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Employee voice behavior and organizational climate: evidence from manufacturing companies in nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of employee voice behavior on organizational climate of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. It used a cross-sectional survey research design and Data were gathered as of February 21, 2023, from middle and lower level employees of manufacturing companies registered under the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria, Delta & Edo Chapter. Ten businesses with a combined staff of 2,017 were chosen for the study's purposes. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 334 employees was created and only 287 responses were retrieved. After a multicollinearity test and correlation matrix revealed no collinearity issues, the hypothesis were tested with linear regression. Results of hypothesis tested showed that participation has positive significant relationship with organizational climate. Additionally, a positive, significant relationship between involvement and organizational climate was discovered. According to the study's findings, employee voice behavior that is measured in terms of participation and involvement enhances the organizational climate, which fosters coworker support, management recognition, creativity, and equity among all group members. The study advises manufacturing firms' top management to recognize the necessity of regularly involving middle and lower level employees in their decision-making processes, whether directly or through advisory participation, in order to continuously increase organizational effectiveness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Instead of using an employee-centered leadership style that takes into account their feelings and compensation, managers in traditional organizational settings used Taylorism management epistemologies to influence workers and treat them like machines. These managers prioritize initiating structure while ignoring rest periods, pay, and employee involvement in addition to employee participation. These abuses are what drew a group of academics together to form the modern human relations movement. According to the tradition of the human relations school, all employees, regardless of their cultural background, should be treated with respect, dignity, and high regard because they are social beings. This presumption led to the development of the human relations field of study known as human resource management, which is tasked with luring candidates into the workforce, assigning them to the proper job position, assessing their performance, rewarding candidates who outperform their peers through promotions, and preparing candidates for exit when the time comes. However, recent advances in human resource research have diverted scholars' focus from human resource management to talent management, combining human resource management functions into three dimensions: talent attraction, talent development, and talent retention (Edeh & Dialoke, 1876; Edeh & Mlana, 1879). However, the human relations movement is here to stay, and this is what has led to the behavior known as employee voice in the workplace. In the modern psychological contract approach, employees have roles to play in the workplace through freedom of expression, in contrast to the former school of scientific management where employees have no say when it comes to decisions that concern their welfare, workplace safety, and other work-related issues. As a result, rather than the other way around, the employees who run the organization determine the organizational climate. This is due to the fact that the organizational climate is positively correlated with how employees are treated. Therefore, it implies that employees who have autonomy and the freedom to contribute positively will raise the effectiveness of the company for which they work.

Communication, structure, warmth, support, responsibility, autonomy, conflict, resource, safety, diversity, trust, innovation, recognition, involvement, fairness, justice, customer service and creativity are organizational climate dimensions that have a direct or indirect impact on employee behavior (Bitwin & Stringer, 1968; Koys & DeCotiis, 1991; Pugh, Dietz, Brief & Wiley 2008; Ehrhart, Witt, Schneider & Perry, 1871; Simha & Cullen, 1871). These elements can have a positive or negative impact on employees, particularly when it comes to their ability to express themselves freely at work. Similar to this, any workplace where employees are not allowed to voice their opinions or complaints will fail to meet its goals because employees are the means by which an organization's goals are carried out when management makes resources available. For instance, it will be very challenging to convince a company's employees to perform their duties if it does not encourage open communication with them. In a similar vein, if every employee receives an equal distribution of resources or compensation, the subordinate will be more successful in carrying out their assignment by using innovation. Additionally, a safe workplace fosters a positive working relationship between employers and employees (Langton, Robbins & Judge, 1876). On the other hand, the organizational structure also affects how employees view the company. For instance, it is confirmed that a very broad range of control is linked to effective decentralization of decision-making (Colquitt, Lepine & Wesson, 1877). Work specialization is another aspect of organizational structure that affects employee behavior. It has been demonstrated that a highly specialized workforce causes fatigue, boredom, stress, low quality, high absenteeism,

and high staff turnover (Colquitt et al., 1877). Furthering this, highly formalized work environments cause job dissatisfaction in employees and more social laziness (Sinding & Waldstrom, 1874).

