

The Link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment: A Systematic Review

Washington Machokoto^{a,*}

^a Faculty of Business, Law & Tourism, University of Sunderland, Sunderland, United Kingdom

*Corresponding Author: washington.machokoto@research.sunderland.ac.uk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34256/1945>

Received: 12-11-2019

Accepted: 23-12-2019

Abstract: This systematic review aimed to explore 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.

Keywords: Employee Voice, Affective Commitment. Systematic Review, Link.

1. Introduction

The literature in Employee Voice and Affective Commitment has continued to expand in recent years among organisational scholars and practitioners. This interest emanates from the belief and evidence that those with a voice in the organisation are the

also committed employees [1- 3]. However, the current literature on Employee Voice and Affective Commitment show that there have been evolving somewhat independently. For example, Maynes and Podsakoff [4] recently found that Employee Voice has become broad,

and Affective Commitment was viewed in different angles by many successive scholars [5-10]. Nevertheless, Employee Voice is discussed by Organisational Affective Commitment researchers and Affective Commitment by Employee Voice researchers. However, neither concept has an agreed definition because of the intrigues and branches within each domain. Moreover, there have been few attempts to find the connection between the two ideas.

Despite both theories being popular in organisational psychology, the concepts differ from origins, with Affective Commitment emerged from sociology scholars. For example, Becker and Kanter [11, 5] and became popular in organisational behaviour literature [12]. However, the Affective Commitment was expanded and embedded in many-body of research, such as understanding job performance [13, 14] and organisational citizenship behaviour [15, 16]. On the other hand, Employee Voice emerged from political economics and ideology. Hirschman considered voice in developmental economics [17]. And later on, the concept was embedded in much organisational literature, such as motivation [18-20]. With this diverting and growing body of literature, the question remains, are these concepts linked?

1.1 Employee Voice

Affective Commitment has been in the literature for long, since 1968 when Kanter described the cohesion commitment as an affective attachment to the organisation. The concept was echoed by Buchanan, who also described conceptualised commitment as an emotional attachment to the organisation [6]. Then, Affective Commitment was considered in terms of its strengths as employees identify attached to the organisation, by previous studies [7-9]. These studies were already attempting to showcase the influence of Affective Commitment concept on the individual employee. Porter and company went on to develop a 15-item scale which they called

Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to strengthen their argument. Arguably, Mowday et al. advocated for the OCQ as a measure of Affective Commitment [9]. Now OCQ is commonly used in psychometric testing and measurement of Affective Commitment. Allen and Meyer later developed the idea to confirm Affective Commitment as a strong emotional attachment to the organisation [10]. Therefore, Affective Commitment makes the growing body of literature in organisational psychology.

Same as Employee Voice, Affective Commitment is essential to the overall performance of the organisation. In this paper, the researcher argues that Employee Voice and Affective Commitment are distinguishable and could be related concepts. The researcher suggests that the correlation could be on how to use the Employee Voice and Affective Commitment material to meet their research objectives, words being used by previous scholars. The current researcher believes that fewer studies were conducted to show that there is a link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment.

1.2 Affective Commitment

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2. Methods

An integrative survey of literature conducted using Efrat Efron and Ravid's proposed guidelines [25]. The methodological rigour of the chosen studies was examined using the critical appraisal skills programme, to increase the reliability of the current review [26]. The constant comparative method was employed to analyse and synthesise data from chosen peer-reviewed studies [27]. The PRISMA checklist was adopted as a reporting guide for the studies rigorous selection process [28]. This systematic process provided a potentially valid and reliable outcome that helps to establish specific links between the two concepts [29]. Also, systematic reviews are ranked at the top of the hierarchy to provide practical-based solutions [29]. The selected studies are further analysed separately, using thematic analysis technique to see themes made up the studies, in hunt of

links between the two piles of material. Thematic analysis is regarded as a suitable method to find trends within studies [30].

2.1 Search Strategy

The systematic search was launched against five significant databases. The databases are Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Business Search Premier, Science Direct and Google Scholar. And this was to identify English-language peer-reviewed studies that made both empirical and theoretical contributions. The researcher used "employee voice" and "affective commitment" as search terms, but the hits were conducted in two phases separately; phase one: *employee voice* articles, and phase two: *affective commitment* articles. The analysis of keywords on titles and abstracts enhanced the establishment of the search terms and for the selection of relevant studies [25]. However, the researcher extended the search terms to include their synonyms, and their corresponding and neighbouring concepts, to maintain the inclusivity of the review [25]. The refinements of each database search were performed by putting years limit (2009-2019), full-text access, peer-review and English-language articles as limiters.

