EFFECT OF RECOGNITION AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING ON THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract
This study investigated the effects of recognition and involvement in decision-making on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using the descriptive survey research design, the study sampled 459 respondents using purposive sampling from a population of 6,271 female teachers. Two hypotheses were stated and tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results revealed a significant effect of recognition on mental well-being ($\beta = .162$, $p < .05$), and a significant effect of involvement in decision-making onthe mental well-being of female teachers ($\beta = .217$, $p < .05$). These findings suggest that both recognition and participative decision-making significantly enhance the mental well-being of female teachers. Consequently, it is recommended that educational authorities implement systematic recognition programs and encourage inclusive decision-making processes to improve teachers' mental health. These measures are particularly crucial for female teachers who face unique challenges related to gender roles and societal expectations.
Keywords: *recognition, Involvement in decision-making, mental well-being, and teachers*

Introduction

The mental well-being of teachers has increasingly become a subject of academic interest and policy concern worldwide and the vital role teachers play in shaping the lives of future generations cannot be overemphasized. It is imperative to note that the well-being of teachers might significantly impact the quality of education delivered, thereby influencing student performance and overall school effectiveness (Glazzard & Rose, 2020). Thus, understanding the factors that promote teachers' mental well-being becomes important. In many parts of the world, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of recognition and involvement in decision-making as critical factors influencing the mental well-being of employees, including teachers. Studies have shown that recognition in the workplace can lead to increased job satisfaction, reduced stress levels, and overall improved mental health (Tirta & Enrika, 2020; Zhang *et al*., 2023). Similarly, involvement in decision-making processes has been linked to enhanced feelings of autonomy, empowerment, and a

sense of control, all of which contribute positively to mental well-being (Edmondson & Matthews, 2024).

In contrast, the situation in developing regions such as Africa presents unique challenges and opportunities. African educational systems often grapple with resource constraints, socio-political instability, and cultural dynamics that influence the teaching profession differently compared to developed countries. According to Muhamad *et al.* (2024), the involvement of teachers in decision-making in African schools is often limited, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement and stress. In Nigeria, the educational sector faces specific challenges that exacerbate the stress levels of teachers. These challenges include large classroom sizes, inadequate teaching materials, poor remuneration, and a lack of professional development opportunities (Fadare *et al.,* 2024). Female secondary school teachers, in particular, may face additional pressures related to gender roles and societal expectations, which can further impact their mental well-being (Ogakwu *et al.,* 2024).

Lagos State, as Nigeria's commercial hub, offers a unique setting for examining these issues. The state's educational landscape is characterized by a mix of public and private schools, each with distinct administrative practices and cultures. This diversity provides a fertile ground for investigating how recognition and involvement in decision-making might affect the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers most especially those working in public schools. Despite the critical importance of these factors, there is a paucity of comprehensive studies specifically addressing the interplay between these factors (recognition and involvement in decision-making) andthe mental well-being of female public secondary school teachers in Lagos State. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on broader teacher populations or different educational levels (Ifunanya, 2024; Ozoemena *et al.,* 2021). Thus, this study fills this gap by providing empirical evidence on the effects of recognition and involvement in decision-making on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Recognition in the workplace denotes the acknowledgment and appreciation of an employee's efforts, contributions, and achievements. This concept is grounded in organizational psychology and human resource management, highlighting its importance in encouraging a positive work environment. Recognition can take various forms, including verbal praise, awards, promotions, and other forms of public acknowledgment. According to Brun and Dugas (2008), effective recognition practices can lead to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment among employees. In the context of teaching, recognition serves as a critical factor in enhancing teachers' morale and dedication to their profession (Lim, 2021). It is particularly relevant for female secondary school teachers who often juggle multiple

roles and responsibilities both at work and home. Recognition not only validates their professional efforts but also provides emotional support, which is crucial for maintaining mental well-being (Baum & Schnake, 2024).

Involvement in decision-making connotes the extent to which employees are allowed to participate in the processes that determine the policies, practices, and direction of their organization. This concept is closely related to theories of organizational behaviour and participative management, which argue that involving employees in decision-making can lead to better organizational outcomes (Vroom & Jago, 1988). When teachers are involved in decision-making, they are likely to feel more valued and empowered, which can enhance their sense of ownership and responsibility towards their work (Ahmed, 2024). For female secondary school teachers, involvement in decision-making can provide a platform to address specific challenges they face, ensuring that their unique perspectives and needs are considered in the school's operational and strategic plans.Mental well-being encompasses a range of factors that contribute to an individual's psychological health, including emotional stability, resilience, life satisfaction, and the ability to manage stress (Midha & Bhambri, 2024). In the workplace, mental well-being is influenced by various elements such as job demands, work environment, social support, and personal coping mechanisms (Yunus *et al.*, 2023).