However, the majority of industry roles in Nigeria's aviation industry derived their social influence from establishing structured leadership mechanisms, which in no way represents contemporary human relations practice as it is attained in other parts of the world. So many domestic airline operators, particularly those operating in the Nigerian workplace, have been crippled by this leadership behavior. This may be attributed to managers in this industry lacking managerial skills because they have little to no experience in influencing their staff members using modern leadership philosophies like emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and knowledge management. The majority of Nigerian manufacturing companies have failed as a result of the structural leadership style adopted by their managers, who are typically appointed by those who founded the companies. The economy of Nigeria has been impacted by these companies' failures in terms of growth, employment, and opportunities for empowerment. As a result, some of these companies' employees fail to make the crucial contributions necessary to boost the profitability of Nigerian manufacturing companies.

In light of the aforementioned, employee voice behavior has helped manufacturing companies as well as multinational corporations grow and expand globally. Employee voice behavior, according to Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington, and Ackers (2004), is linked to high performance, which is brought on by an increase in sales volume, customer spending, and service quality. Employees have been shown to only engage in discretionary behavior when given the opportunity to contribute to the day-to-day operations of the company (Chou & Barron, 1876). Okpu and Kpakol (1878) add that most issues affecting the workplace and the employees will be resolved when managers encourage their staff to voice their opinions. Ruck, Welch, and Menara (1877) also suggest that when managers encourage their staff to suggest fresh approaches to resolving issues at work, it boosts employee motivation to promote the company to peers and members of the larger community. Employee voice behavior that is acknowledged at work has been recognized as a predictor of organizational commitment (Farndale, Van-Ruiten, Kelliher & Hope-Hailey, 1871). Investigated trends of thoughts on employee voice behavior, but none of them looked at the relationship between employee voice behavior and organizational climate. This study examines the significant impact of employee voice behavior on organizational climate in Nigerian manufacturing firms based on this gap in the literature.

Review of Related Literature

Employee Voice Behavior

The German political economist and inventor of the "hiding hand principle", Albert Hirschman, first used the phrase "employee voice" in 1970 in his ground-breaking book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. The phrase was essentially used to describe people who suffer in silence but have faith that things will improve. Although employee voice can apply to both large groups of workers and entire workforces, it can also be used to workers on a smaller scale (for instance, within a team). Employee voice, in its broadest sense, refers to the degree to which employees or workers have a voice in work-related decisions that affect them both inside and outside of the organization where they work (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). Similar in their viewpoint, MacLeod & Clarke (2009) clarified this idea as occurring when employees' opinions are sought after and

taken into consideration in order to recognize that their input matters and can influence corporate governance.

Boxal and Purcell (2011) define employee voice as any opportunity for an individual or group of employees to express their opinions and have some influence over decisions made at work. Don-Baridam and Diri (2022) provide a more accurate explanation by defining another dimension of employee voice as demonstration of individual employee displeasure among managers and subordinates or through an employee grievance procedure; second, demonstration of collective employee displeasure raised by trade unions through collective bargaining action; third, contribution to management decision-making through two-way communication, problem solving, suggestion systems, and an employee feedback system (Anyago, Ojera & Ochieng, 2015; Akinwale, 2018). Similar to this, Employee voice is defined by Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, and Kamdar (2011) as championing and raising awareness of some fundamental issues affecting Employee productive Work Behavior. According to Burrell (2012), employees engage in an upward voice mechanism whenever they purposefully offer suggestions, worries, information about problems, or opinions about their jobs to someone in a higher position within a corporate organization. However, when they stop making such significant contributions, they are remaining silent and depriving their organization of potentially helpful information. Employee voice behaviour is concerned with employee's ability to influence events in the workplace through involvement and participation in decision making (Ogbu et al., 2021) Employee voice behavior can also be interpreted as the ability of the employee to voice their grievances to their line manager or through other channels (Dundon et al., 2004). In terms of categorization, employee voice behaviour is categorized into participation and involvement (Ogbu et al., 2021). When given the chance to do so, employees who are involved in decision-making play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of the organization. On the other hand, involvement refers to a situation in which management permits employees to talk about matters that directly affect them, such as employee motivation, workplace safety, employee compensation, and employee welfare.

