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Does Employee Voice Improve Organizational Performance? A Meta-synthesis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Submitted: May 25, 2026 Final Revised: June 22, 2026 Accepted: June 23, 2026 Published: June 26, 2026	Purpose This study examines whether employee voice improves organizational performance by synthesizing evidence from recent studies across leadership, human resource management, organizational behavior, and organizational performance literature. Despite the growing recognition of employee voice as a mechanism for organizational learning and innovation, existing findings remain fragmented and dispersed across different theoretical perspectives. Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how employee voice contributes to organizational performance and the mechanisms underlying this relationship.
Keywords: employee voice; organizational performance; leadership; human resource management; psychological safety.	Methods This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis approach. A total of 47 articles published between 2022 and 2026 in reputable international journals were systematically reviewed and synthesized. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, relationships, and conceptual patterns concerning employee voice, leadership, organizational context, human resource practices, psychological mechanisms, and organizational performance.
	Findings The synthesis revealed that employee voice contributes to organizational performance indirectly through multiple interconnected mechanisms. Leadership support, high-performance work systems, psychological safety, work engagement, organizational justice, and supportive communication climates emerged as important factors facilitating the effectiveness of employee voice. Employee voice was also found to enhance innovation, organizational adaptability, knowledge sharing, and change readiness. However, the findings indicate that voice behavior may also generate psychological costs, including burnout, resource depletion, and voice regret under unfavorable organizational conditions.
	Research Implications The findings highlight the importance of establishing participative cultures, supportive leadership, and inclusive organizational systems to maximize the benefits of employee voice while protecting employee well-being.
	Originality This study contributes to the employee voice literature by integrating fragmented evidence into a multilevel framework that positions employee voice as a strategic organizational capability supporting sustainable organizational performance.
 	

INTRODUCTION

Employee voice has become an increasingly important topic in organizational behavior and human resource management literature because organizations depend heavily on employees' knowledge, experience, and situational awareness to maintain competitiveness and adaptability. Morrison (2023) described employee voice as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions intended to improve organizational

functioning. The growing complexity of organizational environments has intensified managerial interest in mechanisms that allow employees to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to organizational development. Employee voice is now regarded as a strategic organizational resource because it facilitates information exchange, problem identification, and continuous improvement across organizational levels (Hosseini & Sabokro, 2022; Farh et al., 2024). As organizations seek sustainable sources of competitive advantage, employee voice has attracted substantial scholarly attention as a potential driver of organizational effectiveness and long-term performance.

Research on organizational performance has traditionally emphasized structural characteristics, organizational size, financial resources, and management systems as primary determinants of effectiveness. Walker et al. (2024) noted that empirical evidence regarding structural determinants of performance remains inconsistent across organizational contexts. More recent perspectives have shifted attention toward intangible organizational resources, including employee participation, commitment, knowledge sharing, and innovation capabilities. Riza et al. (2025) found that participative leadership and innovation significantly contribute to organizational performance, while Sutton and Atkinson (2023) demonstrated that employee involvement practices influence performance through employee experiences and well-being. These developments have encouraged scholars to examine whether employee voice functions as a mechanism through which organizations can improve operational effectiveness, innovation outcomes, and overall organizational performance.

The theoretical relevance of employee voice is supported by several organizational perspectives. Social exchange theory suggests that employees are more likely to contribute constructive suggestions when they perceive organizational support and reciprocal relationships with management. Ng et al. (2024) demonstrated that organizational support mechanisms strengthen employee attachment and performance outcomes, while Hong et al. (2024) reported that supportive organizational practices contribute to positive employee attitudes and well-being. Within this framework, voice behavior can be interpreted as a reciprocal response through which employees contribute valuable information that benefits organizational functioning. Such contributions often support organizational learning, innovation, and adaptation, thereby creating conditions that facilitate improved organizational performance (Zhang et al., 2024; Pang et al., 2026).

A growing number of empirical studies have reported positive relationships between employee voice and organizational outcomes. Zhang et al. (2024) found that promotive voice significantly enhances perceived organizational performance, particularly when supported by innovation-oriented human resource management practices. Similar findings were reported by Kim and Cho (2024), who observed that public organizations encouraging employee voice outperformed comparable organizations under conditions of high stakeholder demands. Research conducted in public-sector settings further indicates that employee voice contributes to innovative behavior and facilitates the implementation of organizational improvements (Tsameti et al., 2023). Evidence from logistics organizations also suggests that voice behavior, when accompanied by effective supervisor listening, strengthens employee respect and improves work performance (Pang et al., 2026). Collectively, these studies indicate that employee voice may represent an important mechanism linking employee participation to organizational effectiveness.

The potential value of employee voice is further reflected in studies examining its relationship with innovation and organizational change. Potnuru et al. (2023) demonstrated that employee voice strengthens organizational readiness for change through increased commitment to organizational transformation. Similarly, Hosseini et al. (2022) reported that constructive voice facilitates opportunity recognition, knowledge utilization, and competitive advantage development in knowledge-intensive organizations. Employee voice has also been associated with creativity and innovative work behavior, particularly when organizations cultivate supportive climates and leadership practices (Jha, 2022; Cao et al., 2023). These findings suggest that employee voice may contribute to organizational performance indirectly by strengthening innovation capabilities, facilitating adaptation, and improving organizational responsiveness to environmental challenges.

Despite extensive evidence supporting positive outcomes, the literature does not present a completely consistent picture regarding the effects of employee voice. Kim and Cho (2024) reported that voice opportunities improve organizational performance primarily under conditions characterized by high external demands, whereas the same benefits may not emerge in less demanding environments. Farh et al. (2024) argued that the performance implications of voice depend not only on the existence of voice behavior but also on the quality, feasibility, and contextual relevance of the suggestions provided. Research examining organizational performance more broadly has likewise demonstrated that positive employee-oriented practices do not always translate directly into improved organizational outcomes (Sutton & Atkinson, 2023; Walker et al., 2024). Such findings indicate that the effectiveness of employee voice may be contingent upon contextual factors rather than universally applicable across organizational settings.

