consequently, after screening the abstracts, articles from both databases that referred to organisations other than higher education institutions (HEIs) (e.g. schools or other educational institutions) or to employees who were not academic staff (e.g. administrative staff only, sales employees, individuals with a university degree, or university students) were excluded. In addition, five duplicates identified in the Web of Science database that

also appeared in the Scopus database were removed. Ultimately, nineteen articles were included in the final analysis.

Table 1 presents the quantitative analysis of publications retrieved from the Scopus database.

Table 1. **Inclusion criteria and results of a rapid literature review of the SCOPUS database on participation of academics in the university management**

No.	Criteria for analysis	Number of publications
1.	University OR "higher education institution" OR "HEIs" OR "university management" (area: tittle, abstract, keywords)	2 167 932
2.	AND "employee participation" OR "employee voice" OR "academic collegiality"	167
3.	Research area: management	72
4.	Document type: article, conference paper (meeting the database-specific additional criteria)	26
5.	Language: English	24
7	Publications selected after abstract screening	14
8.	Open access	2

Source: own study

Table 2. **Results of the analysis of Scopus articles**

Authors of publications	Issues discussed
Hosseini et al., 2025	A questionnaire survey examined the role of entrepreneurship in shaping EV in public universities in Iran (an emerging economy) from a gender perspective. The study involved 335 academic staff engaged in entrepreneurial activities and highlighted the positive impact of women holding leadership positions in universities on this process The study demonstrates how various dimensions of the university entrepreneurial climate (communication, knowledge sharing, and an innovative climate) positively influence the voice of academic staff at the surveyed universities. This effect is further strengthened by social networks, which play a key role in disseminating knowledge among academic staff while simultaneously fostering a more open and collaborative academic environment.
Madan et al., 2025	The questionnaire study was conducted at six leading (elite) Indian HEIs and involved 269 respondents, including academic staff. The findings suggest that a concept of distributed leadership (DL) approach can effectively enhance EV and reduce employee silence (ES). In turn, distributed leadership is positively influenced by an empowering power structure (EPS), further strengthened by employees' participation in decision-making (PDM).

Diko & Saxena, 2023	The lack of engagement among academic staff is a serious problem in the higher education system in Ethiopia. The results of a questionnaire survey conducted among 442 academic staff from eight Ethiopian public HEIs indicated that EV, together with perceived organizational support and job characteristics, has a positive effect on academic staff engagement. In turn, engagement (as a mediating variable) influences their organizational citizenship behaviours, which translates into the effective implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in these institutions.
Karim et al., 2022	A survey among 203 academics at twelve private universities in Bangladesh found that EP and teamwork have a direct impact on their knowledge sharing.
Salih & Salih, 2021	A survey study among 292 faculty staff from 10 faculties of the public Anbar University (Iraq) found a positive impact of the benevolent and moral leadership of the surveyed faculty leaders on EV. This leadership positively influences employee behaviour and causes them to create new and expressive ideas. Autocratic leadership has an adverse effect on EV.
Tran & Pham, 2019	Survey research was conducted among 1,050 academic staff and managers from 139 Vietnamese universities. The results indicate that organisational learning (facilitator) positively influences the correlation between EP and performance at these universities.
Mowbray, 2018	The article presents a case study of a university in which qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 26 middle and lowest level managers, including those who are also academic staff. The voice of these managers is suppressed by relational and structural blockages in formal communication channels. Through their own creativity and informal channels, the managers tried to put forward their opinions and demands. Thus, line managers not only mediate the suggestions and ideas of their subordinates (making their voice heard), but they themselves also want to have a voice, i.e. an opportunity to speak out on issues affecting their university and/or department.
Waring, 2017	Based on a case study of a British university that introduced a new performance management scheme, the author explores alternative approaches to leadership and management. This approach focuses on collaborative or partnership working aimed at strengthening EV and highlights the need to reevaluate existing approaches to Human Resource Management (HRM). On the basis of the findings, the author proposes a five-element model of change in the way universities are managed.
Tchapchet et al., 2014	A qualitative study in the form of interviews was conducted with 12 out of 30 academic staff (senior lecturers) at a university of technology in the Republic of South Africa. The findings revealed a strong reluctance a significant reluctance on the part of management to accept EP. Academics are eager to get involved in issues of importance to them and the faculty; however, their contributions were marginalised and undervalued.
Amin et al., 2014	A total of 300 employees from a public university in Malaysia, comprising both academic and support staff, participated in the questionnaire survey. The study showed that that HRM practices and EP are significantly related to university performance. To enhance performance, universities should place special emphasis on HRM instruments such as job definition, training, and employee participation, as well as recruitment, performance appraisal, career planning, and compensation systems.