Theoretical Review

In this study, the self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that contribute to human motivation and well-being. According to SDT, individuals have three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals experience enhanced motivation, engagement, and mental well-being. Recognition and involvement in decision-making are crucial elements in fulfilling these needs, particularly in professional settings such as teaching. Recognition satisfies the need for competence by affirming teachers' skills and efforts, thus boosting their self-esteem and professional identity. Involvement in decision-making fulfills the need for autonomy, giving teachers a sense of control and ownership over their work environment. These aspects are particularly significant for female secondary school teachers in Lagos State, who face unique societal and professional challenges. By meeting their needs for competence and autonomy, recognition and involvement in decision-making can significantly enhance their mental well-being, reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. Despite extensive research on SDT, there is a notable gap in its application to the mental well-being of teachers in developing countries, particularly Nigeria.

Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

Recognition in the workplace has been extensively studied across various professions, with a growing body of literature highlighting its critical role in

enhancing mental well-being (Barnes *et al*., 2021; Grawitch *et al*., 2006; Nunes *et al*., 2024). In the context of teaching, recognition might significantly impact teachers' psychological health, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness. One pivotal study by Brun and Dugas (2008) underscores the importance of recognition in fostering positive mental health outcomes among employees. Their research found that employees who felt adequately recognized for their contributions reported higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of stress and burnout. This finding is particularly relevant for female teachers, who often face unique challenges related to gender roles and expectations. The acknowledgment of their professional efforts can serve as a critical buffer against stressors, enhancing their mental well-being and job satisfaction.Similarly, a study conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) explored the relationship between teacher job satisfaction, stress, and burnout. Their findings indicated that teachers who received regular recognition and positive feedback were less likely to experience burnout and more likely to report higher job satisfaction. This relationship was particularly pronounced among female teachers, suggesting that recognition plays a vital role in mitigating the unique stressors they face in the teaching profession.

A study conducted by Werang *et al*. (2024) investigated the interrelations between emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and job performance among Indonesian elementary school teachers. Their findings revealed that high levels of emotional exhaustion significantly diminished job satisfaction and performance. Conversely, job satisfaction acted as a buffer, enhancing job performance even when teachers experienced emotional exhaustion. This study highlights the critical need for effective recognition and support mechanisms to improve job satisfaction and reduce emotional exhaustion among teachers. Also, Cheng *et al*. (2023) conducted an integrative review on job burnout among teachers in China, identifying key factors contributing to burnout and providing implications for human resource management. Their review highlighted the role of excessive workload, lack of support, and insufficient recognition in exacerbating burnout. The authors suggested that implementing recognition programs and providing adequate support can mitigate burnout and enhance job satisfaction among teachers.Matemba (2024) explored the challenges faced by secondary school teachers in the Meru District Council, Arusha Region, in achieving effective job performance. The findings indicated that lack of recognition, inadequate resources, and heavy workloads were primary obstacles. This study underscored the importance of recognition and resource allocation in improving job performance and teacher satisfaction. Given the unique challenges faced by teachers, particularly females in working in developing contexts, it is imperative to prioritize recognition in educational policies and practices to support their mental well-being and professional satisfaction. Thus, we hypothesized that:
H_1: *Recognition has a significant effect on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State.*

In the context of teaching, several studies have demonstrated that teachers who are actively involved in decision-making processes tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and psychological well-being. For instance, a study by Somech (2002) found that participative decision-making significantly enhances teachers' sense of autonomy and professional efficacy, leading to improved mental health outcomes. This effect is particularly pronounced among female teachers, who often face additional challenges related to gender roles and expectations, making the need for autonomy and empowerment even more critical.Specific studies focusing on female secondary school teachers have further elucidated these dynamics. Research by Dinham and Scott (2000) revealed that female teachers who perceive a higher degree of involvement in school decision-making report lower levels of stress and burnout. This finding aligns with self-determination theory, which posits that fulfilling the need for autonomy through participative decision-making can enhance intrinsic motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Female teachers often encounter unique stressors, including balancing professional responsibilities with domestic duties. Thus, their involvement in decision-making not only promotes a sense of control and agency but also helps mitigate the stress associated with these dual roles.

