

EMPLOYEE VOICE AND WORKERS' COMMITMENT IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between employee voice and workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria an extant review of literature relevant to employee voice and workers' commitment was ascertained. The literature highlighted the theoretical review, conceptual review, and empirical review. The study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design. The study population consist of three hundred and sixty (360) workers, obtained from the human resource departments of the twenty (20) private hospitals in Rivers State. A sample size of one hundred and eighty-six which was determined from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. After data cleaning, one hundred and seventy-seven (177) respondents were finally used for data analysis. The bivariate analysis was carried out to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the dimensions of the employee voice and the measures of workers' commitment with the use of Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient in order to test the stated hypotheses formulated for the study with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26. The empirical findings revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between employee voice and the measures of workers' commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria, that were studied. The study concludes that, considering the acclaimed relevance of employee voice, with respect to employee performance, employers should wholeheartedly embrace employee voice systems and consciously encourage active involvement of employees, particularly those competent, knowledgeable and interested, in making decisions at work. The study recommends that management of private hospitals need to encourage employees' participation in all aspects of decision making as a crucial determinant of employee functioning and job performance.

Keywords: Employee voice, employee commitment, affective commitment, normative continuance commitment, continuance commitment

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, employees have been the most important element of any organization whereby success or otherwise of a given organization depends largely on the performance of its employees. This is because the performance of employees in any organization is vital, not only for the growth of the organization, but also for the growth of individual employee (Meyer & Peng, 2015). Without employees, organizations will not be able to produce business results, achieve organization goals, or meet its financial objectives (Johanim, Zurina, Khulida & Mohamad, 2012). This assertion further reinforces the view of Tamunomiebi and Wobodo (2018) wherein they argued that the employees among every other business resource still remain the life-blood of the organization. Employers believe that making employees happier and healthier increases their efforts, contributions, productivity and level of commitment. Subsequently, Mello (2011) posit that managers need to recognize the value of their employees by encouraging them to remain for their resource talent to be used, and also discourage them from looking elsewhere for better opportunities.

Avalanche of empirical and theoretical studies have at different time and contexts affirmed the indispensability of employees' unflinching commitment and dedication in the pursuit and realization corporate goals. For instance, Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher and Hope-Hailey (2011) assert that employee commitment is an essential ingredient that promotes organizational goal attainment. Similarly, Masse and Tyokaa (2014) cited in Don-Baridam and Obulor (2022) posit that commitment on the part of the employee is an essential commodity to any organization striving to achieve positive business outcomes. When employees feel a 'sense of oneness's' in the organization, the degree of output in their production process will be very high, and thus, they will work as a team in the organization. Where there is worker satisfaction at work, they are likely to stay on in the same workplace. Thus, identifying the needs of the employees and answering it is the most basic approach of every organization to earn their commitment to organizational goals and objectives (Chughtai, 2008).

Despite the increasing awareness to promote workers' commitment because of its importance to the survival of the worker, employer, organisation and even achieving a thriving society, the literature posits that most corporate leaders are still hesitant in paying adequate attention to it probably because of the cost implication (Hughes, Patrick, Hannon, Harris & Ghosh, 2011) and reluctance to invest, hence the need for a common voice by the employees. Employee voice illustrates the arrangements for a two-way dialogue to take place and enables employees to influence work related issues and covers the provision of opportunities for employees to register discontent, express complaints or grievances, make input, and modify the power of management at the workplace (Benson, 2000).