Asmawi et al., 2013	A questionnaire survey among 128 academics from six purposely selected Malaysian universities focused on the influence of transformational leadership on the development of a research and development culture in these HEIs. The results indicated that this development can be achieved by strengthening eight key organisational culture factors, including the EP of academic staff. (The other factors include: risk taking; teamwork/group diversity; tolerance of mistakes/celebrating success; knowledge sharing; autonomy; open communication; and social networks.
Ayanda & Sani, 2011	Nigerian universities demonstrate a moderate level of implementation of strategic HRM practices. Survey results showed that there are significant differences among academic staff between Nigerian public (29) and private (15) universities in the level of SHRM, training and development, career planning systems, and EP, resulting from the ownership type and age of these HEIs. It is recommended that these universities better integrate HRM practices with their overall activities and strategies. Private HEIs, in turn, are encouraged to appropriately plan the career development of their employees and to provide them with adequate opportunities to participate in strategic and tactical decision-making concerning their work environment.
Torka et al., 2010	A questionnaire survey among academic staff from three faculties of a university in the Netherlands examined direct employee participation (DEP) and its impact on the organisational commitment of academic staff. The findings showed that the quality of DEP as expressed by satisfaction with participation and perceived distributive justice (regarding this participation) has a positive effect on their affective organizational commitment and overall employee relations. It may also contribute to improving university performance.
Jones, 2002	Drawing on a case study carried out at an Australian university, the author showed that knowledge sharing by academic staff requires the fulfilment of employees' rights to satisfactory employment conditions as well as their EP in the decision-making process.

Source: own study

The articles retrieved from the Scopus database address both EP and EV and refer primarily to academic staff, and in some cases also to academics and other university employees, mainly administrative staff. The reviewed studies focus on two main groups of issues. The first concerns the benefits of implementing EP or EV for universities, including knowledge sharing, cooperation among staff, engagement in university affairs and educational quality, organisational flexibility, and overall university performance. The second group relates to the associations between EP/EV and selected organisational factors, such as leadership style, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial climate, internal communication, HRM tools, and working conditions. Most of the studies (10) use quantitative methods in the form of questionnaire surveys. Only one study addresses the direct participation of academic staff. None of the publications examine their participation in the key areas of university activity.

The quantitative analysis of publications from the WoS database is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. **Inclusion criteria and results of a rapid literature review of WoS database on academics' participation in the university management**

No.	Criteria for analysis	Number of publications
1.	University OR "higher education institution" OR "HEIs" OR "university management" (area: topic)	1 221 244
2.	AND "employee participation" OR "employee voice" OR "academic collegiality"	95
3.	Document type: article, conference paper	94
4.	Research area: management	20
5.	Language: English	20*
6.	Publications selected after abstract screening and removal of duplicates from the Scopus database*	5
7.	Open access	4

* The following studies were identified as duplicates: Hosseini et al., 2025; Madan et al., 2025; Tran & Pham, 2019; Mowbray, 2018; Asmawi et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2019).

Source: own study

Table 4. **Results of the analysis of WoS articles**

Authors of publications	Issues discussed
Fleming & Harley, 2024	The research, conducted among academics at a neoliberal business school in Australia, examined academic collegiality. The authors point out that academic collegiality that is manifested, i.a. in reviewing the work of other researchers and mentoring of colleagues does not improve the productivity of academics, nor does it count in terms of institutional indicators. It takes away time that they could spend on their own research work, writing 'big hit' publications and gaining prestige. But academic collegiality, as an essential aspect of the academic profession, is appreciated for its intrinsic value. It must be maintained. In today's neoliberal business schools which explicitly links rewards to work, collegiality must lead to improved productivity.
Mowbray et al., 2022	Based on qualitative research in two case studies, and 50 semi-structured interviews, including a university in Australia, the authors investigated how proactive line managers reconfigure EV mechanisms and employ them to enhance organisational performance in line with of the EV mechanism and its use to improve results based on a high performance strategy. The study revealed the dangers of supervisors focusing on the use of EV to advance employer interests to the exclusion of employee interests. The authors warn against such 'one-sided' use of EV.