In keeping with the aforementioned existing literature on employee voice behavior, this study presents some empirical research on employee voice behavior and its findings from academics around the world in various industries. Employee voice behavior has a positive, statistically significant association with work engagement, according to Yucel and Muhammed's study on employee voice behavior and its impact on work engagement in Turkey in 1879. The research of Nur and Lily (1878) showed that employees who regularly have their opinions heard and acknowledged by management would feel valued and motivated to contribute to decision-making as well as exhibit discretionary behaviors. Positive associations between employee voice behavior and job satisfaction were found in empirical studies (Anyango & Aila, 1877; Zaid & Lily, 1877). Previous studies on employee voice behavior are now presented to provide a starting point. Findings by Yang et al. (1879) showed that employee voice behavior and career success expectation are mediated by one another. Employee voice behavior has a positive, significant association with work engagement, according to Yucel and Muhammed's findings from 1879. According to Zhen et al. (1879) research, mediating role plays a beneficial role in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee voice behavior. Results from Xiaoyan et al. (1877) showed that promotional voice is favorably related to pro-social and constructive motives. According to Jui-Chih's (1877) findings, the relationship between supervisor support and self-

determined pro-social motivation was mediated by psychological needs. The findings of Asadollah and Saeed (1876) demonstrated that employee voice behavior has a favorable impact on the significance of the work. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that an employee's voice behavior and job satisfaction are positively correlated (Zaid & Lily, 1877; Anyango & Aila, 1877).

Organizational Climate

Climate is a term for atmospheric circumstances. But when it pertains to an organization, it is focused on how staff members feel about it in terms of its caring compared to that of their coworkers who work in the same sector (Mullins, 1871). On the other hand, Sinding and Waldstrom (1874) argued that the workplace climate captures the circumstances, sentiments, and perspectives of employees. Additionally, how an employee feels affects how they behave, view how well they perform at work, and interact with management. This is due to the fact that an employee's level of organizational culture acceptance will greatly affect the organizational climate (Mullins, 1871). Organizational climate is concerned with how staff members perceive their work environment and how that affects their attitudes and behavior. Every organization's culture typically dictates how employees respond to and handle problems relating to their jobs (Langton et al., 1876). Employees, for instance, will put more effort into their work in a company where salaries are paid on time. On the other hand, employees in an organization will not be dedicated to their work if salaries are not typically paid on time or they are owed several months' pay; instead, such an organization will be known for high employee turnover and absenteeism. According to Litwin and Stringer's 1968 conceptualization of organizational climate, it consists of structure, support, risk, responsibility, warmth, standards, identity, and conflict. It also includes autonomy, innovation, trust, fairness, cohesion, support, and resources (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991).

However, the findings of trends in organizational climate thought are now being presented. The findings of Okoseimiema and Eketu (1879) showed a significant positive correlation between organizational climate and employee engagement. According to research by Massoud, Purevdulam, Weiming, and Wing-Keung (1879), the relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction was mediated by organizational climate and work style. Organizational climate partially mediated organizational effectiveness, according to Reetu and Anshu's findings in 1879. The research of Okoli (1878) demonstrated a strong correlation between organizational climate and administrative support. Employee job satisfaction was found to be significantly positively impacted by organizational climate (Woko, Ukoha & Alagah, 1878). The findings of Dewa, Anak, and Putu (1878) showed that organizational climate and leadership had a positive, significant impact on employee performance. Another empirical finding showed that job satisfaction acted as a mediator between organizational climate's positive and significant impact on commitment to the organization (Iman et al., 1879; Tadesse, 1878; Swastadiguna & Dewi, 1878; Aysen, 1878). According to research by Muhammad et al. (1878), organizational climate significantly influences turnover intentions. However, this study focuses on the four Koys and DeCotiis (1991) dimensions of organizational climate: recognition, fairness, support, and innovation. On another hand, two dimensions of employee voice behaviour advocated by Armstrong (2009) which include participation and involvement were also adopted (Ogbu et al., 2021)