Allowing employee voice to thrive so that positive workers' commitment outcomes can be reaped has remained a research concern that has drawn serious attention which has led to several related studies. From the standpoint of literature reviewed, most related studies had basically focused on employee voice and some fractions of workers commitment viz: employee voice and job satisfaction; enhancing performance through employee engagement; employee voice and organizational performance: employee voice in management and employee health; employee voice and mental well-being; effects of high-involvement work systems on employee satisfaction; job attitudes between unionized and non-unionized employees; job characteristics, employee voice and well-being; (Esiebo, 2018; Patrice & David, 2018; Rona, Elinor & Martin, 2018; Joshua, Antonio, and O'neil, 2016; Kim, Macduffie and Pil, 2010; Macleod and Clarke, 2009). It was therefore clear from the literature that, there were not enough specific studies that attempted to examine the linkage between employee voice and the totality of workers' well-being in the selected oil and gas companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study aims to determine the relationship that exist between employee voice and workers' commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions was put forward:

- i. What is the relationship between employee voice and affective commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

- ii. What is the relationship between employee voice and normative commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between employee voice and Continuance commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Conceptual Framework

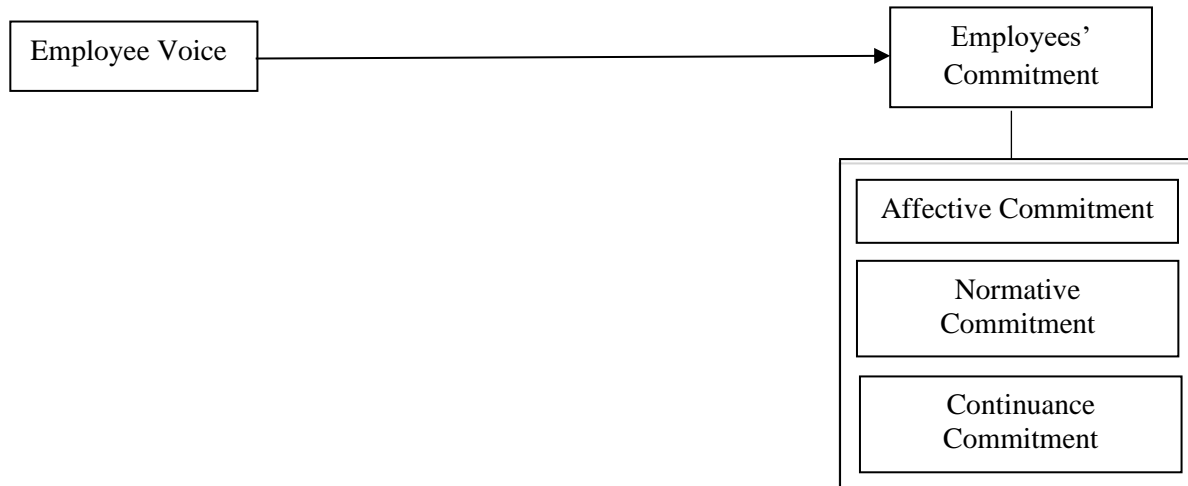


Figure 1: Employee voice and Workers Commitment

Source: Author's Research Work 2023.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

The underpinning theory for this study will be anchored on the social exchange theory.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory is a psychological theory that explains social behavior based on a cost-benefit analysis of social interactions. The theory posits that individuals expect to receive rewards or benefits from social interactions, and they will only engage in social interactions if they believe that the rewards outweigh the costs (Blau, 1964). The theory further suggests that individuals evaluate their social interactions based on the perceived fairness of the exchange, and they will only continue to engage in social interactions if they believe that the exchange is fair (Homans, 1958). In a study by Ogunyomi and Bruning (2014), the researchers examined the relationship between employee perception of organizational support and their

turnover intentions. The study found that employees who perceive high levels of organizational support are less likely to have intentions to leave the organization. The study supports the social exchange theory by showing that employees who perceive that they receive support from the organization are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization. In the context of employee voice and worker commitment, the social exchange theory suggests that employees will only engage in behaviors that promote the interests of the organization if they believe that they will receive rewards or benefits in return. The rewards or benefits may come in the form of pay, promotion, recognition, or other forms of social exchange. The theory also suggests that employees will evaluate their commitment to the organization based on the perceived fairness of the exchange.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Employee Voice