Ejaz et al., 2022	A questionnaire survey on ethical leadership was carried out among 327 academic staff from several different universities in Pakistan. The results indicated that this form of leadership has a significant and positive impact on employee well-being, job satisfaction and the Furthermore, job satisfaction and EV are mediating variables between ethical leadership and employee well-being.
Sholekar & Shoghi, 2017	EV is an effective communication tool for organizational improvement. Silence can have a disruptive effect on decision-making and organizational change. A (statistically significant) factor that makes it easier for employees to express ideas and prevents silence is organisational culture. The survey was conducted among members of Islamic Azad University in Tehran.
Sankey & Machin, 2014	A preliminary study of staff (30% academics) at a regional university in Australia found that the presence of respondents' autonomous motivation for EP in non-mandatory professional development can be a critical factor in organisational effectiveness. When employees are actively supported in their personal interests and the choice of professional development, all the while gaining their internal benefits, they are likely to make a commitment to implement the knowledge gained for the benefit of the university.

Source: own study

The publications retrieved from the WoS database also indicate benefits for universities resulting from the implementation of EP/EV academics in the university management, including organisational improvement, enhanced performance, and increased efficiency. The studies emphasise that mechanisms of academic staff participation in university management are more effective when the needs, interests, and well-being of academic are taken into account and when academic collegiality is fostered. As in the case of the Scopus database, none of the reviewed publications address the participation of academic staff in the key areas of university activity.

5. Discussion

As the analysis of articles from the Scopus and WoS databases (Tables 2 and Table 4) shows, employee participation (EP) and its "weaker" form – employee voice (EV) (Wilkinson et al., 2018; Strauss, 2006) occur in the university management. They refer to academic staff as well as other employees, primarily administrative staff.

Most of these articles refer to EP in general without distinguishing its variations. Only one draws attention to the positive impact of direct employee participation (DEP) on academic staff' satisfaction with participation, organisational commitment (Torka et al., 2010), supervisor-subordinate relationships and improved university performance (Amin et al., 2014; Sankey & Machin, 2014)). Another concerns academic collegiality as an intrinsic value, a central aspect of the academic profession that must be maintained (Fleming & Harley, 2024). Academic collegiality is a symbol of the university's autonomy (Antonowicz, 2005; Sztompka, 2017), shaped by its tradition

(Leja, 2013). But in today's global economy, it must also lead to improved productivity (Fleming & Harley, 2024).

A modern university is an entrepreneurial, digital university (cf. Titko et al., 2025) that should operate in a market-oriented way (Sułkowski, 2022). It should obtain funding for its activities from external financing sources, from the commercialisation of research results, and not only from budget grants (Leja, 2013). It should provide research and educational services that meet the needs of different stakeholder groups and not focus only on the development of 'pure' science. Even if such an approach carries the risk of limiting the autonomy of the university and brings about lack of financial resources for the development of disciplines that are less competitive (e.g. humanities) (Drapińska, 2011).

Most articles highlight the benefits of EP/EV for HEIs. As in enterprises, the use of employee participation in HEIs results in academics sharing knowledge (Karim & Abdul Majid, 2022; Jones, 2002), improved their development opportunities, employees relations(Sankey & Machin, 2014), increased their organisational commitment (Torka et al., 2010), better fulfilment of professional duties (Sankey & Machin, 2014; Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2015; Kwiek & Szymula, 2024) and acceptance of organisational change (Ejaz et al., 2022;; Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018b; Westhuizen et al., 2012; Oparanma & Zeb-Obipi, 2012; O'Brien, 2002; Ignyś, 2014). The benefits for employees from management participation, academics collegiality (Fleming & Harley, 2024), supervisors' support (Madan et al., 2025, Stankiewicz-Mróz, 2015) also for the individual development goals of subordinates (Sankey & Machin, 2014), transformational leadership (Asmawi et al., 2013) result in improved university performance (Torka et al., 2010), university improvement (Sholekar & Shoghi, 2017; Tran & Pham, 2019; Amin et al., 2014; Torka et al., 2010), and the development of R&D culture (Asmawi et al, 2013). Also, HRM strategy and tools (Cierniak-Emerych, 2012; Ayanda & Sani, 2011), mainly training (Amin et al., 2014) as well as working conditions (Jones, 2002) foster the development of EP of academic staff and the resulting benefits for them and HEIs. EP benefits all parties involved in it (Stocki et al., 2008).

