

# Factors that affect employee voice in non- union organisations

---

Submitted by: Hrvoje Kos

Student Number: 14117479

Dissertation submitted for the award of  
BA (Hons) Human Resource Management

School of Business  
**National College of Ireland**

**Submitted to the National College of Ireland, July 2015**

## **ABSTRACT**

There has been a proliferation of non-union organisations in the recent times. The current business environment is changing representation of employee voice from collective union to individual communication with the organisation. This research explores the factors that influence employee voice in a non-union organisation from the perspective of employees. Using quantitative method of surveys, the research surveyed 36 respondents to understand how they would rate factors affecting employee voice from their perspective in order of importance. The research also explored the relationships between the individual employee variables such as age, work experience and type of work and its relationship with how they rate the importance of the factors that affects employee voice. Some of the key findings of the research were that the most important factors that affect employee voice are those related to the relationships between the employee and the organisation. The study found that the supervisor has a key role in employee voice in non-union organisations and the relationship between an employee and supervisor greatly affects how employee views their representation in the organisation. The research also found that there are certain factors that affect employee voice that facilitate their job performance in the organisation and certain factors that affect the employee voice that are related to the rewards that the employee expects for their job performance. The research found that the importance given to the factors that affect employee voice are influenced by age, type of work, number of years of experience, position in the organisation, and number of employees in the organisation.

# Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

## National College of Ireland Research Students Declaration Form (*Thesis/Author Declaration Form*)

**Name:** Hrvoje Kos

**Student Number:** 14117479

**Degree for which thesis is submitted:** B.A. (Hons) Human Resource Management

### Material submitted for award

- (a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.
- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- (c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)
- (d) *Either* \*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.  
*Or* \*I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

---

*(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)*

**Signature of research student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** 20/07/2015

## **Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland**

Student name: Hrvoje Kos

Student number: 14117479

School: School of Business

Course: Human Resource Management

Degree to be awarded: B.A. (Hons) Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: Factors that affect Employee Voice in non-union organisations

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ron Elliot, for his support and help with my dissertation. He gave me useful comments and feedback that were helpful in improving my work. With his supervision, I was able to get a better understanding of the subject and he encouraged me to continue my hard work. I would also like to thank all of the lecturers of my course who have helped me in developing the skills and knowledge that enabled me to complete this dissertation. I would not have been able to produce this work without the training provided by them.

Finally, I would thank my friends and family who provided me with encouragement and support throughout my course.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	1
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation .....	2
Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	9
1.1 Background .....	9
1.2 Aims and Objectives .....	10
1.3 Structure of the dissertation.....	10
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	11
2.1 Introduction .....	11
2.2 Employee Voice in unionised and non-unionised firms .....	11
2.3 Definition of Employee Voice .....	12
2.4 Management of employee voice in non-union organisations.....	13
2.6 Factors influencing non-union employee voice .....	15
2.6.1 Macro environmental Factors .....	15
2.6.2 Micro Organisational Factors.....	17
2.7 Outcomes of influential factors on non-union employee voice .....	20
2.7.1 Union Avoidance by Organisations .....	20
2.7.2 Ideological Hostility.....	20
2.7.3 Balance between the irrational and rational employer behaviour.....	20
2.8 Conclusion.....	21
Chapter 3 Research Methodology .....	22
3.1 Introduction .....	22
3.2 Research Approach .....	22
3.3 Data Collection.....	23

3.4	Data Analysis .....	24
3.5	Limitations .....	24
3.6	Research Plan .....	24
3.7	Conclusion.....	25
Chapter 4	Findings.....	26
4.1	Introduction .....	26
4.2	Basic Details of Participants .....	26
4.3	Employment Organisations of participants .....	29
4.4	Factors affecting Employee Voice .....	36
4.5	Correlation Analysis between variables between participants and ratings given for factors affecting employee voice.....	38
4.6	Conclusion.....	39
Chapter 5	Discussion .....	41
5.1	Introduction .....	41
5.2	Discussion of findings .....	41
5.3	Conclusion.....	47
Chapter 6	Conclusion and Further Research .....	48
6.1	Recommendations for further research .....	49
	References.....	50
	Appendix 1.....	52