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2.2 Search Process and Outcome

A total of 235 (AC = 64, EV = 171) articles were successfully found. The researcher used Endnote software to identify duplicate articles and 100 (AC = 21, EV = 79) were found and removed from the list, leaving a new total of 135 (AC = 43, EV = 92) for title screening.

Table 2.1 Search Results

Databases	Search Terms	Total Articles	Articles after limiters
Academic Search Complete	Employee Voice	120	28
	Affective Commitment	111	16
Business Search Complete	Employee Voice	332	34
	Affective Commitment	201	15
Business Search Premier	Employee Voice	432	80
	Affective Commitment	208	22
Science Direct	Employee Voice	114	17
	Affective Commitment	26	8
Google Scholar	Employee Voice	62	12
	Affective Commitment	9	3
Total			235 (AC =64, EV = 171)
***AC = Affective Commitment ***EV = Employee Voice			

One hundred and two articles (AC = 23, EV = 79) were removed because titles were found to be irrelevant. The 33 remaining articles (AC = 20, EV = 13) had their abstracts screened for relevance to the topics. The abstract filter established that 20 articles (AC = 13, EV = 7) were not relevant, leaving only 13 articles (AC = 7, EV = 6) legible for analysis. After, remaining 13 articles were exposed to critical appraisal and four articles (AC = 3, EV = 1) were excluded because they were reviews and nine articles (AC = 4, EV = 5). The critical appraisal chose nine quantitative studies for further analysis. The complete search process is presented in a PRISMA flow chart on Figure: 2.2 below;

2.3 Data Analysis

Michaelis et al., Benson and Brown, Ghorpade et al., Rivkin et al., Kwon et al.,

Holland et al., Ruck et al., Vandenberghe et al. and Belizon studies were analysed [31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39]. The researcher examined the nine studies (EV = 5, AC = 4) that were successfully chosen separately, using the thematic process. Thus, the material was put 5 Employee Voice in one folder and 4 Affective Commitment studies in another before conducting thematic analysis. The intention was to see the linkage between the two concepts, Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. The researcher conducted initial coding, noticed trends of statements and confirmed themes, on each folder. The researcher later compared the themes between the two folders. The researcher later compared the themes between the two folders.