EV positively influences the engagement of academic staff in university affairs (Diko & Saxena, 2023), improves HEIs' effectiveness (Sholekar & Shoghi, 2017), enhanced performance and efficiency (Mowbray et al., 2022). The power of EV is greater when it is enhanced by the supportive behaviour of supervisors (Ejaz et al., 2022; Sankey & Machin, 2014; Mowbray, 2018; Kizielewicz, 2015; Mowbray et al., 2015; Hosseini et al., 2025), effective communication with subordinates supported by organisational culture (Sholekar & Shoghi, 2017; Cabała, 2015), and an entrepreneurial culture (Hosseini et al., 2025; Kwiek, 2015). EV development is also fostered by cooperation and partnership between managers and subordinates (Waring, 2017; Hosseini et al., 2025), the development of HRM tools (Ayanda & Sani, 2011; Waring, 2017; Amin et al., 2014), and also showing respect to employees (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018b), benevolent leadership,

Salih & Salih, 2021) and distributed leadership, which focuses on the relationships between the leader and other team members and subordinates (Madan, et al., 2025; Stankiewicz-Mróz, 2015), and ethical (moral) leadership (Ejaz et al., 2023; Salih & Salih, 2021). The latter refers to "principled leadership", which characterises a leader who acts in accordance with his or her declared values and inspires subordinates to act according to the highest standards (Teneta-Skwiercz, 2010; Haromszeki & Molek-Winiarska, 2018). Salih & Salih (2021) support the findings of other researchers that authoritarian leadership and centralisation of management negatively affect EV/EP in university management (cf. Moczulska, 2011).

Despite the numerous benefits and positive effects of EV for an organisation, it was found that in some HEIs EV can be constrained by relational and structural blockages in formal communication channels (Mowbray, 2018) and reluctant management (Tchapchet et al., 2014). Moreover, pseudo-participation (cf. Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018b) practices of line managers to use EV (and high performance HR strategies) to advance "unilateral" employer interests to the exclusion of employee interests were identified (Mowbray et al., 2022). The authors of the study point out the inappropriateness of such action. The use of pseudo-participation (manipulation) practices (Cierniak-Emerych, 2012) or the disregard of the employee voice mechanism, is not conducive to building employee trust and kills their motivation to participate and use their knowledge, experience and skills for the benefit of their organisation. In the long term, it can result in employee reluctance to participate, loss of organisational commitment, or the emergence of an employee silence (ES) mechanism (Lotfi Dehkharghani et al., 2023; Diko & Saxena, 2023).

This mechanism can negatively impact decision-making and organisational change in HEIs (Sholekar & Shoghi, 2017; Gambarotto & Cammozzo, 2010). Its cause may be the fear of sharing knowledge and information with colleagues (Van Dyne et al., 2003) and with top management. This implies a lack of mutual trust. Without trust between employees, it is difficult to build organisational commitment or employee participation mechanisms (Rees et al., 2013; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003; Diko & Saxena, 2023; Stankiewicz-Mróz, 2015). The lack of conditions conducive to academic staff participation in the management of the university under study can be a big loss for the university.

Two publications indicate that despite various unfavourable activities or issues blocking EP/EV in the researched HEIs, academic staff (other employees) and line managers, have strong intrinsic motivation to participate in management (Mowbray, 2018), even when their contributions are downplayed and underestimated. It is noteworthy that despite the obstacles, these staff members through various formal and informal means seek to influence decisions affecting their university and faculty (Mowbray, 2018); they want to be involved (Tchapchet et al., 2014).

No one can be forced to participate in the organization management but creating favourable conditions for those motivated to do so can bring many benefits to an organization and its employees (Stocki et al., 2008).

6. Conclusions

A rapid literature review of the Scopus and WoS databases indicates that research is being conducted among HEIs staff, including academics, regarding their participation in the university management. These are quantitative (much more frequent) and qualitative surveys conducted in public and private universities located mainly in Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Iran, Malaysia, India), as well as in Europe (the Netherlands), Africa (Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa), and Australia. These studies show that employee voice, viewed as a "weaker form" characterised by less employee participation in power/decision-making processes, is used just as frequently as employee participation.