Employee voice (EV) is one of the evolving issues in human resource management. It refers to a rather nebulous phrase subject to wide-ranging usage. Early usage was rooted in the overly skewed balance of power in favour of the employer and the related establishment of trade unions. Trade unions served to provide workers voice to influence the terms and conditions in the employment relationship. That is, employee voice was initially seen in the context of industrial democracy which was touted to enable workers have some influence in unionized work settings (Marchington, 2010). Voice was perceived as key to achieving harmonious and effective employment relationship guaranteeing employee right and wherein trust, fairness and respect prevail (Ackers, Marchington, Dundon & Wilkinson, 2006; Johnstone & Ackers 2015). In non-union settings, voice has been located in joint consultative committees and work councils (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington & Ackers 2004).

According to Boxal and Purcell (2011) Employee voice comprise of all kinds of opportunities where individual or collective employees will have an opportunity to express themselves and exert some influence on workplace decisions. In a more apt explanation, Purcell (2014), presents another dimension of employee

voice as demonstration of individual employee displeasure among managers and subordinates or through employee grievance procedure; secondly, demonstration of collective employee displeasure raised by trade unions through collective bargaining action; thirdly, contribution to management decision-making process through a two-way communication, problem solving, suggestion systems and attitude evaluations; and lastly, through shared partnership understanding, joint consultative forum and work councils. When an employee is given an opportunity or has the opportunity to air their opinion about their welfare; it improves a firm's growth both in structure and culture. It should be noted that workers or employee still have a way of indirectly speaking up their ideas even when they are not encouraged by their private employers or the government.

Concept of Workers Commitment

Employee's commitment refers to an employee's belief in the organization's goals, values and desire to remain a member of the organization and loyalty to the organization (Mowday, 1979). According to Khan, Tariq, Hamayoun and Bhutta (2014) employee's commitment is an attitude that reflects an employee's loyalty to the organization and this is an ongoing process through which members of organization can express their concern for the organization and its continued success and well-being. Agada and Zeb-Obipi (2018), defined organizational commitment as a sustainable binding force or mind-set that propels an individual to stay and work dedicatedly and whole-heartedly to achieve organizational goals. They argued that employee commitment is of a critical importance for the success of the organization. Employee commitment is the emotional bond or attachment between the employees and their organization (Don-Baridam, 2017).

Measures of Workers Commitment

Affective Commitment

The first to be mentioned here reflects an affective or emotional attachment and is called affective commitment. When a person has an affective commitment, he or she has the desire to follow a course of

action. Antecedents of this form of commitment are for example personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences and structural characteristics. Meyer and Allen (1997) defined affective commitment as an emotional belongingness towards organization. Moreover, Meyer and Allen (1997) further describe affective commitment as involvement, attachment, and positive feelings such as identification of employees with organization. In this situation, employee has established strong attachment, and relationship with organization. Emotional attachments of employees increase the sincerity for organization, accept, and follow the rules in the organization and accomplished the organizational goals effectively. Affective commitment can be explained as a problem sense of identification with or involving in organization (Yousef, 2000).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is referred to as obligatory commitment to the organization (Setti, 2014). Normative commitment focuses on the individual's sense of obligation to stay with the organization. This commitment stems from an individual's moral obligation to stay with the organization regardless of the benefit he or she might receive by leaving (Radosavljevic, Cilerdzic & Dragic, 2017). Setti, (2014) define normative commitment simply as a feeling of obligation to remain with the organization. With this concept, employees retain membership because they feel they ought to do so. Radosavljevic, Cilerdzic & Dragic, (2017) further suggested that normative commitment might result from pressures exerted either prior to, or after, organizational entry. Normative commitment is heavily grounded upon values and personal norms; therefore, attempting to measure it presents unique challenges. Researchers have discovered that measuring normative commitment usually focuses on the extent to which a person believes he or she should be loyal and make sacrifices on behalf of the organization (Weiner, 1982).