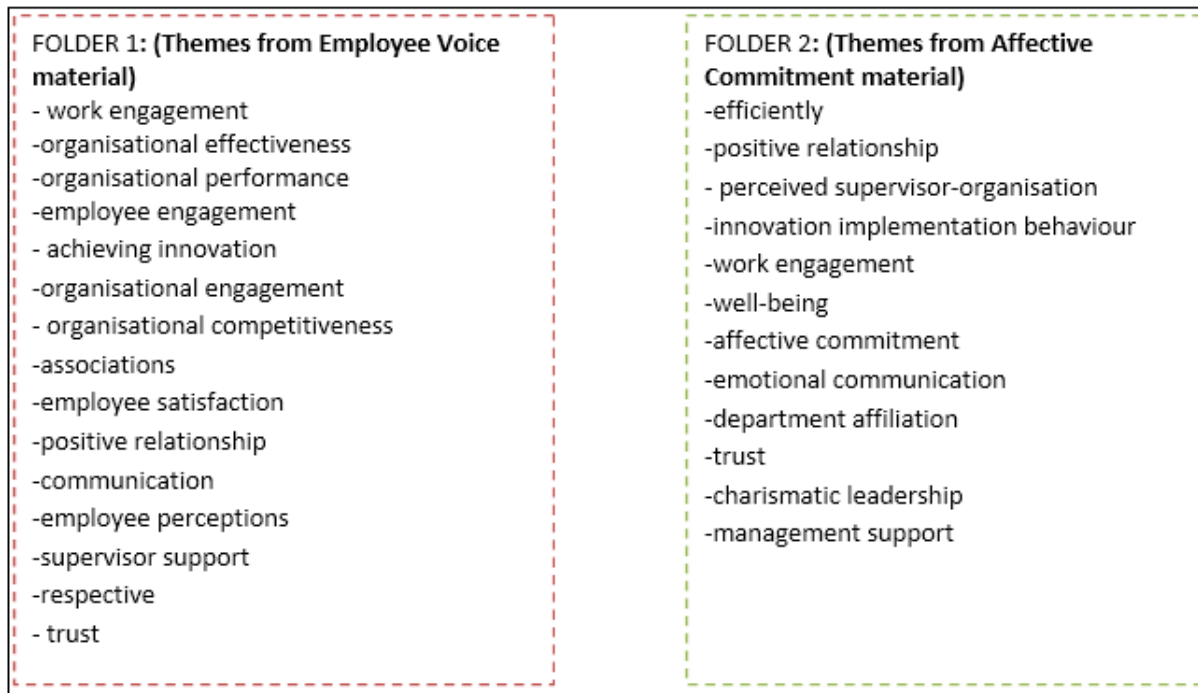


Figure. 2.3.1 Themes in Folders

Figure 2.3.1 above shows a list of themes that emerged from the analysis of studies. The researcher identified some similar themes between the Folders (see Figure 2.3.2 below)

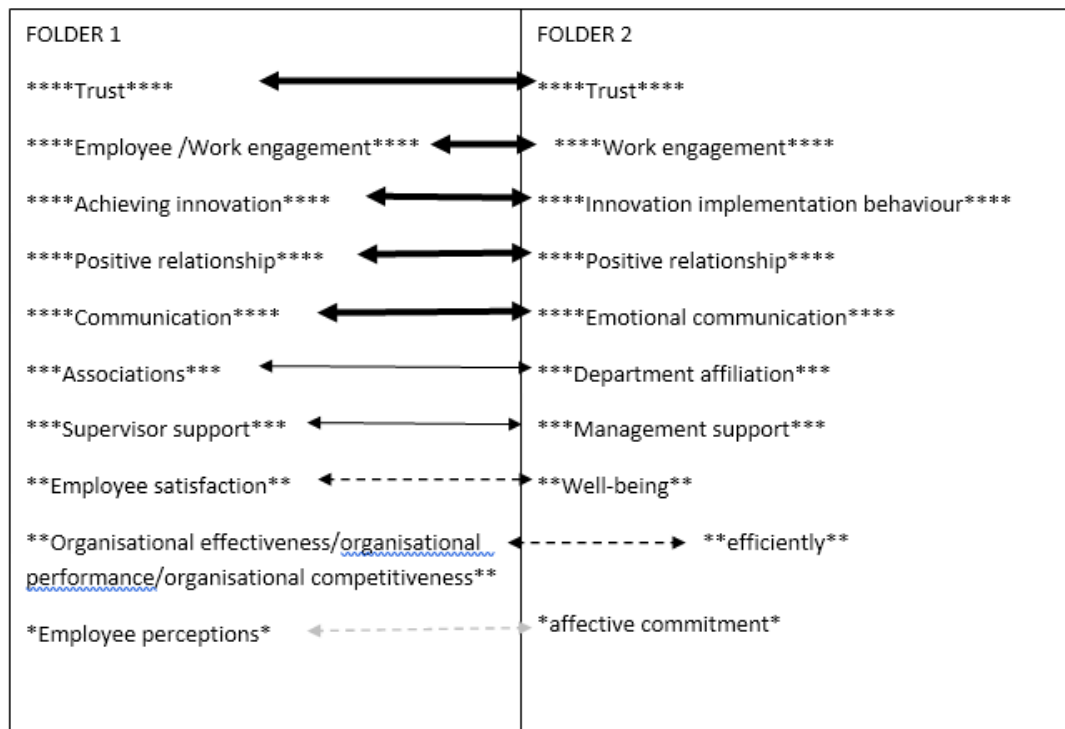


Figure. 2.3.2 Linking the Themes

**** Core Themes *** Sub-Themes¹ ** Sub-Themes² *Weak Themes

The researcher noticed that themes such as “*trust*”, “*Employee/work engagement*”, “*...innovation...*”, “*positive relationship*” and “*communication*” had strong links between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Thus all studies (Michaelis et al., Benson and Brown, Ghorpade et al., Rivkin et al., Kwon et al., Holland et al., Ruck et al., Vandenberghe et al. and Belizon showcased these five themes as crucial within these two separate concepts. Some themes, such as “*associations*”, “*department affiliation*”, “*supervisor support*” and “*management support*” could have a better connection. Thus, “*associations*” vs “*department affiliation*” and “*supervisor support*” vs “*management support*” had a better link between the folders [31-39]. The reviewer recognised that the majority of studies indicated that these two sets of themes are paramount in the studies of Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Also, themes “*employee satisfaction*”, “*well-being*”, “*organisational effectiveness/competitiveness/performance*” and “*efficiently*” could be linked. For instance, “*employee satisfaction*” vs “*well-being*” and “*organisational effectiveness/competitiveness/performance*” vs “*efficiently*” could form core themes across the concepts. This argument highlights that those scholars, such as Rivkin et al., Holland et al., Ruck et al., Belizon, supported these sets of themes throughout their studies [34, 36, 37, 39]. The researcher noticed that “*employee perceptions*” and “*affective commitment*” were also important themes throughout the studies, but the link between them was weak, although the researcher thought that “*employee perception*” could determine “*affective commitment*” to some extent. These themes were however displayed by all studies in affective commitment [31, 33, 34, 38] (*affective commitment*) and only one study