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Macro Organisation and Micro Organisation factors influencing employee voice .....	17
Figure 2 Research Plan followed for the study .....	25
Figure 3 Age of Participants .....	27
Figure 4 Gender of the participants .....	27
Figure 5 Type of Employment .....	28
Figure 6 Work Experience of the participants .....	28
Figure 7 Type of Organisation .....	29
Figure 8 Type of Industries that participants were working in .....	30
Figure 9 Position of the participants in their organisations .....	31
Figure 10 Number of employees working in the organisation of the participants.....	31
Figure 11 Participants working in a team .....	32
Figure 12 Presence of HR department in the organisation .....	32
Figure 13 Presence of employee unions in organisations .....	33
Figure 14 Employees part of the employee union in organisations where employee unions are present .....	33
Figure 15 Medium provided to the employees for sharing feedback with the organisation.....	34
Figure 16 Point of contact for the participants for giving suggestions and making complaints .....	35
Figure 17 Factors affecting employee voice in non-union organisation.....	38
Figure 18 Correlation relationships between employee individual variables and importance of factors affecting employee voice .....	39
Figure 19 Relationships between employee and organisation and the factors affecting them.....	43
Figure 20 Relationship between employee and organisation based on employee expectations.....	44



## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1 Participants ratings about how often they felt represented and how often their concerns were addressed.....	35
Table 2 Factors affecting employee Voice in non-union organization.....	37

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Employee unions are official groups of employees that are officially recognised by an organisation as being representative of the overall opinions and feedback of all the employees that are a part of this group. Employee unions have been an important part of organisations providing a channel of representation of employees to the top management of the companies. However recently, more and more organisations are avoiding employee unions in their organisations and are instead creating new channels for representation of employee voice that would avoid formation of an official employee union (Dundon et al, 2005). In other words, the organisations are encouraging individual means of communication rather than collective communication of feedback from the employees to the organisation (Gollan, 2006). Although this puts enormous pressure on the human resources department and line managers in the organisations to ensure that the employee is adequately satisfied in the organisation, non-union organisations insist that this is a better and more effective form of employee representation (Kaufman, 2003). With the heavy reliance on individual communication by the employees to their supervisors of human resource departments, there can be many cases in which the employees may not share feedback or may feel under-represented in the firm. This can be especially the case when there are certain factors that hinder or discourage the communication of employee to the non-union representation channels.

This research explores the factors that affect the employee voice in a non-union organisation. This is a highly relevant issue in organisations in the present times as most of the organisations are giving up employee unions to adopt non-union ways of employee representation. Moreover, the growing numbers of small and medium enterprises do not have enough number of employees that would warrant an official recognition as employee union and these organisations are heavily reliant on non-union means of representation for employees. The research on non-union representation of employee voice is limited and heavily focussed on justifying the effectiveness and efficiency of non-union organisations. This research would contribute to the literature on employee voice in non-union organisations by identifying and validating the factors that influence employee voice in the organisation from the perspective of employees.

This would be one of the very few studies that have explored employee voice from the perspective of employees for firm level factors that can influence employee voice.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to identify the factors that affect employee voice in a non-union organisation. The specific objectives of the research are

1. To explore the definition of employee voice in a non-union organisation
2. To propose and validate potential factors that affect employee voice in a non-union organisation
3. To explore the relationships between the individual employee variables and factors that affect their employee voice in a non-union organisation

## **1.3 Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation is structured in six chapters. The first chapter gives a brief background of the subject of employee voice in non-union organisations and sets the objectives for the research. The second chapter reviews the literature on the definition of employee voice, definition of non-union organisations, the factors that influence employee voice and the outcomes of employee voice in non-union organisations. The third chapter explains the methodology for the research describing the research methods that were used for the study. The fourth chapter describes the results of survey done for the study and presents the results of data analysis in the form of graphs and charts. These results are interpreted and discussed in the fifth chapter and the implications of the results are examined for achievement of objectives of the research. The final chapter concludes the research and gives recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2      LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Non-unionization is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly popular among the firms around the world. Today, there are more organisations with non-unions than there are with unions present in them (Kersley et al, 2005). According to Bryson et al (2007) large sections of the employed population comprises of ‘never-members’ who are people who have not been a part of unions throughout their working life and are likely to never be a part of unions in the future either.