Continuance Commitment

This aspect of commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees with strong continuance commitment will remain in organization because they need

organization. The continuance components refer to commitment based on the cost that the employees associate with leaving the organization. It may be primarily affected by perceptions of external considerations for “side bets” such as retirement benefits and pension plans. It is akin to calculative commitment, built on side bet theory. Committed employees are more likely to remain with the organization, work toward the attainment of organizational goals, exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization and show acceptance of the organization’s major goals and values. Continuance commitment describes an individual’s need to continue working for the organization based on the perceived costs associated with leaving (Allen and Meyer, 1991).

Empirical Review

Employee Voice and Workers’ Commitment

Don-Baridam and Diri (2022) examined the relationship between employee voice and workers’ well-being in food and beverages manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study used a cross-sectional design. The population of this study is the seven (7) food and beverages manufacturing companies out of the Thirty-four (34) manufacturing companies registered with the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), as obtained from the 2019 updated Directory of the Rivers State zone of the Association. These seven (7) companies were purposively selected because of their peculiarity of being in the same grouping of production, that is, food and beverages. The population element for the study was 208 employees, of which a sample size of 137 was extracted using Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for univariate analysis while Spearman Rank Order correlation Coefficient was used to test all stated hypothesis. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between Employee Voice and the measures of workers Well-being in food and beverages manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study recommends that organizations need to encourage employees’ participation in all aspects of decision making as a crucial determinant of employee functioning and job performance.

Washington (2019) explores the relationship between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment in literature. The researcher approached several databases, including Academic Search Complete, Business Search Complete, Business Search Premier, Science Direct and Google Scholar and found 235 relevant studies. Nine studies were selected for review after a vigorous process that rejected many studies because they were duplicated or not fitting in the inclusion criteria. The chosen studies were put in separate folders; Folder 1: Employee Voice, and Folder 2: Affective Commitment. A thematic process that included careful reading data, coding, identifying trends, establishing themes and confirming themes, was used on material separately. The researcher identified and confirmed “trust”, “employee/work engagement”, “innovation”, “positive relationship” and “communication” as core themes and further analysis of themes as done including sub-themes to validate the outcome. This review found that there was a significant link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment in literature. Previous studies also supported this connection. Limitations, the vigorous process could have left out some critical studies that could have changed the outcome. Even, the thematic analysis that identified and confirmed themes could have been biased towards the researcher’s understanding. Therefore, the researcher recommends further research to confirm these outcomes. Future research should include more qualitative studies and more studies to explore the association between the two concepts. However, the current results help future scholars and practitioners to understand the link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment.

Nwizia and Saale (2022) Examine the relationship between employee voice and organisational survival and generates contributions of employee voice to organisational survival. The paper revealed that employee voice gives workers opportunities to air out their ideas that encourage business survival and also promotes organisation harmony as well as trust among employee and between employees and between employees and management. The exit-voice-loyalty theory was used to explain the relationship between employee voice and survival of the organisation. The paper concluded that employee voice positively influence organisational survival and we suggested that management should allow workers to participate in decision making process in order to achieve organisational survival, management should allow employees to express

their unsatisfactory and satisfactory situations to the organisation without fear of management's negative retaliation which lead to strike actions and management should give room for a dependable union representative that can promote the continuity and survival of the organisation.

Ebikebina and Vopnu (2020) investigated the relationship between employee voice and workers commitment of insurance firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 208 employees of four insurance companies in Port Harcourt from which a sample size of 136 was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's rank order correlation with the decision rule set at a $P < 0.05$ level of significance for the rejection of the null hypotheses. The study findings revealed that employee voice is significantly associated with workers' commitment, and that it contributes to enhancing measures such as affective, normative and continuance commitment. Given this evidence, the null hypotheses are rejected as the results from the analysis indicate otherwise. The findings of the study suggest that the commitment of workers within the selected insurance firms can be considered as being explained by their voice within the organization. It was therefore concluded that employee voice contributes significantly towards workers' commitment. As such the study recommended that defensive voice suggests workers avoidance of conflict within the organization; however, it also indicates a shying away from responsibilities and accountability by the respondents. Therefore, it is suggested that organizations encourage their staff to be open about their views. This can be achieved through the institutionalization of workgroups and teams within which members are allowed more recognition and freedom to air and to be held accountable for their views. Thus, we hypothesized that;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between employee voice and affective commitment of workers in private hospitals in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between employee voice and normative commitment of workers in private hospitals in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between employee voice and continuance commitment of workers in private hospitals in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design to obtained responses from the mobile telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population covered three hundred and sixty (360) workers from the twenty (20) private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria and a sample of 186 was determined using the table from Krejcie and Morgan (1970). After data cleaning, 177 copies of the questionnaire were finally used for data analysis. The Spearman's rank order correlation was adopted in the test for 3 hypotheses formulated for the study with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26.0.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alphas of Study Variables