One explanation for these inconsistencies is the substantial influence of leadership on employee voice behavior. Zhao and Luan (2022) demonstrated through meta-analysis that transformational leadership has a strong positive relationship with employee voice. Subsequent studies have identified similar effects for servant leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, inclusive leadership, ambidextrous leadership, spiritual leadership, and digital

leadership (Song et al., 2022; Dua et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2023; Ouyang et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024; Aboobaker & KA, 2024). Leadership behaviors shape employee perceptions of psychological safety, trust, fairness, and support, all of which influence employees' willingness to express constructive opinions. Consequently, the performance outcomes associated with employee voice may partly depend on organizational leadership conditions that determine whether employee input is encouraged, accepted, and utilized effectively.

Human resource management systems constitute another important contextual factor. Badru et al. (2024) found that high-performance work systems encourage employee voice through the development of an organizational engagement climate. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2024) reported that innovation-enhancing HRM practices foster promotive voice through improved employee satisfaction. Employer-sponsored career development practices have also been linked to stronger organizational attachment and higher performance outcomes (Ng et al., 2024). Emerging evidence suggests that digital HR technologies and artificial intelligence applications may create additional communication channels that facilitate employee participation and engagement (Dutta et al., 2023; Dutta & Mishra, 2025). These findings indicate that organizational systems play an important role in determining whether employee voice becomes a productive organizational resource capable of improving performance.

The employee voice literature has also expanded beyond organizational outcomes to examine employee well-being and psychological functioning. Lainidi et al. (2025) found that higher levels of employee silence are associated with greater burnout, whereas voice behavior is negatively related to burnout. Similar findings were reported by Kassandrinou et al. (2023), who identified psychological safety as a mechanism linking employee silence, engagement, and burnout. Additional studies have associated voice behavior with engagement, trust, organizational identification, meaningful work, and employee retention (Amah, 2023; Akhmedi et al., 2023; Mansour, 2025). However, other research has identified potential costs associated with voice, including workload burdens, voice regret, emotional strain, and sleep disturbances (Newton et al., 2024; Heydarifard & Krasikova, 2023). These findings suggest that employee voice represents a multidimensional phenomenon involving both organizational benefits and individual consequences.

Although the literature on employee voice has expanded rapidly, several important gaps remain. Morrison (2023) observed that much of the existing research concentrates on antecedents of voice behavior rather than its broader organizational consequences. Similarly, Hosseini and Sabokro (2022) concluded that the employee voice literature remains fragmented across disciplinary perspectives and lacks conceptual integration. Existing studies differ substantially in terms of organizational context, industry, methodology, national setting, and outcome measures, creating challenges for drawing generalized conclusions regarding the relationship between employee voice and organizational performance. Furthermore, many studies focus on employee-level outcomes, while evidence regarding organization-level performance effects remains dispersed across different research streams.

Given these limitations, a meta-synthesis offers an appropriate approach for integrating the growing body of evidence concerning employee voice and organizational performance. By systematically synthesizing findings from diverse empirical studies, a meta-synthesis can identify recurring themes, clarify theoretical mechanisms, evaluate contextual contingencies, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how employee voice contributes to organizational effectiveness. The present study therefore aims to synthesize contemporary evidence regarding the role of employee voice in improving organizational performance, identify dominant explanatory mechanisms, and develop an integrated framework that explains the conditions under which employee voice functions as a strategic resource for organizational success.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis design to integrate empirical evidence concerning the relationship between employee voice and organizational performance. A meta-synthesis approach was selected because research on employee voice has expanded across diverse disciplines, including organizational behavior, human resource management, leadership, innovation, employee well-being, and organizational effectiveness. The diversity of research settings, theoretical perspectives, and outcome variables has resulted in fragmented findings, making a systematic synthesis necessary to identify recurring patterns and develop a comprehensive understanding of the employee voice–performance relationship. The study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to ensure methodological transparency, rigor, and reproducibility. Compared with conventional narrative reviews, meta-synthesis enables systematic interpretation of empirical findings to generate higher-order theoretical insights and conceptual explanations.

Data Sources

10 database consisted of 47 14 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2022 and 2026. The selected studies were retrieved from internationally recognized databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Springer, SAGE, Frontiers, and APA journals. The reviewed articles represented a broad range of disciplinary areas encompassing organizational behavior, human resource management, leadership studies, organizational communication, public administration, innovation management, and industrial and organizational psychology. The empirical evidence originated from various national contexts, including China, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Canada, Greece, the United States, and several multinational settings, thereby providing broad contextual coverage for the synthesis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

14 Eligibility criteria were established before the review process to ensure consistency in study selection. Only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2022 and 2026 were considered for inclusion. Studies were required to examine employee voice in relation to organizational outcomes, employ empirical research methods, provide full-text accessibility, and be published in indexed scholarly journals. Conference papers, books, editorials, conceptual articles, non-English publications, studies published before 2022, and articles unrelated to employee voice were excluded from the review. Only studies satisfying all inclusion criteria were retained for further analysis.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal article	Conference papers, books, editorials
Language	English	Non-English
Publication Year	2022–2026	Before 2022
Topic	Employee voice and organizational outcomes	Studies unrelated to employee voice
Evidence	Empirical research	Pure conceptual papers
Accessibility	Full-text available	Abstract only
Quality	Indexed and peer-reviewed journals	Non-reviewed publications

Study Selection and Corpus Development

The review process followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. Articles were initially reviewed based on title, abstract, and keywords. Full-text examination was subsequently conducted to evaluate alignment with the review objectives and eligibility criteria. The final corpus consisted of 47 studies that explicitly examined employee voice and its organizational implications. Rather than treating studies as statistical observations, each article was regarded as a source of qualitative evidence contributing conceptual insights, theoretical propositions, and empirical interpretations regarding employee voice and organizational performance.

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Data Extraction Procedure

A structured data extraction protocol was developed to ensure consistency across all included studies. Information extracted from each article comprised the author, publication year, country, industrial context, sample size, research design, theoretical framework, employee voice construct, organizational outcome, and principal empirical findings. The extracted information was systematically organized into a coding matrix to facilitate comparison, thematic coding, and synthesis.