Due to the lack of unions, the employees have to discuss their issues directly with their supervisors and managers. Managers on the other hand, have gained more power for unilateral decision making that affects the employees (Dundon and Gollan, 2007). If the issue is not resolved, employees are being forced to reach out to third party institutions such as employment tribunals, citizens advice bureau etc. (Abbot, 2004). Therefore, there is a new system for employee voice management that is emerging as a result of lack of employee unions.

### **2.2 Employee Voice in unionised and non-unionised firms**

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a lot of emphasis on the advantages of having unions to manage employee voice in organisations. Freeman and Medoff (1984) argued that employee unions provided an efficient mechanism for employees to communicate their concerns to the organisations so that problems and issues could be resolved at early stages. They suggested that employee unions can potentially increase the productivity of the employees and quality of operations (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). Pfeffer (1998) found that employee voice is important to build employee commitment towards the organisation.

Despite the research on advantages of employee voice for the organisation, recent times have seen a drastic reduction in the number of organisations that support unions. Unions are considered inefficient for the firm operations by decreasing the productivity of the employees (Dundon et al, 2004). This means that there is a growing representation gap for employees to their organisation and there is an emerging need for managing employee voice in non-union organisations to ensure that the communication between employer and the employee is maintained. Terry (2003) observes that the decline in

unionisation may be due to the inefficacy of unions for managing employee voice in the organisation. Delery et al (2000) found that unions are able to affect quitting rates in the organisations only through the mediation of compensation. Similarly, Ackers et al (2006) argues that many non-union organisations have been successful in developing strong forms of participation of employees in the organisation and can be compared to unionised firms that can be weak, ineffectual and corrupt. The shift of employee voice management from union to non-union channels questions the validity and exclusives of unions and explores other channels for employee voice. Kaufman (2003) found that non-union voice management by organisation can often lead to employee satisfaction and organisation commitment through fostering cooperative and positive employee relations. Another study by Taras and Copping (1998) revealed that when a company allows perceptions of encouraging participation and representation of employee through their non-union voice management initiatives; this can often lead to high expectations of employees in their role in decision making process. When these expectations are not fulfilled, it often leads to frustration and search for third party representation of employee voice.

Non-union organisations are organisations that do not recognise trade unions of employees and do not include them in their communication mechanism with employees (Campling and Gollan, 1999; Dundon et al 2005). Non-unionism does not imply that there is no communication between the workforce and the organisation. It just means that there is no formal channel in the form of trade unions that is recognised by the organisations. Non-union organisation also does not necessarily mean that there is a complete absence of unions for the employees. In some organisations, certain sections of the workforce may be represented by unions that are recognised by the organisation while other employee groups may not receive the same recognition.

### **2.3 Definition of Employee Voice**

Voice is considered to be an attempt to change an unsatisfactory situation rather than escape from it (Batt et al, 2002). Employee voice is a means of expression of dissatisfaction by the employees (Batt et al, 2002). This definition carries a negative connotation with the term 'employee voice' by emphasizing that employee voice is a means for communicating only the problems and issues of the employees without including the element of participation and positive development through such mechanism. Bryson (2004) defined employee voice as potential dialogue between the employees and the organisation to communicate their perceptions, concerns and issues