[32] in the set of studies on Employee Voice. However, the current researcher identified some essential themes on each side, although there was no linkage between them across the concepts, it is important to recognise these themes, which are “*respect*” (Employee Voice Folder) and “*Charismatic Leadership*” and “*perceived supervisor-organisation*” (Affective Commitment Folder). These unique themes emerged from at least one study during coding, and they are all important in the studies of Employee Voice and Affective Commitment.

3. Discussions

The purpose of this research was to identify the link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment in literature. “*Trust*”, “*Employee/Work engagement*”, “*Innovation*”, “*Positive relationship*” and “*Communication*” were core themes that emerged from both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment material (see *Figure 3.1* below).

As ‘*trust*’ has been described as central to human relationship, when one believes that someone is good and honest [40]. For example, Holland et al. examined the role of direct voice on engagement by health professionals and mediating role trust plays [36]. They found that trust was one of the mediators to supervisor support and direct voice among nursing professionals. This finding implies that trust is essential in both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Thus, many previous studies established that employees require trust to contribute into decision-making mechanism of the organisation [1, 41, 42, 43]. Also, some previous scholars found that employees need trust to remain emotionally committed to an organisation [44-46].

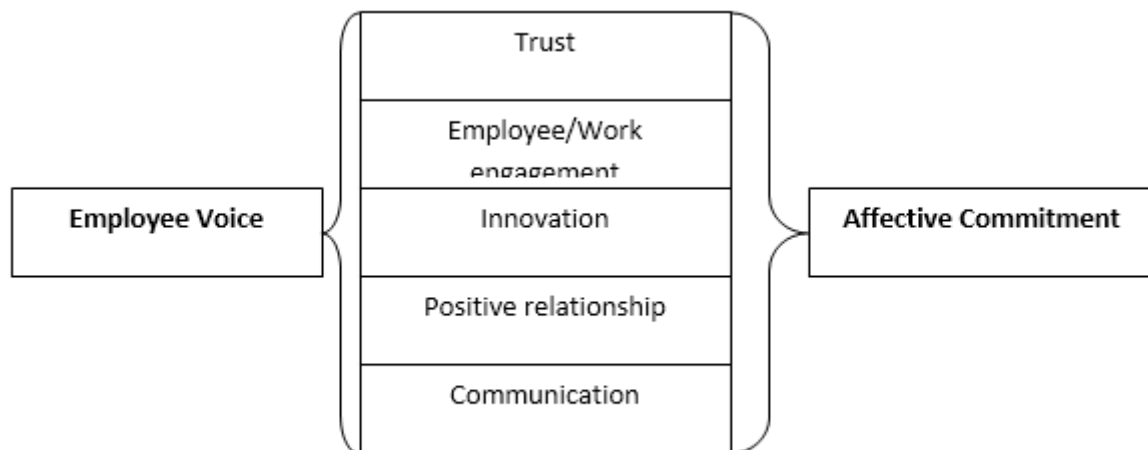


Figure. 3.1 Core Themes

Attridge described “*employee/work engagement*” as when organisational members physically, cognitively, mentally and emotionally perform their work roles [47]. This definition tells that employee/work engagement is vital on the understanding of both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. For instance, Kwon et al. developed a multi-level argument that explores how individual employee perceptions of voicing affect their engagement level [35]. They developed propositions for future thinking that employee/work engagement is linked to direct employee voice. Similarly, past researchers, such as Rees et al., Purcell, and Ruck et al. found a link between Employee Voice and employee/work engagement [48, 49, 37]. Also, some previous scholars established a relationship between employee/work engagement and Affective Commitment [50-53].