Table 2. Data Extraction Framework

Analytical Element	Description
Author(s)	Study identification and citation details
Publication Year	Year in which the study was published
Context	Organizational, institutional, and national setting of the study
Research Objective	Main purpose, aim, or research question addressed by the study

Theoretical Lens	Underlying theory, conceptual framework, or perspective guiding the research
Voice Dimension	Forms, types, or dimensions of employee voice examined in the study
Organizational Outcome	Performance-related, behavioral, or organizational outcomes associated with employee voice
Key Findings	Principal empirical results and major conclusions reported by the study
Emerging Concepts	New themes, patterns, or concepts identified as relevant to the synthesis process

The extracted information was compiled into a synthesis matrix that served as the foundation for coding and thematic interpretation.

Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using an adapted Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) framework. Evaluation focused on conceptual clarity, methodological transparency, coherence between research questions and findings, analytical rigor, and contribution to understanding employee voice.

Table 3. Quality Appraisal Framework

Criterion	Assessment Focus
Conceptual Clarity	Clear definition of constructs and theoretical foundations
Methodological Transparency	Explicit description of research design, data collection procedures, and analytical methods
Analytical Rigor	Credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of data analysis and interpretation
Findings	Consistency, coherence, and alignment between results and research objectives
Contribution	Relevance and significance of the study for differentiated instruction research and synthesis objectives

Thematic Synthesis Process

The data analysis followed the thematic synthesis approach proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008), which was implemented through an iterative and systematic process to ensure a comprehensive synthesis of the evidence. The analysis began with open coding, in which relevant findings, interpretations, and conceptual statements from each selected study were examined line-by-line to identify recurring ideas related to employee voice and organizational performance, with initial codes assigned to represent emerging concepts. Subsequently, codes exhibiting conceptual similarities were systematically organized into broader descriptive themes, enabling the identification of consistent patterns across the reviewed studies while preserving the contextual meaning of the original findings. This iterative analytical process facilitated the integration of evidence from diverse studies into coherent thematic categories, thereby providing a rigorous foundation for interpreting the relationships between employee voice and organizational performance within the existing body of literature.

Generation of Analytical Themes

The final stage involved the development of analytical themes that transcended individual studies. Through constant comparison and interpretive synthesis, broader theoretical explanations were constructed regarding how employee voice contributes to organizational performance. Four major analytical themes emerged from the synthesis: Employee Voice as a Catalyst for Organizational Innovation, leadership as an Enabler of Voice Effectiveness, Human Resource Practices as Supporting Mechanisms for Voice, Contextual Conditions Shaping Voice–Performance Relationships.

Conceptual Analytical Framework

The synthesis revealed that employee voice contributes to organizational performance through several interconnected organizational mechanisms. Across studies, employee voice was consistently associated with innovation capability, knowledge sharing, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and organizational learning. The strength of these relationships was shaped by contextual conditions, including leadership characteristics, human resource management practices, organizational justice, psychological safety, and organizational culture.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was enhanced through transparent documentation of review procedures, systematic coding protocols, iterative comparison across studies, and continuous refinement of emerging themes. Analytical decisions were documented throughout the synthesis process to establish dependability and facilitate replication.

Ethical Considerations

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from published scholarly literature. No direct interaction with human participants occurred, and no confidential information was collected. Ethical approval was therefore not required. All sources were acknowledged and cited in accordance with established standards of academic integrity and responsible research practice.

RESULTS

Study Selection and Characteristics

Following the PRISMA procedure, the initial search across Scopus-indexed databases yielded a broad pool of publications concerning employee voice and organizational outcomes. After removing duplicate records and screening titles, abstracts, and eligibility criteria, 47 studies published between 2022 and 2026 were retained for qualitative synthesis. These studies represented diverse industrial settings, including manufacturing, logistics, higher education, hospitality, banking, healthcare, information technology, public administration, and service organizations. The included articles consisted of empirical studies, literature reviews, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Included Studies (n = 47)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency
Publication period	2022	14
	2023	17
	2024	10
	2025	5
	2026	1
Research design	Quantitative empirical	35
	Meta-analysis	7
	Systematic review	3
	Qualitative study	1
	Literature review	1
Region	Asia	28
	Europe	8
	North America	6
	Middle East	3
	Africa	2
Main contexts	Manufacturing	8
	Service industries	7
	Public sector	5
	Higher education	5
	Banking	4
	Healthcare	4
	Logistics	2
	Hospitality	2
	ICT	2
	Others	8

The synthesis revealed that employee voice research has expanded considerably after 2022. Most studies originated from Asian contexts, particularly China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. Quantitative approaches dominated the literature, whereas qualitative investigations remained limited. Studies were conducted across a wide range of organizational settings, suggesting that employee voice is relevant across sectors.

Distribution of Organizational Outcomes Associated with Employee Voice

The reviewed studies reported various consequences of employee voice beyond individual performance. Organizational outcomes were found to encompass innovation, work engagement, organizational commitment, change readiness, retention, creativity, and overall performance.

Table 2. Organizational Outcomes Identified Across the Literature

Organizational Outcome	Representative Studies
Organizational performance	Zhang et al. (2024); Kim and Cho (2024); Pang et al. (2026); Riza et al. (2025)
Innovation capability	Jha (2022); Tsameti et al. (2023); Cao et al. (2023)
Employee engagement	Dutta et al. (2023); Amah (2023); Song et al. (2022)
Organizational commitment	Hong et al. (2024); Riza et al. (2025)
Change readiness	Potnuru et al. (2023)
Knowledge sharing	Lee et al. (2023); Hosseini et al. (2022)
Creativity	Cao et al. (2023)
Retention and intention to stay	Aboobaker and KA (2024)
Well-being	Ejaz et al. (2022)
Adaptability and transformation	Yang et al. (2024); Ouyang et al. (2022)

Across the reviewed studies, organizational performance emerged as a multidimensional construct. Instead of being limited to financial outcomes, performance was frequently manifested through innovation, engagement, adaptability, creativity, and employee retention.

Evidence of Positive Relationships Between Employee Voice and Organizational Performance

Most studies reported beneficial consequences of employee voice for organizations. The findings consistently indicated that employee voice facilitated organizational learning, innovation, knowledge sharing, and improved work outcomes.