to the management. This definition restricts the role of employee voice to communication and does not give the employees the power to participate in decision making and have an influence on management decisions. Boxall and Purcell (2006) defines employee voice as “processes and structures” that empower employees to give their opinions and participate in the decision making process of the organisation. Defining employee voice in a non-union context can be ambiguous and confusing. This is because unions have a defined structure and mechanism in place that has been established through literature and research in the past decades. Non-union employee voice is a topic that has not been studied as much and has been interpreted by different organisations in different ways. Dundon et al (2004) suggests that employee voice has been interpreted in four different ways by academics and practitioners. These are: articulation of individual dissatisfaction to address issues and problems in the organisation, expression of collective organisation where employee voice is involved in collective bargaining, contribution to management decision making, and demonstration of mutuality and co-operative relationship between the employee and the employer. Managers in non-union organisations generally perceive voice as a process rather than an outcome (Wilkinson et al, 2004). It is considered a part of daily operations of the organisation.

#### **2.4 Management of employee voice in non-union organisations**

Milward et al (2000) suggests that employee voice can be expressed through three ways: trade unions, indirect or representative participation and direct employee involvement. Both trade unions and indirect representation through a collective voice have declined over the years and direct employee involvement has developed to represent the employee voice. The study by Bryson (2004) found that non-union voice is much more effective than union voice to elicit managerial responsiveness. He also found that direct voice of the employee is more effective than representative voice in both union and non-union organisations. Wilkinson et al (2004) found that employee voice is managed in organisations in five different ways.

1. Individual communication and exchange of ideas between the employee and the manager

2. Upward problem solving where the employee provides feedback and this is taken upwards in the organisational hierarchy for evaluation and improvement of organisational performance
3. Collective representation of the opinions and views of the workforce to the management. This can be done either through formal establishment of unions or through a non-union collective.
4. Engagement of the employees and providing them with encouragement and support to express their opinions and feedback to the managers. This makes the employees feel more involved and non-hesitant to communicate with the managers.
5. Giving an opportunity to employees to have a say about issues and ensuring that their opinions will be taken into account for improvement of the problem.

Dundon et al (2005) studied how employee voice is managed in various non-union organisations and found that management facilitates employees to share their views and ideas. In their study of 18 non-union organisations across the UK, they revealed that managers in these organisations primarily view employee voice as a loose and imprecise notion that is a part of HR initiatives and policies and is important to achieve competitive advantage in the organisation. The employees in these organisations expected to have a voice with the managers supporting and even encouraging such behaviour. Organisations used mechanisms such as electronic media, two-way communications, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys and project teams for upward problem solving among employees. A study by Wilkinson et al (2004) found that managers generally perceive employee voice as a two way communication between the employer and the employee. Team work provides employees with the opportunity to collaborate and give their suggestions on improving the business operations (Batt et al, 2002). Representative participation was ensured through non-union consultative forums. Batt et al (2002) find that non-union organisations often use dispute resolution procedures including management review of grievances, peer review, and non-union arbitration. These initiatives encourage individual representation of the employee rather than a collective voice. Batt et al (2002) found that these dispute resolution procedures do not affect quitting rates of employees. They suggest a need for a stronger representation of employee voice than these initiatives. Dundon et al (2005) argue that the new citizenship agenda promoted by the EU is an empowering tool for the employees

who have increased expectations from their employers regarding employee voice and have become more confident with expressing their views.

## **2.6 Factors influencing non-union employee voice**

Dundon and Gollan (2007) give a framework of the external and internal factors that affect the non-union voice arrangements in an organisation. Among the macro-environmental factors, they identify market influences from the product and labour markets and competitors in the industry, structural influences of organisation size and ownership of nationality of the organisation, and the regulatory environment with respect to EU directives and government regulations. These factors can have a major effect on how the organisation decides to manage employee voice. The micro-organisational factors include managerial strategies for employees that have been formed according to the external environment, occupational identity and group solidarity of employees within the organisation, power and influence of the employees, degree of trust between the employer and the employee and the level of autonomy of the employees. These factors will help in giving a background about the factors that affect employee voice in non-union organisations according to previous research.