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

On the potential relationships between employees and the organization, several theories have been put forth. These theories include the social exchange theory (SET), which Blau developed in 1964 to explain how subordinates will be empowered, the human capital theory

(postulated by Schultz in 1961 and developed by Gary Becker in 1964 to explain how imparting useful skills and knowledge on subordinates would improve their productivity), the self-determination theory, which Deci and Ryan first made public in the mid-1980s, and the self-determination theory. But Edwin Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory serves as the foundation for this study. According to this theory, people are encouraged to give their all in order to accomplish the goals of a course that they set for themselves or are a part of. By being a part of a process, a person understands what it entails and is willing to do whatever it takes to see that process' goals achieved (Locke & Schweiger, 1997).

The goal setting theory's application helps to explain how an organization can increase the effectiveness of its procedures and results if it includes employees at all levels (whether top, middle, or lower) in all operational decisions. Therefore, this study makes the assumption that involving middle and lower level workers in decision-making (either directly or as advisors) will lead to better task results (productivity), better situational adjustments (adaptability), and greater flexibility. In accordance with the foregoing, when employees are given the opportunity to positively contribute to workplace operations, they typically have a positive perception of the internal work environment, which gives them confidence as stakeholders rather than seeing themselves as visitors (Ogbeide & Harrington, 1871). The following hypothesis was developed to allow for an empirical investigation of the study's goals:

H₁: Employee voice behavior has no significant effect on organizational climate in Nigerian manufacturing firms.

3. METHODS

The cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. The population is made up of every middle- and lower-level employee of the thirty manufacturing companies that are registered with the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria, Delta & Edo Chapter, as of February 21, 2023. For the purposes of this study, ten manufacturing companies totaling 2,017 employees were chosen and a sample size of 334 workers was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula as shown below:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where N = the population size,

n = sample size,

e = sampling error

Given the population size and with a sampling error of 5 percent, the required sample size is computed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2,017}{1 + 2,017 (0.05)^2} = 333.80 = \text{App. } 334$$

Employee voice behavior (EVB) dimensions and organizational climate (OC) measures were taken into consideration when creating a self-developed, closed-ended questionnaire. With the help of three research questions on a five-point Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5, participation and involvement were assessed. On the other hand, three questions on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Very Great Extent to 1 = Very Low Extent) were used to measure recognition, fairness, innovation, and support. The data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Linear regression analysis was used to test the

hypothesis while mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses. For the test, the alpha level of significance was set at 5%. No collinearity issue was discovered after computing the multicollinearity test and correlation matrix.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 334 copies of the structured questionnaire were given out, but only 287 of them were considered error-free and suitable for further data analysis, representing an 85.9% response rate. The benchmark set by Oghuvbu (1870), who noted that a response rate of 60% or higher is statistically convenient for further analysis and can be relied upon, has been surpassed by this. The majority of respondents (153) have spent at least 10 years working for their respective companies; 134 lower-level employees took part in the study, description of the research characteristics is explained in **Table 1**.

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics

Variables	N Stat	Min. Stat	Max. Stat	Mean Stat	Std. Dev. Stat	Skewness Stat	Std. Error	Kurtosis Stat	Std. Error
Participation	187	1.00	5.00	3.782	1.392	-.687	.165	-.721	.357
Involvement	187	1.00	5.00	3.590	1.409	-.656	.165	-.726	.357
Recognition	187	1.00	5.00	3.701	1.358	-.704	.165	-.790	.357
Support	187	1.00	5.00	3.643	1.365	-.645	.165	-.653	.357
Fairness	187	1.00	5.00	3.669	1.374	-.693	.165	-.643	.357
Innovation	187		5.00	3.597	1.351	-.587	.165	-.785	.357
Valid N Histwise)	187	1.00							

All the variables have Skewness and Kurtosis ratios less than 2 which affirm the assumption of normality (Weinberg & Abramowitz, 2002).