Table 3. Positive Effects of Employee Voice Identified in the Literature

Positive Effects	Supporting Studies
Improved perceived organizational performance	Zhang et al. (2024)
Enhanced organizational effectiveness	Kim and Cho (2024)
Increased innovation behavior	Tsameti et al. (2023)
Increased creativity	Cao et al. (2023)
Better work engagement	Amah (2023); Song et al. (2022)
Greater change readiness	Potnuru et al. (2023)
Improved performance through supervisor listening	Pang et al. (2026)
Increased knowledge sharing	Lee et al. (2023)
Better employee well-being	Ejaz et al. (2022)
Higher intention to stay	Aboobaker and KA (2024)

The evidence demonstrated that employee voice generally contributed to favorable organizational outcomes. Studies consistently portrayed voice behavior as an important mechanism for enhancing organizational adaptability and effectiveness.

Leadership Factors Supporting Employee Voice

A large proportion of studies highlighted leadership as a major factor associated with employee voice behavior. Different leadership styles were found to encourage employee participation and constructive expression.

Table 4. Leadership Approaches Associated with Employee Voice

Leadership Style	Representative Studies
Transformational leadership	Zhao and Luan (2022); Potnuru et al. (2023)
Ethical leadership	Dua et al. (2023); Ejaz et al. (2022)
Servant leadership	Song et al. (2022)
Authentic leadership	Kim et al. (2023)
Inclusive leadership	Qi et al. (2023)
Ambidextrous leadership	Ouyang et al. (2022); Li et al. (2023)
Digital leadership	Yang et al. (2024)
Spiritual leadership	Aboobaker and KA (2024)
Leadership emotional intelligence	Amah (2023)
Leader humor	Cao et al. (2023)

Leadership-related variables represented one of the most frequently recurring patterns across the reviewed literature. Multiple leadership approaches were associated with greater employee willingness to express ideas and suggestions.

Human Resource Practices Facilitating Employee Voice

Several studies emphasized the importance of organizational practices and HR systems in strengthening employee voice and subsequent organizational outcomes.

Table 5. Human Resource Mechanisms Supporting Employee Voice

HR Practices	Studies
High-performance work systems	Jha (2022); Badru et al. (2024)
Innovation-enhancing HRM	Zhang et al. (2024)
Employee involvement practices	Potnuru et al. (2023)
Career development practices	Ng et al. (2024)
Employee benefits and support systems	Hong et al. (2024)
AI-enabled HR technologies	Dutta et al. (2023); Dutta and Mishra (2025)
Communication systems and social media channels	Ghani and Malik (2023)
Well-being-oriented HRM	Mansour (2025)
Training and development programs	Sutton and Atkinson (2023)

The findings indicated that employee voice frequently emerged within organizational systems characterized by supportive HR practices, communication channels, and developmental opportunities.

Mediating Mechanisms Linking Employee Voice and Performance

The synthesis identified several mechanisms explaining how employee voice translates into organizational outcomes.

Table 6. Mediating Mechanisms Identified Across Studies

Mediating Variable	Supporting Studies
Work engagement	Song et al. (2022); Liu et al. (2022); Yang et al. (2024)
Employee empowerment	Yang et al. (2024)
Psychological safety	Lee et al. (2023); Kassandrinou et al. (2023)
Organizational commitment	Riza et al. (2025)
Commitment to change	Potnuru et al. (2023)
Trust in leadership	Amah (2023)
Relational energy	Zhu et al. (2023)

Employee respect	Pang et al. (2026)
Organizational identification	Akhmadi et al. (2023)
Job satisfaction	Ejaz et al. (2022)

The reviewed evidence suggested that employee voice rarely affected organizational performance directly. Instead, various psychological and relational mechanisms appeared repeatedly across studies.

Contextual Conditions Influencing Voice Effectiveness

Although employee voice was predominantly associated with positive outcomes, the strength and consequences of voice varied according to contextual factors.

Table 7. Contextual Factors Shaping Voice–Performance Relationships

Contextual Conditions	Studies
Organizational climate	Tsameti et al. (2023)
Organizational justice	Qi et al. (2023)
Team culture	Yue et al. (2025)
Psychological safety	Lee et al. (2023)
Supervisor listening	Pang et al. (2026)
Leader-member exchange quality	Zhu et al. (2023)
Ambidextrous culture	Ouyang et al. (2022)
Social sustainability orientation	Pang et al. (2026)
Communication quality	Yue et al. (2025)
Interpersonal justice	Aboobaker and KA (2024)

The studies consistently showed that contextual environments played an important role in determining the extent to which employee voice translated into beneficial outcomes.

Negative and Resource-Cost Consequences of Employee Voice

Although positive outcomes dominated the literature, several studies documented adverse consequences associated with employee voice.

Table 8. Negative Outcomes and Constraints Associated with Voice

Negative Outcomes	Studies
Voice regret	Newton et al. (2024)
Emotional exhaustion and burnout	Lainidi et al. (2025)
Employee silence resulting from burnout	Kassandrinou et al. (2023)
Insomnia caused by prohibitive voice	Heydarifard and Krasikova (2023)
Resource depletion	Newton et al. (2024)
Reduced future voice behavior	Newton et al. (2024)
Toxic leadership effects	Gupta and Chawla (2024)
Workplace incivility leading to silence	Gustiawan et al. (2023)

The findings indicated that employee voice was not universally beneficial. Certain forms of voice, especially when unsupported by organizational resources, were accompanied by psychological costs and could discourage subsequent speaking-up behavior.

Emergent Themes from the Meta-Synthesis

Based on the thematic synthesis process, four major analytical themes emerged from the included studies.