A study conducted by Anastasiou and Belios (2020) explored the effect of age on job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion of primary school teachers in Greece. Their findings indicated that older teachers reported higher job satisfaction and lower levels of emotional exhaustion compared to their younger counterparts. This relationship was particularly pronounced among teachers with extensive teaching experience, suggesting that age and experience play a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction and mitigating emotional exhaustion in the teaching profession. Paulsrud and Wermke (2020) investigated decision-making in the context of teacher autonomy in Sweden and Finland. Their research revealed that Swedish and Finnish teachers perceive a high level of autonomy in their decision-making processes. This perception of autonomy was significantly associated with their job satisfaction and professional efficacy. The study highlighted that the educational context and national policies in Sweden and Finland foster an environment where teacher autonomy is supported, contributing positively to their overall job satisfaction and mental well-being.Based on the foregoing arguments, we hypothesized that:

H_2*: Involvement in decision-making has a significant effect on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State.*

Research Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey research design as the blueprint for data collection and analysis. The target population for data collection comprised female teachers employed in the 322 public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, totaling 5,187 as of 2017, according to the Lagos State Ministry of Education (2017). Due to the absence of current statistics on the number of female teachers in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State as of 2024, this study employed the

exponential growth rate technique to estimate the number of female teachers expected to be employed in Lagos State in 2024. The State's annual growth rate of 3.7%, as reported by the World Population Review 2024 report, was utilized for this projection. Consequently, the estimated number of female teachers in public senior secondary schools in 2024 was projected to be 6,271. Hence, this figure was adopted as the population of the study.

Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 364 was drawn from this population. To account for potential non-response in the survey, an additional 30% of the sample size, as recommended by Israel (1992), was added to the initial 364, resulting in a final sample size of 473.Data collection was conducted using purposive sampling, selecting female teachers working in senior secondary schools who possessed specific and relevant knowledge concerning the variables under study. This method ensured that the data collected was derived from a well-informed group. A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, comprising two parts: Part A focused on demographic variables, while Part B contained existing scales adapted to the study's context. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The adapted scales demonstrated acceptable reliability coefficients, exceeding the 0.70 benchmark as per Cronbach's alpha.

Recognition was measured using a 4-item scale adapted from the work of Grawitch *et al*. (2007) and it has been found to have an acceptable reliability coefficient (α=.750) among ICT professionals (Azeez, 2019). To measure employees' involvement in decision-making, the propensity for participative decision-making scale (PPDMS) developed by Parnell and Bell (1994) was adapted in this study. The 13-item scale is reliable because it has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of α=.860 in the Nigerian context (Azeez, Fapohunda & Jayeoba, 2017).Additionally, teachers' mental well-being was measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale developed by Stewart-Brown *et al*. (2009) and the scale has been found to have a reliable coefficient of α = .84 among Norwegian and α = .86 among Swedish respondents respectively (Haver *et al.,* 2015).To ensure a proportional distribution, 80 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to each of the six educational districts of Lagos State. Research assistants ensured that participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. The questionnaire administration occurred over four weeks, with 462 copies retrieved following multiple follow-ups. Out of the 462 copies retrieved, representing a 97.7% response rate, three copies were excluded due to incompleteness, resulting in 459 completed questionnaires, or 97%, used for final analysis.The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze demographic data, while structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to assess the structural relationships between recognition, involvement in decision-making process, and mental well-being.The statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and SPSS AMOS version 22.This study adhered to the Lagos State University Research Ethics Policy (2020), ensuring the maintenance of ethical standards in protecting participants' rights, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding research integrity.

Findings and Discussion

This section brings to the fore the analysis and discussion of collected data to draw conclusions and make appropriate recommendations.