### **2.6.1 Macro environmental Factors**

Macro environmental factors are the ones that exist outside the organisation and are beyond the control of the organisations. These include the business environment in terms of political factors, economic factors, social factors, technological factors, environmental factors and legal factors. Dundon and Gallon (2007) study the macro-environment affecting employee voice under three headings- market pressures, structural influences and legal regulations.

#### ***Market Pressures***

The competitive environment in the industry can highly affect the management of employee voice in an organisation. Human resources are one of the most unique resources of an organisation and can be a source of competitive advantage in the industry (Porter, 1991). In an organisation that is service oriented and largely dependent on the skills of its workforce, it is especially important that there is a channel of communication between the employees and the organisation. Dundon and Gallon (2007) reveal that organisations where employees have direct interaction with customers and where customer service is given a high importance need to make



significant efforts to ensure that employee voice is managed in an efficient manner. Market pressures of customer service, limited supply of talented workforce, and requirement of flexibility in terms of business operations increase the need for innovations in employee voice so that employees feel a part of the organisation and are given an opportunity to share their opinions for better business performance.

### ***Structural Influences***

Organisation structures in terms of the size of operations, number of employees, type of management etc. can have an effect on how employee voice is managed in an organisation. For example, small and medium enterprises may not have specific departments to manage human resources and employee relations and employee voice may largely be managed by the immediate supervisors of the employees. On the other hand, large scale enterprises with specific structures in place for employee relations, learning and training of workforce etc. have specialised human resource manager that may undertake regular reviews and have formal channels of communication with the employees for expression of opinions and complaints. In terms of the style of management, this also differs with the size of the organisation and the extent of involvement of the owner and top management with management of employee relations.

### ***Regulatory Environment***

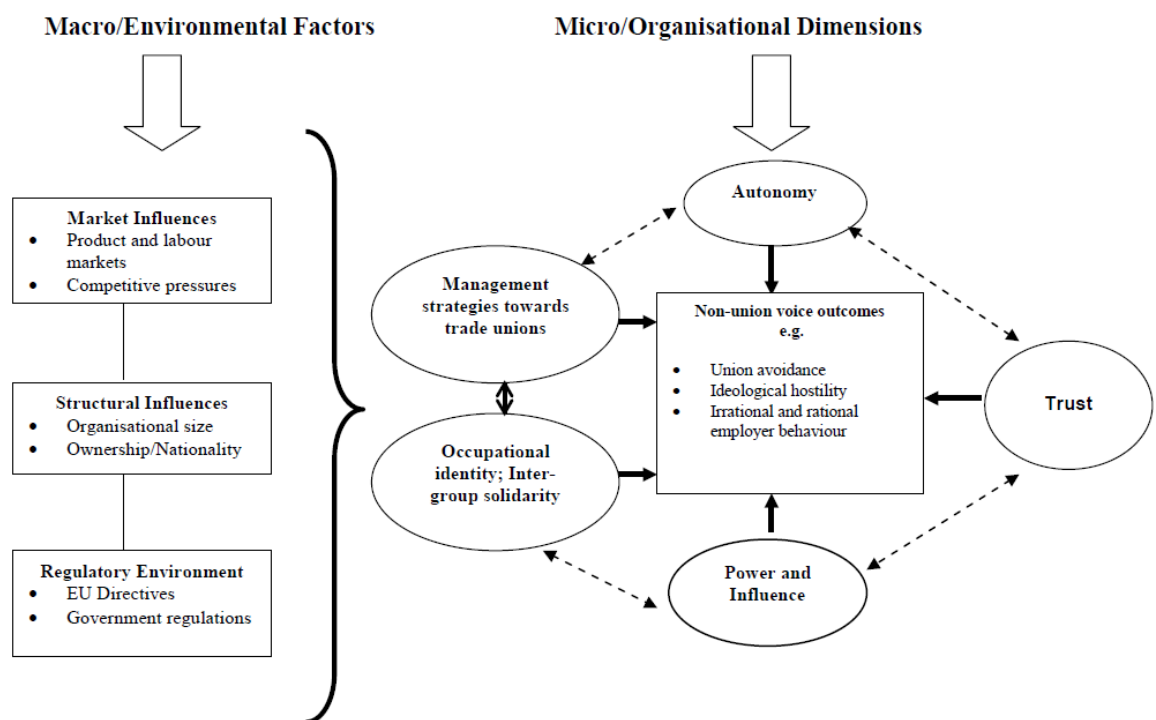
The legal obligations of the organisation to give provisions for employee voice in an organisation are a major factor that affects the way that employee voice is managed. In the EU, there are two EU directives that have a direct impact on employee voice in organisations. The EU Directives on European Works Councils and Employee Information and Consultation provide for a formal framework for representation and communication of employees to the employer. The European Work Councils provides a new type of collective voice for employees in the non-union firms. EU Directive on Information and Consultation requires organisations with 50 more employees to establish a formal procedure for employee voice. Under the directive, the employees are supposed to be consulted in matters related to the economic situation of the undertaking, developments relating to employment (especially any threats to employment), and substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations (Hall, 2003). These necessary frameworks for representation of employees in the organisation shape the way employee voice is managed in an effective manner while