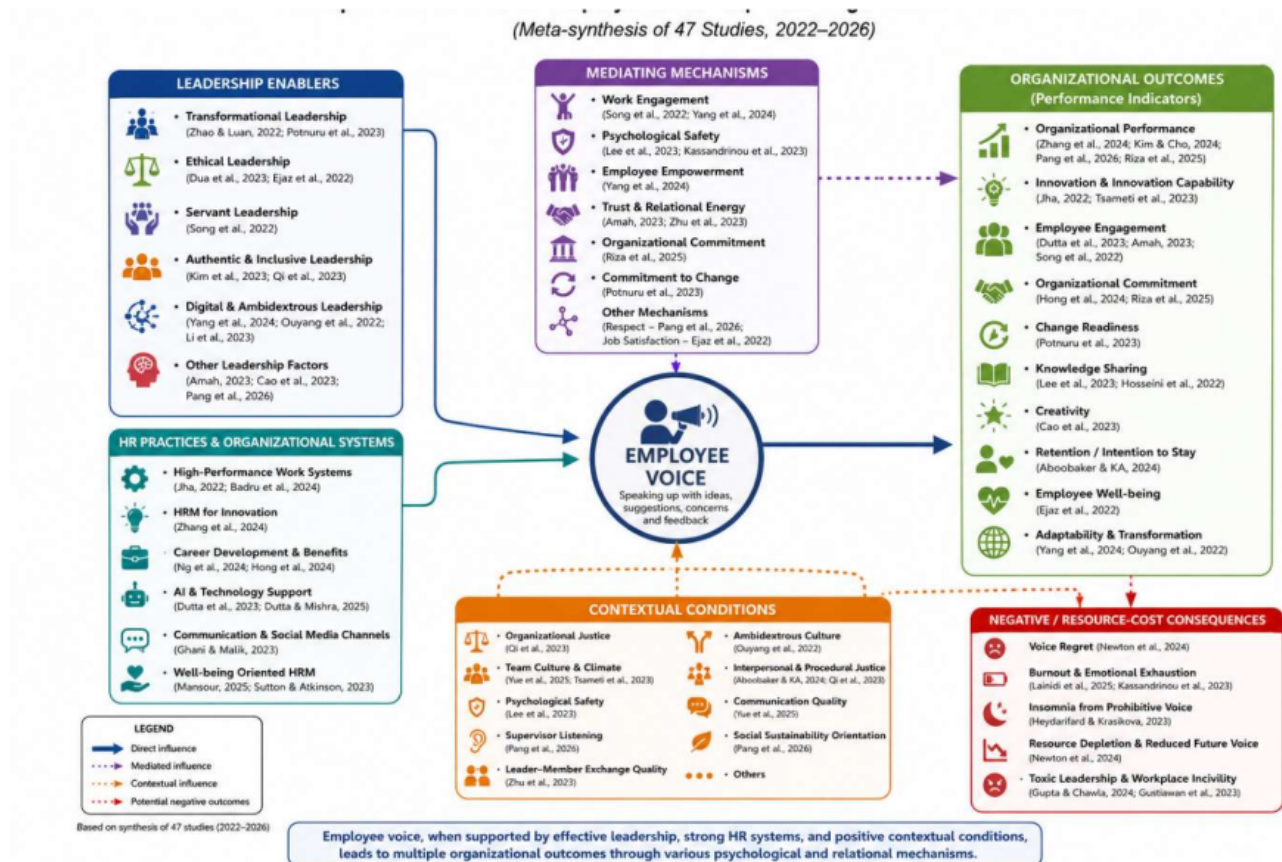


Figure 1. Emergent Themes from the Meta-Synthesis

DISCUSSION

Employee Voice as a Strategic Resource for Organizational Performance

The findings synthesized in this study indicate that employee voice should no longer be conceptualized merely as discretionary communicative behavior, but rather as a strategic organizational resource capable of generating sustainable performance advantages. Across the reviewed studies, voice consistently emerged as a mechanism through which employees contribute knowledge, communicate concerns, and propose constructive ideas that facilitate organizational adaptation and effectiveness. Morrison (2023) emphasized that contemporary employee voice research has shifted from examining simple antecedent–outcome relationships toward understanding voice as a dynamic organizational capability embedded within broader organizational systems. Similarly, Hosseini and Sabokro (2022) argued that organizational voice represents an essential component of participative management, while Howard and Serviss (2022) demonstrated that prosocial forms of employee participation generate benefits at both individual and organizational levels, thereby supporting the notion that employee voice contributes to broader organizational functioning rather than isolated employee outcomes.

The synthesis further demonstrates that organizational performance associated with employee voice extends beyond traditional financial indicators toward multidimensional outcomes encompassing innovation, commitment, engagement, adaptability, and knowledge integration. Zhang et al. (2024) showed that innovation-enhancing HRM stimulates promotive voice and subsequently improves perceived organizational performance, while Kim and Cho (2024) found that voice opportunities become increasingly valuable when organizations face competing demands and environmental uncertainty. Likewise, Riza et al. (2025) reported that participative leadership and innovation positively contribute to organizational performance and commitment, suggesting that employee participation serves as an important mechanism connecting internal capabilities with organizational effectiveness. These findings resonate with Walker et al. (2024), who argued that organizational performance should be understood as a multidimensional construct shaped by structural and contextual factors rather than solely by efficiency indicators, thereby reinforcing the strategic relevance of employee voice within contemporary organizations.

Another important observation concerns the relational mechanisms through which employee voice contributes to organizational outcomes. Pang et al. (2026) demonstrated that congruence between employee voice and supervisor listening significantly improves performance in Logistics 4.0 settings, suggesting that voice generates value only when organizations possess the capability to absorb and respond to employee input. Furthermore, Atz et al. (2023) emphasized that sustainable performance increasingly depends upon organizational capacities to integrate social and behavioral resources into broader performance systems, a proposition that aligns with the knowledge-sharing perspective advanced by Hosseini et al. (2022). From this perspective, employee voice functions as an intangible organizational asset that facilitates learning, adaptation, and resilience, thereby transforming individual experiences and expertise into collective capabilities that support long-term organizational performance.

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Employee Voice as a Catalyst for Innovation and Organizational Adaptability

The synthesis revealed that innovation represents one of the most frequently reported consequences associated with employee voice, suggesting that voice behavior functions as an important mechanism through which organizations enhance adaptability and continuous improvement. Zhang et al. (2024) demonstrated that innovation-enhancing HRM indirectly influences organizational performance through promotive voice, highlighting the mediating role of employee participation in converting organizational resources into performance outcomes. Similarly, Tsameti et al. (2023) reported that employee voice positively influences innovative behavior within public organizations, thereby supporting the proposition that innovation is facilitated by employees' willingness to express ideas and recommendations. These findings indicate that voice contributes to organizational adaptability by expanding the range of information available for decision-making and increasing opportunities for experimentation and improvement.

The relationship between voice and innovation also appears to operate through creativity-related processes and social interactions. Cao et al. (2023) demonstrated that leader humor enhances employee creativity through voice behavior, indicating that voice acts as an intermediary mechanism translating supportive leadership into creative outcomes. Furthermore, Akhmadi et al. (2023) found that organizational identification strengthens pro-social voice behavior, thereby promoting collective orientations that facilitate knowledge sharing and innovation. Lee et al. (2023) similarly emphasized the importance of coworker knowledge sharing and psychological safety in encouraging employee voice, suggesting that innovative outcomes emerge not only from individual initiative but also from collaborative environments characterized by trust and mutual support. These findings collectively indicate that employee voice contributes to innovation through relational and cognitive mechanisms rather than through isolated behavioral processes.