Table 1: Analysis of Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Age	20-30	60 (13%)
	31-40	150 (33%)
	41-50	160 (35%)
	51-60	89 (19%)
Department (Teaching Area)	Science	120 (26%)
	Arts	140 (30%)
	Commercial	110 (24%)
	Vocational/Technical	89 (19%)
Marital Status	Single	80 (17%)
	Married	320 (70%)
	Separated	30 (7%)
	Widowed	29 (6%)
Educational Qualification	NCE	22 (5%)
	BSc/B.Ed	220 (48%)
	M.Ed./MSc.	178 (39%)
	PhD	39 (8%)
Years of Teaching Experience	0-5	106 (23%)
	6-10	100 (22%)
	11-15	150 (33%)
	16-20	44 (10%)
	21 and above	59 (12%)
Location of School	Urban	250 (54%)
	Sub-Urban	140 (30%)
	Rural	69 (15%)

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

The demographic results of the study in Table 1 present a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of female teachers in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. In terms of age distribution, the largest group of respondents falls within the 41-50 years category, comprising 35% of the sample. This is followed by the 31-40 years age group, representing 33%, while the 20-30 and 51-60 age groups constitute 13% and 19% respectively. This indicates a balanced mix of mid-career and more experienced teachers, with a smaller proportion of younger educators. Regarding the teaching areas, the distribution shows that 30% of the teachers are in the Arts, making it the most represented department. Science follows closely with 26%, while

the Commercial and Vocational/Technical departments account for 24% and 19% respectively. This distribution suggests a diverse range of academic specializations among the respondents, with a relatively even spread across different subject areas, highlighting the variety of expertise present in the teaching workforce.

In terms of marital status, a significant majority of the respondents, 70%, are married. Single teachers constitute 17%, while those who are separated or widowed make up 7% and 6% respectively. This data suggests that the majority of female teachers in Lagos State are likely to have family responsibilities, which could influence their work-life balance and professional commitments. Educational qualifications of the respondents indicate that nearly half (48%) hold a Bachelor's degree (BSc/B.Ed), with 39% possessing a Master's degree (M.Ed./MSc.).

A smaller percentage, 8%, has attained a PhD, while 5% hold a National Certificate in Education (NCE). This reflects a high level of educational attainment among the teachers, with a significant proportion having advanced degrees. In terms of teaching experience, 33% of the respondents have 11-15 years of experience, 23% have 0-5 years, and 22% have 6-10 years. Those with over 20 years of experience constitute 12%, indicating a substantial presence of both relatively new and highly experienced teachers. Lastly, the location of schools reveals that the majority of teachers (54%) are in urban areas, with 30% in sub-urban and 15% in rural areas, highlighting the urban-centric distribution of teaching personnel in Lagos State.

Test of Hypotheses

H₁: Recognition has a significant effect on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State.

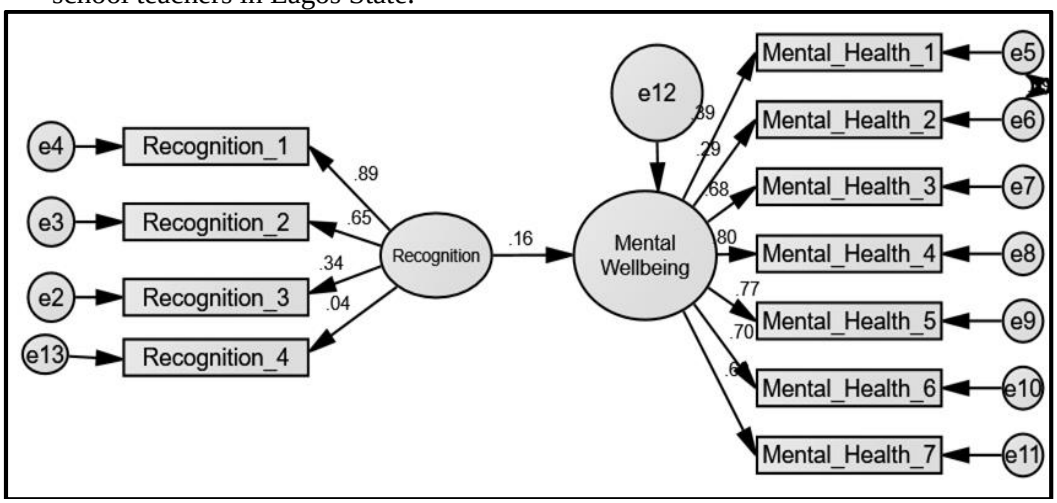

Figure 1: SEM Analysis between recognition and mental wellbeing

The results from the structural equation modeling (SEM) reveal a significant positive effect of recognition onthe mental well-beingofpublic secondary female teachers in Lagos State. The standardized estimate (β) of .162 suggests that an increase in recognition connects with an improvement in mental well-being. This implies that teachers who feel recognized and appreciated are likely to experience better mental he. The critical ratio (C.R.) of 2.581, which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, further substantiates the statistical significance of this effect, indicating that the observed effect is unlikely to be due to chance.The standard error (S.E.) of .067 indicates the level of precision in the estimated effect of recognition on mental well-being. A smaller standard error denotes higher precision, implying that the relationship between recognition and mental well-being is measured with a reasonable degree of accuracy. This precision enhances the reliability of the findings, suggesting that initiatives aimed at increasing recognition could effectively improve the mental well-being of female teachers.