Table 2.
Correlations matrix

Spearman's rho		RECO	INNO	FAIR	SUPP
Participation	Correlation	.832**	.856**	.786**	.807**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	287	287	287	287
Involvement	Correlation	.853**	.857**	.826**	.784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	287	287	287	287

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

Keys: RECO = Recognition; INNO = Innovation; FAIR = Fairness and SUPP = Support

According to **Table 2**, there was a significant positive relationship between the employee

voice behavior dimension of participation and the organizational climate indicators of recognition, innovation, fairness, and support ($P = 0.000-0.05\%$). The indicators of organizational climate (recognition, innovation, fairness, and support) and involvement had a positive significant relationship ($P = 0.000-0.05\%$). This implies that employees have the right to take part in meetings and other organizational activities, such as decision-making. Therefore, if employees aren't allowed to participate in organizational activities like decision-making and other organizational meetings, the organizational climate won't be favorable, which may lead to counterproductive work behaviors like absenteeism, high employee turnover, and indiscipline. On the other hand, if employees are involved in work schedules and other assigned tasks, the workplace climate is stabilized, which in turn encourages discretionary work behaviors, such as effectiveness, efficiency and high performance.

Table 3.
Multicollinearity test of independent variables and collinearity diagnostics

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Participation	.287	3.402
Involvement	.287	3.402

A tolerance value of less than 0.1 indicates that the variable cannot be combined as a linear combination of other independent variables, and it quantifies collinearity. Base on **Table 3**. Multicollinearity between the two variables is not present in this study because the tolerance value (0.287) is greater than 0.1. The tolerance value and VIF tests clearly rule out multicollinearity in the model.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to confirm the impact of employee voice behavior and organizational climate in Nigerian manufacturing firms because correlation does not imply causation. Table 4 below shows a summary of the regression result.

Table 4.
Linear regression analysis of employee voice behavior on organizational climate

Model	R ²	F	α	β	t	Prob.
EVB>Org.Climate	.593	371.40	.753	.856	17.684	0.000

Table 4. shows that employee voice behavior explains 59.3% of the variation in organizational climate ($R^2 = 0.593$). The F-statistics (371.40; $p = 0.000$) support the model's fitness. The estimator's coefficient is positive and the probability value of the t-statistics, which checks the significance of the estimate, indicates that it is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that employee voice behavior has a significant impact on the organizational climate of Nigerian manufacturing firms ($\beta = 0.856$; $t = 17.684$; $p = 0.000$).

This study discovered that employee voice behavior has a positive significant effect on organizational climate, implying that managers of Nigerian manufacturing firms encourage employees to participate in decision making and daily work output. This study's findings are consistent with previous empirical studies that found that employee voice behavior is positively associated with organizational climate (Anyango & Aila, 1877; Zaid & Lily, 1877; Yucel & Muhammed, 1879). Employee voice behavior has a significant effect on organizational climate and productivity in Nigerian manufacturing firms, according to the

findings. If middle and lower level employees participated in decision making, firms' output and processes would be highly effective. This finding backs up the findings of Saeed (2016), Dede (2019), Ezeanolue and Ezeanyim (2020), Asokk, Gudda, Bhati, and Vanishree (2021), and Mambula, Francis, and Zirra (2021), who all stated that employee participation makes decision making easier, creates a good working environment, increases commitment, satisfaction, and morale, and has a direct impact on organizational climate.

This study concludes that measuring employee voice behavior in terms of participation and involvement improves organizational climate, which fosters coworker support, management recognition, innovativeness, and equity among all members of the organization. This implies that employees will be motivated to bring new innovations into the workplace if they believe their voice will be heard during management meetings as a result of their involvement and participation in decision making. Second, when employees believe they are supported by management in terms of obtaining necessary materials to improve their effectiveness, they will perceive the organization as a harmonious and friendly place to work. Finally, employees who believe they are treated fairly in terms of promotion and compensation practices will have a favorable opinion of the organizational climate. In light of the findings, this study recommends that manufacturing firms' top management see the need to constantly involve middle and lower level employees in their decision making processes, whether directly or through advisory participation, in order to gain more effectiveness. This study has added to our understanding by confirming that employee voice behavior has a significant impact on employee recognition, innovation, fairness, and support in manufacturing firms.

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