The findings additionally suggest that organizational adaptability depends not merely on the existence of voice behavior but also on the quality and contextual relevance of employee contributions. Farh et al. (2024) proposed a contextualized understanding of voice quality, arguing that voice effectiveness depends on dimensions such as feasibility, desirability, and contextual appropriateness. Likewise, Potnuru et al. (2023) found that employee voice contributes to organizational change readiness through commitment-to-change mechanisms moderated by transformational leadership, indicating that voice facilitates adaptation when supported by favorable organizational conditions. These observations correspond with the findings of Ouyang et al. (2022), who demonstrated that ambidextrous leadership and organizational culture strengthen work motivation and employee voice, suggesting that organizations possessing adaptive cultures are more capable of translating employee contributions into innovative and performance-enhancing outcomes.

Leadership Mechanisms Enabling Voice Effectiveness

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Leadership emerged as one of the most dominant themes across the synthesized literature, highlighting the importance of leadership styles in shaping employees' willingness to speak up and participate in organizational processes. Meta-analytic evidence provided by Zhao and Luan (2022) confirmed that transformational leadership exerts a positive influence on employee voice behavior, suggesting that inspirational and developmental leadership practices encourage employees to contribute ideas and challenge existing procedures. Similar conclusions were reported by Song et al. (2022), who demonstrated that servant leadership promotes employee voice through relational mechanisms, while Kim et al. (2023) found that authentic leadership strengthens employee-organization relationships and facilitates voice behavior in response to workplace dissatisfaction. Collectively, these findings indicate that leadership effectiveness in promoting voice depends primarily on the creation of trust and supportive interpersonal relationships rather than on hierarchical authority.

Beyond transformational and servant leadership, several studies identified additional leadership forms that facilitate voice behavior and organizational effectiveness. Qi et al. (2023) demonstrated that inclusive leadership positively influences employee voice, with organizational justice perceptions acting as an important moderating factor. Similarly, Dua et al. (2023) reported that ethical leadership enhances employee voice across demographic groups, while Ejaz et al. (2022) showed that ethical leadership contributes to employee well-being through job satisfaction and

voice mechanisms. Amah (2023) further revealed that leaders' emotional intelligence influences employee engagement through trust in direct leadership and employee voice, suggesting that emotional competencies constitute important resources for fostering employee participation. These findings collectively imply that leadership effectiveness is largely contingent upon leaders' capacities to cultivate trust, fairness, and psychological support within organizational environments.

Emerging forms of leadership also appear increasingly relevant in contemporary organizational contexts characterized by digitalization and complexity. Yang et al. (2024) found that digital leadership positively influences employee voice through empowerment and work engagement, indicating that leadership capabilities must evolve alongside technological transformation. Likewise, Li et al. (2023) demonstrated that ambidextrous leadership influences employee voice through emotional expression and leader-subordinate similarity, whereas Sulphery and Jasim (2022) highlighted the moderating role of paradoxical leadership in mitigating the negative consequences of organizational silence. Aboobaker and KA (2024) further reported that spiritual leadership and interpersonal justice contribute to employees' intention to remain within organizations through voice behavior. Taken together, these findings suggest that leadership constitutes a critical enabling mechanism that determines whether employee voice becomes an organizational resource or remains an underutilized behavioral potential.

Human Resource Practices and Organizational Systems Supporting Employee Voice

The findings of this meta-synthesis indicate that employee voice is not an isolated behavioral phenomenon but rather a consequence of organizational systems that provide opportunities, resources, and motivational conditions for participation. High-performance work systems emerged as one of the most frequently reported organizational mechanisms facilitating employee voice and subsequent performance outcomes. Jha (2022) demonstrated that high-performance work systems indirectly stimulate voice behavior through motivational pathways, while Badru et al. (2024) found that organizational engagement climate strengthens the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee voice. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2024) reported that innovation-enhancing HRM practices promote employee voice and improve perceived organizational performance through multilevel serial mediation processes, indicating that voice is embedded within broader human resource architectures designed to support organizational competitiveness.

The evidence further suggests that developmental and supportive human resource practices contribute substantially to voice-related outcomes. Ng et al. (2024), through a meta-analysis, demonstrated that employer-sponsored career development practices positively influence employee performance and reduce turnover intentions, implying that investment in employee growth strengthens reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations. Likewise, Hong et al. (2024) found that employee benefits and supportive organizational practices enhance perceived organizational support, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being, all of which create favorable conditions for employee participation. Mansour (2025) additionally reported that well-being-oriented HRM practices improve employee retention and meaningfulness at work, while Sutton and Atkinson (2023) emphasized that organizational performance should not be pursued at the expense of employee well-being because employee experiences serve as important mediating mechanisms linking HR practices with organizational effectiveness. These findings collectively indicate that supportive HR systems provide the social and psychological infrastructure necessary for sustaining employee voice and its organizational consequences.

The increasing digitalization of organizations has also introduced new mechanisms that facilitate voice processes and employee engagement. Dutta et al. (2023) demonstrated that artificial intelligence-enabled chatbots augment employee voice and contribute to higher engagement levels, suggesting that technological tools may complement traditional communication mechanisms. Similarly, Dutta and Mishra (2025) found that AI-based virtual assistants positively influence employee engagement by improving access to information and communication quality. Ghani and Malik (2023) further argued that social media platforms represent emerging spaces through which employees express opinions and participate in organizational conversations, thereby expanding voice opportunities beyond conventional hierarchical channels. Collectively, these findings suggest that contemporary employee voice increasingly depends upon integrated human resource systems and digital infrastructures capable of facilitating information exchange and participation across organizational levels.