Also, “*innovation*” emerged as a sold theme in the majority of the studies reviewed. Doganova and Eyquem-Renault defined innovation in business as the process of translating ideas or inventions into goods and services that create value and satisfy customers’ needs and expectations [54]. For example, Belizon in the study to measure

employee voice in multinational organisations across Europe, found that innovation is a factor within employee engagement [39]. Therefore, being innovative as an employee becomes a vital instrument in determining Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Previous work, for example, Janssen et al., Gambarotto and Cammozzo, and Ng and Feldman linked Employee Voice with innovation [55-57]. More so, some past investigators, including Eisenberger et al., Michaelis et al., and Camelo-Ordaz et al. saw the connection between Affective Commitment and innovation [58, 31, 59].

Likewise, a *positive relationship* is regarded as the association that makes one happier, attractive and supportive [60]. For instance, Ruck et al., in their study, managed to find a significantly positive relationship between bottom-up employee voice and emotional business engagement [37]. This finding then shows that there is a connection between positive relationship with Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Nevertheless, previous researchers, including Botero and Dyne, Hsiung, and Tangirala and Ramanujam, connected a positive relationship with Employee Voice [61-63]. With others established a link between positive

relationship and Affective Commitment [15, 64, 65].

Nevertheless, *communication* emerged as another core theme while reviewing the selected studies. As, Bovee and Thill suggested, communication is the process of sharing information within the business and outside that has the commercial benefit to the organisation [66]. In other words, communication is critical because it indicates levels of Employee Voice and Affective Commitment within an organisation. For instance, Ruck et al.'s study proved that internal communication is essential to employee engagement [37]. Also, existing literature suggests that there is a relationship between communication and Employee Voice [67-69]. Some scholars, including Van den Hooff and de Ridder, Van Vuuren et al. and McKay et al. treated communication linked to Affective Commitment in their studies [70-72].

The current researcher also recognized that “*associations/department affiliation*” and “*supervisor support/management support*” emerged as sub-themes and significant after

analysing the material (see *Figure 3.2* below).

However, the researcher suggested that themes were weaker, although they could correspond across the concepts.

Associations and being affiliated to the department were viewed as they could refer to the same concept, and could be relevant to the understanding of Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Also, supervisor/management support came up as a theme because the discussions of Employee Voice and Affective Commitment need help from the organisation’s management hierarchy. For example, Hollard et al. found that both supervisor support and employee voice were depending on the employees’ association with the organisation [36]. Also, Michaelis et al. established that department affiliation has an impact on leadership and trust of the management [31]. Even, previous studies, such as Meyer et al., Kooij et al., Albrecht and Andretta, and Kanten and Ulker indicated that there is a connection between affiliation and affective commitment and the support from the management [73-76].