S/N	Variables	No. of items	Alpha (α)
1	Employee Voice	9	0.860
2	Workers Commitment	9	0.835

Source: SPSS Output, 2023.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis (Test of Research Hypotheses)

Decision rule: The decision rule which applies for all bivariate test outcomes is stated as follows: where $P < 0.05$, reject hypothesis on the basis or evidence significant relationship; and where $P > 0.05$, accept hypothesis on the basis of insignificant relationship between the variables.

Scatter Plot of the Relationship between Study Variables

According to Neuman (2000: 323) cited in Asawo (2009), Scatter graph is one of the techniques used in deciding whether a bivariate relationship does exist between interval scaled variables. In our bid to determine the existence and trend of this relationship, we plotted a scatter diagram as presented in Figure 2. employee voice as a predictor variable is plotted on the X axis whereas workers Commitment as the criterion variable is on the Y axis.

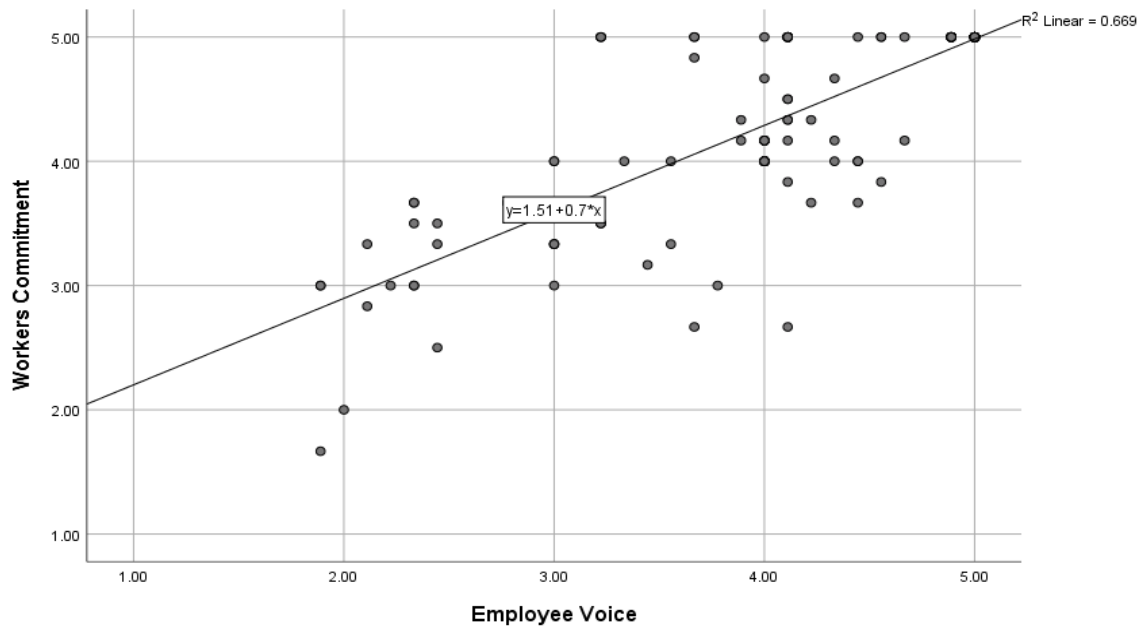


Figure 1: Scatter plot for the relationship between employee voice and workers Commitment.