Psychological and Relational Mechanisms Underlying Voice-Performance Relationships

The synthesis demonstrates that the relationship between employee voice and organizational performance rarely operates through direct linear pathways, but instead involves complex psychological and relational mechanisms. Psychological safety emerged as one of the most prominent mediating factors identified across the reviewed studies. Lee et al. (2023) found that coworker knowledge sharing and psychological safety positively influence employee voice, indicating that individuals are more likely to express ideas when interpersonal risks are minimized. Similarly, Kassandrinou et al. (2023) demonstrated that psychological safety mediates the relationship between burnout, silence,

and work engagement among teachers, suggesting that supportive psychological climates are essential for transforming employee participation into positive outcomes. These findings reinforce Morrison's (2023) argument that voice behavior is fundamentally influenced by perceptions regarding the safety and consequences of speaking up within organizational environments.

In addition to psychological safety, engagement and trust emerged as important relational mechanisms underlying voice effectiveness. Liu et al. (2022) demonstrated that moral identity promotes employee voice through work engagement and leader secure-base support, emphasizing the importance of relational resources in facilitating proactive behaviors. Likewise, Amao (2023) found that leaders' emotional intelligence indirectly influences employee engagement through trust in direct leadership and employee voice, while Zhu et al. (2023) reported that relational energy and leader-member exchange quality strengthen the effects of supervisor feedback on employee voice. These findings suggest that voice behavior is not simply a function of individual disposition but depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships and the extent to which employees perceive leaders as supportive and trustworthy. Consequently, organizational performance benefits associated with voice are mediated by relational mechanisms that encourage employees to invest cognitive and emotional resources in organizational improvement.

Several studies additionally revealed that motivational and identity-based mechanisms contribute to the effectiveness of employee voice. Potnuru et al. (2023) demonstrated that commitment to change mediates the relationship between employee voice and organizational change readiness, indicating that voice behavior enhances adaptive capacities through psychological commitment. Akhmadi et al. (2023) similarly reported that organizational identification strengthens prosocial voice behavior, while Pang et al. (2026) found that perceived respect and supervisor listening jointly contribute to performance outcomes. Chen et al. (2023), although focusing on pay-for-performance systems, emphasized that fairness perceptions and cognitive evaluations influence work performance, implying that employee voice may become more effective when embedded within equitable organizational environments. Collectively, these findings suggest that employee voice influences organizational performance through multidimensional psychological mechanisms involving trust, identification, engagement, commitment, and perceptions of fairness.

Contextual Conditions Shaping the Effectiveness of Employee Voice

The findings synthesized in this study indicate that the effectiveness of employee voice is strongly contingent upon contextual factors operating at interpersonal, team, and organizational levels. Employee voice does not automatically generate beneficial outcomes; rather, its consequences depend on whether organizational contexts provide support and responsiveness toward employee contributions. Qi et al. (2023) demonstrated that organizational justice moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee voice, suggesting that fairness perceptions strengthen employees' willingness to communicate ideas and concerns. Similarly, Yue et al. (2025) found that supervisory communication, team culture, and team relationships significantly shape voice behavior, emphasizing that employees evaluate social norms and relational climates before deciding whether speaking up is worthwhile. These findings support the contextual perspective advanced by Farh et al. (2024), who argued that voice quality and effectiveness should be understood in relation to situational dynamics rather than as universal behavioral characteristics.

Organizational culture and leadership contexts also emerged as important conditions influencing voice outcomes. Ouyang et al. (2022) reported that ambidextrous culture strengthens the positive effects of leadership on employee voice through work motivation, while Li et al. (2023) showed that leader-subordinate similarity and emotional expression influence how leadership affects employee participation. Kim et al. (2023) further demonstrated that employee-organization relationships determine voice behavior during dissatisfying work events, highlighting the importance of relational contexts in shaping employee responses. Hosseini et al. (2022) similarly emphasized that knowledge-based organizations require environments characterized by openness and learning orientation to sustain voice behavior and knowledge exchange. These findings indicate that contextual characteristics determine whether employee voice becomes a source of innovation and performance or remains underutilized due to unfavorable organizational conditions.

Another contextual factor concerns the importance of communication reciprocity and listening mechanisms. Pang et al. (2026) demonstrated that congruence between employee voice and supervisor listening improves performance, suggesting that voice alone is insufficient without organizational responsiveness. Zhu et al. (2023) similarly showed that leader-member exchange quality strengthens the impact of supervisor feedback on employee voice, indicating that relational quality affects the effectiveness of communication processes. Tedone and Bruk-Lee (2022) additionally found that personality traits influence employees' tendencies to speak up, implying that contextual and individual factors jointly shape voice behavior. Taken together, these findings suggest that employee voice is fundamentally a context-sensitive phenomenon whose effectiveness depends upon interactions among leadership quality, communication processes, organizational culture, and individual characteristics.

The Dark Side of Employee Voice: Resource Depletion and Psychological Costs

Although employee voice is predominantly associated with positive organizational outcomes, the findings of this meta-synthesis reveal that voice behavior is not universally beneficial and may generate substantial psychological and emotional costs for employees. Morrison (2023) argued that contemporary voice research has increasingly acknowledged the paradoxical nature of speaking up, recognizing that employees often face uncertainty regarding the consequences of expressing concerns or suggestions. Consistent with this perspective, Newton et al. (2024) demonstrated that voice behavior accompanied by supervisor delegation may produce voicer regret because employees experience increased responsibilities and resource depletion after expressing constructive suggestions. These findings indicate that voice behavior requires cognitive, emotional, and relational investments, implying that organizations cannot assume that encouraging employee voice automatically results in positive consequences without considering the burdens imposed on employees.

The synthesis further reveals that employee voice and silence are closely associated with employee well-being and burnout. Lainidi et al. (2025), through a systematic review and meta-analysis, demonstrated significant relationships between burnout, employee silence, and voice behavior, suggesting that psychological exhaustion influences employees' willingness and capacity to speak up. Similar findings were reported by Kassandrinou et al. (2023), who found that burnout negatively affects engagement and indirectly contributes to silence through reduced psychological safety. Heydarifard and Krasikova (2023) additionally showed that speaking up may result in insomnia and sleep disturbances because employees continue to mentally process interpersonal risks and possible repercussions associated with voice enactment. These findings suggest that voice behavior represents a demanding form of proactive behavior that consumes emotional and cognitive resources, thereby highlighting the importance of considering employee well-being when designing participative organizational systems.