Furthermore, the p-value of .010 signifies that the relationship between recognition and mental well-being is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This low p-value confirms the robustness of the interplay, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Consequently, these findings underscore the importance of recognition in promoting mental well-being among female teachers, highlighting the potential benefits of implementing recognition programs and policies within educational institutions to enhance teachers' mental health. The findings of this study align with a substantial body of literature emphasizing the importance of recognition in enhancing mental well-being across various professions, including teaching. The study aligns with the submission of Brun and Dugas (2008) who notedthat employees who feel recognized report higher job satisfaction and lower stress and burnout levels. This is particularly pertinent for female teachers, who often encounter unique challenges related to gender roles and societal expectations. The acknowledgment of their professional contributions can serve as a critical buffer against these stressors, thus enhancing their mental well-being. In this context, our study's results, show a significant positive effect of recognition on mental well-being, therefore, reinforcing the pivotal role of recognition in supporting the psychological health of teachers.

Furthermore, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) provided evidence that regular recognition and positive feedback are essential in reducing burnout and increasing job satisfaction among teachers. Their study specifically notes that this relationship is particularly strong among female teachers, underscoring the unique influence recognition has on mitigating the stressors they face. This aligns with our findings that increased recognition significantly enhances mental well-being, suggesting that recognition not only improves job satisfaction but also serves as a protective factor against the adverse effects of occupational stress and burnout. Such findings

advocate for the implementation of systematic recognition programs in educational institutions to foster a supportive work environment.Additionally, the studies by Werang *et al*. (2024) and Cheng *et al*. (2023) further substantiate the critical role of recognition in managing job performance and preventing burnout. Werang *et al*. (2024) emphasized that emotional exhaustion diminishes job satisfaction and performance, whereas job satisfaction can buffer against such exhaustion. Cheng *et al*. (2023) integrative review points to excessive workload, lack of support, and insufficient recognition as primary contributors to burnout among teachers. They suggest that recognition programs and adequate support can significantly mitigate burnout and enhance job satisfaction. Matemba (2024) also emphasizes that lack of recognition, alongside inadequate resources and heavy workloads, hinders effective job performance. These findings collectively underscore the necessity of recognition and resource allocation to improve job satisfaction and performance among teachers, corroborating our study's results that advocate for enhanced recognition to bolster teachers' mental well-being.

H_2: Involvement in decision-making has a significant effect on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State.

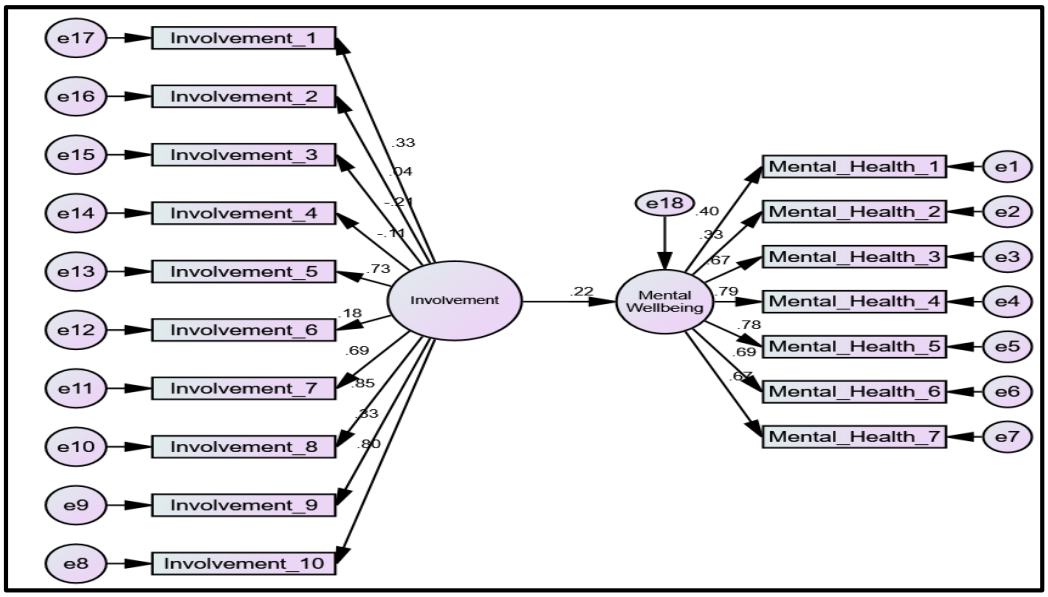

Figure 2: SEM Analysis between involvement in decision making and mental wellbeing