The mainstream research under study identifies the benefits of EP for universities. Some studies analyse the direct link between EP/EV and improved performance of HEIs. Some point to an indirect element reinforcing which are the benefits from EP/EV for academic staff. These employees, as a result of experiencing satisfaction with EP/EV and improvement in their well-being and development opportunities, focus with greater commitment on perfecting, developing and improving the performance (cf. Cierniak-Emerych, 2012; Kwiek & Szymula, 2024; Diko & Saxena, 2023) of their universities.

A few surveys reveal the resistance of the management of some HEIs to employee participation, the use of pseudo-participation, or the existence of various impediments that staff and line managers encounter and have to overcome in order to put forward their ideas and proposals for improving the performance of their universities. One gets the impression that these impediments do not discourage the respondents, but mobilise them to seek opportunities for participation in university management. This points to the need and validity of creating conditions in HEIs for participation so that motivated knowledge workers, who are academics, can use their knowledge for the benefit of the university, faculties and themselves.

Leadership style turned out to be an important determinant of employee participation. Surprisingly, neither the consultative style nor the participative style, considered crucial to the development of EP in organisation management (Rutka, 2012), occurred in any study. Instead, an ethical (moral) style (based on values and the highest standards of conduct) appeared.

Other factors positively influencing participation of academic staff in the university management are attitude, respect and concern of managers for their employees, good relationships and mutual trust between them, HRM strategy and tools, organisational culture.

Among the identified impediments in the realisation of the EP of academics in the university management the most prominent is the reluctance of supervisors.

Another important finding is that only two articles refer to specific varieties of employee participation in the university management, i.e.: direct participation and indirect participation expressed through academic collegiality.

In answering the research question, it should be stated that the issues relating to the participation of academics in the university management presented in the studies and publications from the Scopus and WoS databases mainly concern the positive impact of employee participation on:

- Knowledge sharing among academics.
- Improvement of the university's performance and the involvement of academics in its development and improvement by increasing their satisfaction with EP (EV). This satisfaction, in turn, is influenced by ethical leadership, support for employees' interests and professional development and their motivation for EP by supervisors, and HRM strategy and tools.

None of the analysed publications identified the participation of academic staff in the management of the university in the key areas namely student education, scientific development, and relations with the external environment.

The aim of the study was met. The issues concerning the participation of academic staff in the university management of HEIs, which are researched and presented in the literature in the Scopus and WoS databases, were identified. A research gap was confirmed in the form of a lack of studies and publications on academic staff participation in university management in the key areas of university activity: student education, scientific development, and relations with the external environment.

The participation of academic staff in the university management is not the subject of frequent research. In order to fill this research gap, it would be worthwhile to undertake further research on: the different varieties of employee participation in universities, i.e. direct, indirect, as well as financial or as an employee shareholding (in private universities); the stages of the decision-making process in which academics participate; their participation in strategic decisions and in decisions relating to the main areas of HEI activities (education of students (and PhD. students), science development, "third mission"); possible differences in the participation of academics in the management of different types of HEIs, e.g. public and private; universities and polytechnics or business schools, large and small. It would also be worth investigating the occurrence of other characteristic features of EP at universities, e.g. intensity (passive: cooperation, active: co-determination) (cf. Mendel, 2001; Moczulska, 2011), degree of formalisation (formal, informal), relationship of EP with the university social responsibility (Szelągowska-Rudzka, 2018a). The author intends to focus on investigating the direct participation of academics in the university management in relation to its main areas of activity.

As the conducted analysis shows, the participation of academic staff (and other employee groups) in the university management can provide it with numerous benefits, primarily, in terms of improving performance of the HEIs through increased staff satisfaction with the employee participation. Therefore, it is worthwhile for HEIs authorities to consider the possibilities of developing the participation of academics in the university management, especially in direct employee participation. It would enable academics - knowledge workers - to use their expertise, relations with the environment and involvement in the university's affairs to develop, improve and adapt to the knowledge-based economy and its requirements for HEIs.

A limitation of the conducted study may be its narrowing to the rapid literature review. Although it is less in-depth than a systematic review and can be carried out in less time by one person, it is reliable and credible. Another limitation for some of the studies is that the analysis is narrowed to titles and abstracts due to lack of access to full texts. Despite these limitations, the study achieved its objective and addressed the research question, confirming the research gap identified at the beginning. Furthermore, additional areas for future research were identified.

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Generative AI
and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

While preparing this work, the author did not use any tool/service.

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