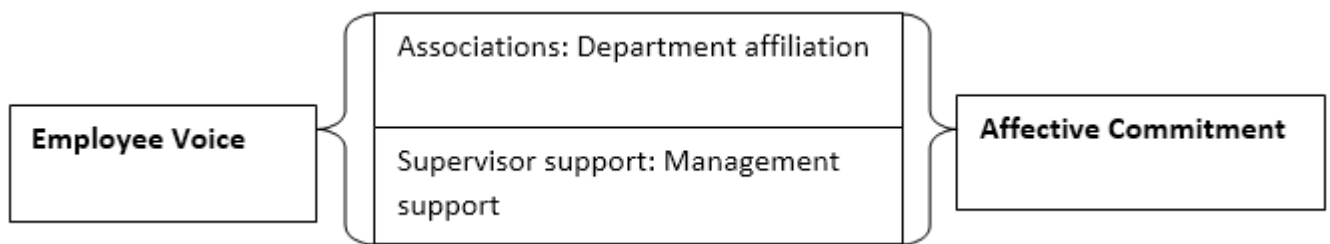


Figure. 3.2 Sub-Themes¹

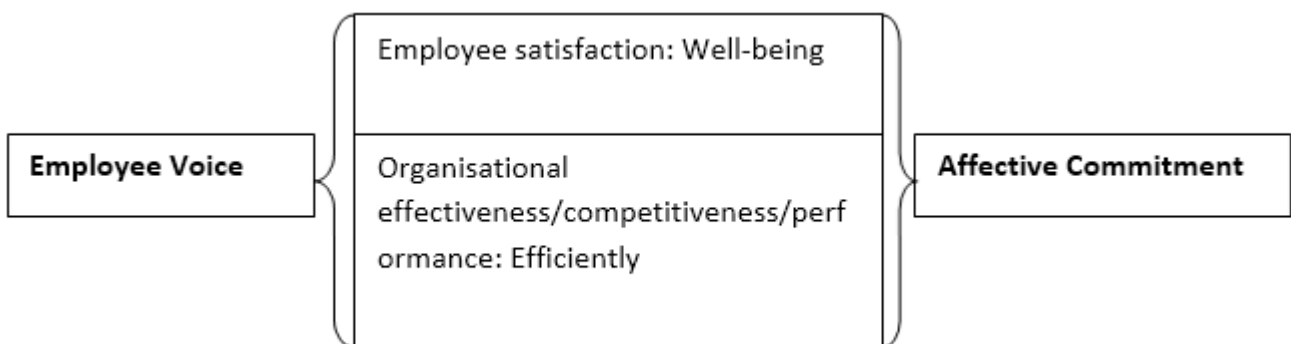


Figure.3.3 Sub-Themes² The researcher, while reading the selected studies, picked employee perceptions/commitment as a weak theme that had trends in both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment studies (see *Figure 3.4* below)

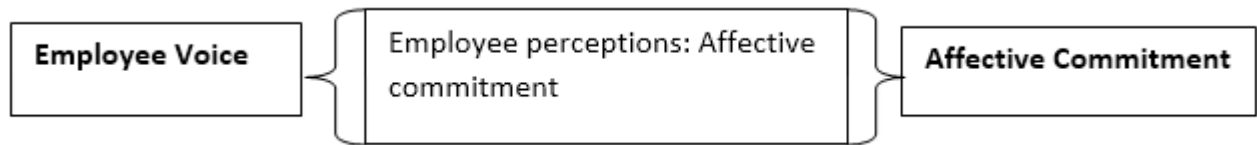


Figure.3.4 Weak Themes

The reviewer again identified *employee well-being/satisfaction* and *organisational effectiveness/competitiveness/performance* vs efficiently as substantive themes (see *Figure 3.3* below). For example, Rivkin et al. found that well-being is associated with Affective Commitment [34]. Ruck et al. (2017) established that employee satisfaction is connected to Employee Voice [37]. Therefore this theme, employee well-being/satisfaction, has an impact on both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment discussions. Previous studies also found that well-being/employee satisfaction is related to Employee Voice and Affective Commitment [77, 78].

Again, *organisational effectiveness/competitiveness/performance* vs efficiently form another theme that was confirmed from the selected literature. For instance, Belizon found that *organisational effectiveness/competitiveness/performance* is linked to Employee Voice [39]. In the past, researchers, such as Baptiste and Nelson linked Employee Voice, Affective Commitment and *organisational effectiveness* [79, 80].

The researcher, while reading the selected studies, picked *employee perceptions/commitment* as a weak theme that had trends in both Employee Voice and Affective Commitment studies (see *Figure 3.4* below).

Besides four out of nine studies indicated commitment as part of the theme *employee perceptions/commitment*, the researcher, however, suggested that the theme was weak since it was one-sided on the model. Thus, the theme was concentrated in affective commitment folder only. Past scholars also

found a connection between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment and employee perceptions (e.g., Farndale et al. 2011, Wang et al. 2014) [1, 81].

Limitations, however, this reviewer is without its weaknesses. The first apparent defect is in the process used to select the studies for review. The procedure could have been biased, hence only quantitative studies were chosen. Therefore essential studies that were qualitative could have missed. Again, the thematic process used to analyse the selected articles could also been biased. Consequently, the researcher does not guarantee the transferability of the outcome of this review. Moreover, several studies that were included could be minimal for transferable results. However, to limit these drawbacks, the researcher consulted several databases and Google scholar and as well as snowballing, looking for studies. Also, the reviewer was consistent in analysing data..

4. Conclusion

The review concludes that there is a significant link between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment in the body of literature. After examining the nine vigorously selected studies, core themes emerged, which were “*trust*”, “*employee/work engagement*”, “*innovation*”, “*positive relationship*” and “*communication*”, and they all supported the association between the two concepts. Other sub-themes also notably helped this outcome. Again, the connection between Employee Voice and Affective Commitment was also supported by previous researchers, who also

demonstrated the relationship between the two concepts. It was evidenced that the earlier scholars in Employee Voice and Affective Commitment were following common themes over the years. However, the researcher recommends that the findings of this review require further research using a different set of studies. Despite some weaknesses, the results of this study inform additional researchers, who could be interested in the two concepts, Employee Voice and Affective Commitment. Also, the outcome could be relevant to managers who could want to understand that Employee Voice associate with Affective Commitment.

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Funding: No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflict of Interest: The Author has no conflicts of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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