The structural equation modeling (SEM) results in Figure 2 reveal a significant positive effect of involvement onthe mental well-beingof female teachers in Lagos State public secondary schools in Lagos State. The standardized estimate (β) of .217 indicates that an increase in involvement is associated with an improvement in mental well-being. This suggests that teachers who feel more involved in the decision-making processes in their professional environment tend to experience

better mental health outcomes. The critical ratio (C.R.) of 3.673, which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, further confirms the statistical significance of this effect, indicating that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance.The standard error (S.E.) of .020 indicates a high level of precision in the estimated effect of involvement in decision-making on mental well-being. A smaller standard error denotes greater precision, suggesting that the interplayofinvolvement in decision-makingon mental well-being is measured with considerable accuracy. This precision enhances the reliability of the findings, implying that efforts to increase teacher involvement could effectively enhance their mental well-being. Such initiatives might include participative decision-making, collaborative teaching strategies, and inclusive policy development, all of which could contribute to a more supportive and engaging work environment.

Furthermore, the p-value of .000 signifies that the interplay between involvement in the decision-making process and mental well-being is statistically significant at the 0.05% level. This low p-value confirms the robustness of the association, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis of no effect. Consequently, these findings underscore the importance of involvement in fostering mental well-being among female teachers.These findings align with the study by Somech (2002), which found that participative decision-making significantly enhances teachers' sense of autonomy and professional efficacy, leading to improved mental health outcomes. This effect is particularly pronounced among female teachers, who often face additional challenges related to gender roles and expectations. By being more involved in decision-making processes, female teachers can achieve a greater sense of autonomy and empowerment, which is critical for their mental well-being. Dinham and Scott (2000) also support this, revealing that female teachers with a higher degree of involvement in school decision-making report lower levels of stress and burnout, aligning with self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985), which posits that fulfilling the need for autonomy through participative decision-making can enhance intrinsic motivation and wellbeing.Additionally, research by Anastasiou and Belios (2020) on primary school teachers in Greece indicated that older teachers reported higher job satisfaction and lower levels of emotional exhaustion compared to their younger counterparts. This relationship was particularly strong among teachers with extensive teaching experience, suggesting that age and experience contribute significantly to job satisfaction and reduced emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, Paulsrud and Wermke (2020) highlighted the importance of teacher autonomy in Sweden and Finland, where high levels of perceived autonomy in decision-making were significantly associated with job satisfaction and professional efficacy. These studies collectively underscore the importance of ensuring teachers' involvement in the decision-making to enhance their mental well-being, echoing the findings of this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the significant effect of recognition and involvement on the mental well-being of female secondary school teachers in Lagos State. The SEM analysis revealed that both recognition (β = .162) and involvement (β = .217) have positive and statistically significant effects on mental well-being, with critical ratios and p-values confirming the robustness of these relationships. In conclusion, these results suggest that female teachers who feel recognized and involved in the decision-making processes in their professional environments would experience better mental health well-being. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the importance of recognition and participative decision-making in enhancing employee well-being across various professions, including teaching.Based on the findings; it is recommended that public secondaryschool authorities and educational policymakers should prioritize the implementation of systematic recognition programs and policies that acknowledge the contributions of female teachers. Regular positive feedback and appreciation can significantly enhance their mental well-being. Additionally, public secondary school authorities should promote an inclusive environment that encourages teacher involvement in decision-making processes. Strategies such as participative decision-making, collaborative teaching approaches and inclusive policy development can help create a supportive and engaging work environment, thereby improving the mental well-being of female teachers.

As suggestions for further studies, future research should explore the long-term effects of recognition and involvement on the mental well-being of teachers, incorporating longitudinal studies to understand the sustained impact of these factors. Additionally, studies could examine the specific challenges faced by female teachers in different educational contexts and cultural settings to develop tailored interventions. Further research could also investigate the role of other organizational factors, such as workload management and resource allocation, in influencing the mental well-being of female teachers, most especially those working in the public sector.

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