Another factor contributing to the dark side of employee voice concerns adverse organizational environments that inhibit participation and encourage silence. Gustiawan et al. (2023) demonstrated that workplace incivility promotes employee silence, with job embeddedness and power distance influencing the strength of this relationship. Similarly, Gupta and Chawla (2024) emphasized that toxic leadership creates environments characterized by fear, distrust, and emotional strain, thereby discouraging employees from expressing concerns and reducing organizational learning capacities. Sulphey and Jasim (2022), however, found that paradoxical leadership can mitigate some negative effects of organizational silence by creating balanced environments that accommodate both authority and participation. Collectively, these findings indicate that employee voice is embedded within resource-based and emotional dynamics, suggesting that organizations must provide supportive climates and psychological safeguards to ensure that voice contributes to performance without generating unintended negative consequences for employees.

Toward an Integrated Framework of Employee Voice and Organizational Performance

The findings synthesized in this study suggest that employee voice should be conceptualized as a multilevel and multidimensional phenomenon embedded within broader organizational systems rather than as an isolated employee behavior. The systematic review conducted by Hosseini and Sabokro (2022) demonstrated that organizational voice encompasses numerous antecedents, mediators, and contextual conditions that interact dynamically across organizational settings. Likewise, Morrison (2023) argued that the field has evolved from a narrow focus on antecedents toward a broader understanding of how voice contributes to organizational learning, adaptation, and effectiveness. Consequently, the relationship between employee voice and organizational performance should be understood through integrated frameworks that account for leadership, human resource systems, psychological mechanisms, and contextual variables operating simultaneously rather than independently.

The evidence synthesized across the reviewed studies further indicates that employee voice contributes to organizational performance through complex chains of influence rather than through direct effects alone. Transformational leadership, ethical leadership, inclusive leadership, servant leadership, digital leadership, and spiritual leadership provide supportive environments that encourage voice behavior (Zhao & Luan, 2022; Song et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024; Aboobaker & KA, 2024). Human resource practices, career development initiatives, and supportive organizational systems create structural conditions that facilitate participation and engagement (Badru et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2024). Psychological mechanisms, including work engagement, trust, commitment, and organizational identification, subsequently transform voice behavior into innovation, adaptability, and performance outcomes (Amah, 2023; Potnuru et al., 2023; Akhmadi et al., 2023). Therefore, employee voice should be viewed as an intermediate capability situated between organizational resources and strategic performance outcomes rather than as an independent predictor of effectiveness.

The findings additionally suggest that future organizational environments characterized by digitalization, artificial intelligence, and increasing complexity require more contextualized understandings of employee voice. Emerging technologies such as AI-enabled chatbots and virtual assistants have expanded opportunities for employee

participation and communication beyond conventional hierarchical channels (Dutta et al., 2023; Dutta & Mishra, 2025). Social media platforms have similarly transformed the nature of employee voice by enabling more decentralized and continuous forms of interaction between employees and organizations (Ghani & Malik, 2023). Moreover, contextual perspectives proposed by Farh et al. (2024) indicate that voice quality and dynamics vary across organizational stages and socialization processes, implying that voice effectiveness cannot be generalized without considering situational contingencies. Taken together, the findings support an integrated perspective in which employee voice constitutes a strategic organizational capability emerging from interactions among leadership processes, organizational systems, psychological resources, and contextual environments, ultimately contributing to sustainable organizational performance and long-term organizational resilience.

CONCLUSION

This meta-synthesis demonstrates that employee voice constitutes a strategic organizational capability that contributes to organizational performance through complex interactions among leadership practices, human resource systems, psychological mechanisms, and contextual conditions. Rather than functioning solely as a communicative behavior, employee voice represents an important channel through which organizations mobilize employee knowledge, strengthen innovation capacity, facilitate organizational adaptability, and enhance long-term effectiveness. The synthesis also indicates that the relationship between employee voice and organizational performance is indirect and contingent, relying heavily on supportive leadership, organizational justice, employee engagement, psychological safety, and reciprocal communication mechanisms. Accordingly, employee voice should be understood as an integral component of organizational systems that support sustainable performance and organizational resilience.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the employee voice literature by providing a comprehensive synthesis that integrates fragmented findings across leadership, human resource management, organizational behavior, and performance research. The present study advances the understanding of employee voice by positioning it as a multilevel capability operating through interconnected organizational, relational, and psychological processes rather than as an isolated behavioral construct. Practically, the findings imply that managers and organizations should develop participative cultures, supportive leadership systems, and inclusive communication systems to maximize the benefits derived from employee voice. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of balancing performance objectives with employee well-being to ensure that speaking up remains a sustainable organizational resource rather than a source of psychological strain and resource depletion.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis approach and relied exclusively on previously published articles, which may limit the ability to establish causal relationships and quantify the magnitude of effects among variables. Second, the reviewed studies originated from diverse organizational contexts, sectors, and countries, potentially introducing contextual heterogeneity that may influence the generalizability of the synthesized findings. Third, despite incorporating recent studies, the review mainly focused on formal organizational settings and paid relatively limited attention to emerging work arrangements, hybrid workplaces, and rapidly evolving digital ecosystems.

Future studies are encouraged to examine employee voice within increasingly digital and technology-driven work environments, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence, remote work arrangements, and platform-based organizations. Subsequent research may also adopt longitudinal, mixed-method, or cross-cultural approaches to explore how voice mechanisms evolve over time and differ across institutional settings. Moreover, future investigations should examine the dark side of employee voice more extensively, including emotional exhaustion, voice fatigue, and resource depletion associated with continuous participation demands. Such directions would enrich current theoretical understanding and provide more contextualized explanations regarding the effectiveness of employee voice.

This study contributes to society by emphasizing that organizational performance is not solely determined by technological resources or managerial authority but also by the capacity to recognize and value employees' ideas, concerns, and experiences. Encouraging open communication, mutual respect, and participative practices may help organizations create healthier workplaces, improve employee well-being, and strengthen organizational sustainability. Consequently, the broader public including employees, managers, policymakers, and organizations may benefit from understanding employee voice as a mechanism that promotes not only organizational effectiveness but also more inclusive, adaptive, and human-centered workplaces.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this manuscript, artificial intelligence tools were utilized for language editing, grammar correction, and readability enhancement. All intellectual contributions, including conceptualization, analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of findings, remain the sole work of the author. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all scholarly content presented in this paper.

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