The apparent pattern of the cases in the scatter plot sloping upwards from left to right is an indication of existing linear and positive relationship between strategic intelligence and corporate resilience. The scatter plot observed from the linear value ($R^2 = 0.669$) indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two main constructs in the study. The coefficients indicated that an increase in employee voice explain 53.9% increase in workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Relationship between Employee Voice and the Measures of Workers' Commitment

Table 2: Correlations for Employee Voice and the Measures of Workers' Commitment

			Employee Voice	Affective Commitment	Normative Commitment	Continuance Commitment
Spearman's rho	Employee Voice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.638**	.618**	.614**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001	.000	.000
		N	177	177	177	177
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.638**	1.000	.738**	.588**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.	.000	.000
		N	177	177	177	177
	Normative Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.618**	.738**	1.000	.548**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	177	177	177	177
	Continuance Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.614**	.588**	.548**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	177	177	177	177

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

H_{01.3}: There is no significant relationship between employee voice and workers' commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 2 shows a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.638, 0.618 and 0.614 on the relationship between employee voice and the measures of workers' commitment (affective, normative and continuance commitment) in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the relationship is positive, implying that an increase in the affective, normative and continuance commitment was as a result of the adoption of employee voice. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between employee voice and the measures of workers' commitment (affective, normative and continuance commitment) in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Similarly displayed in the table 2 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtain from table 2, the tests of significance show that the relationship between employee voice and the measures of workers' 'commitment is significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between employee voice and the measures of workers' commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the relationship between employee voice and workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that a significant relationship exists between dimensions of employee voice and the measures of workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. Using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval, the findings of this study confirmed that there is strong positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of employee voice and the measures of workers Commitment. The evidence on the scatter plot shows that approximately 66.9% of the changes and manifestations of workers Commitment can be linked to actions that reflects employee voice in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The finding supports the study by Don-Baridam and Diri (2022) on the relationship between employee voice and workers' well-being in food and beverages manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between Employee Voice and the measures of workers Well-being in food and beverages manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study recommends that organizations need to encourage employees' participation in all aspects of decision making as a crucial determinant of employee functioning and job performance.

The finding also supports the conclusion of Nwizia and Saale (2022) on the relationship between employee voice and organisational survival and generates contributions of employee voice to organisational survival. The paper revealed that employee voice gives workers opportunities to air out their ideas that encourage

business survival and also promotes organisation harmony as well as trust among employee and between employees and between employees and management. The exit-voice-loyalty theory was used to explain the relationship between employee voice and survival of the organisation. The paper concluded that employee voice positively influence organisational survival and we suggested that management should allow workers to participate in decision making process in order to achieve organisational survival, management should allow employees to express their unsatisfactory and satisfactory situations to the organisation without fear of management's negative retaliation which lead to strike actions and management should give room for a dependable union representative that can promote the continuity and survival of the organization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this study reveals that employee voice plays significant role in workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. Thus, we conclude that employee voice is a precursor of workers Commitment in private hospitals in Rivers State, Nigeria. This position was built on the observed correlation between employee voice and measures of employee commitment comprising Affective Commitment, normative Commitment and Continuance Commitment. We therefore conclude that, considering the acclaimed relevance of employee voice, with respect to employee performance, employers should wholeheartedly embrace employee voice systems and consciously encourage active involvement of employees, particularly those competent, knowledgeable and interested, in making decisions at work. From the research analysis and conclusions, it becomes plausible to recommend that:

- i. Managers of private hospitals need to encourage employees' participation in all aspects of decision making if they expect them to perform at their peak for organizational performance to be improved.
- ii. By adopting employee voice as an engagement strategy, management of private hospitals can increase the psychological well-being level of its employees.
- iii. Management of private hospitals in Rivers State should create an avenue where employees' perception of getting the opportunity to voice and being heard, make them more engaged in the organization which will lead to their social well-being.

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