following the legal requirements. They may limit or trigger different types of channels for employee voice (Hall, 2003).

## 2.6.2 Micro Organisational Factors

Micro organisational factors are the elements within the organisation that affect employee voice. Being within the organisation, most of them can be controlled, managed and changed by the organisation unlike the macro-organisational factors. Dundon et al (2007) identifies five micro-organisations dynamics affecting management of employee voice. These are given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Macro Organisation and Micro Organisation factors influencing employee voice**



Source: Dundon et al (2007)

### 1. Managerial Strategies

The managerial strategies followed by the organisations have a primary impact on employee voice. The types of strategies chosen determines how involved the employees are in the decision making process and how often they are asked for their opinions and feedback. Strategies may or may not give importance to communication and trust between the employees and the managers. Dundon et al (2007) suggest that strategies that place an importance on trust between the employee and the employer are effective non-union channels for employee voice. This means that the employees are able to

develop their knowledge and skills and contribute to productivity, support for organisational changes and contribution to the decision making process of the organisation along with their managers (Gollan, 2006). Formal channels of communication between the employee and the employer provide a degree of legitimacy for management of employee voice in non-union organisations (Kaufman, 2003). However, the structures that are put in place for voicing of employee opinions and feedback may be limited by the skills, knowledge and inclination of the middle managers, line managers, and supervisors towards the importance they give to employee voice (Kaufman, 2000). For an organisation to perform well, the type of managerial strategy and channel that is used for management of employee voice-union or non-union must be effective and efficient providing benefits to both the employer and the employee.

## ***2. Occupational Identity and Group Solidarity***

Occupational identity and group solidarity refers to the value placed on the employees by the organisation and the solidarity within the workforce to communicate opinions to the management. This means that the organisation must give importance and attention to the employees and the value that they provide towards the performance of the organisation. If the employees are recognised for their work, feel that their role is important and develop an occupational identity within the organisation, the employee voice channels are likely to be more effective (Lewinski and Weintoff, 2000). Such importance can be shown by development of informal communication and encouragement on the daily performance of the employees by their supervisors and line managers (Dundon et al, 2007). This kind of informal engagement develops a comfort level with the managers enabling the employees to voice their opinions and improve their performance. It shows individual importance and ensures that any employee problems are voiced and resolved at the earliest.

Group solidarity or team cohesiveness can affect channels of employee voice and organisation performance by developing a capacity for collective action and resistance to management. This means that if the team members and employees have close bonds while working together and share same opinions, issues and problems with the organisation, they can form a group that can collectively demand for organisational change. Such group solidarity can operate on a similar level as in trade unions with or

without the formal structures of a trade union and without an official recognition from the organisation.

### ***3. Power and Influence at the workplace***

The impact of power and influence on employee voice is explained by Dundon et al (2007) in terms of scope and range of issues that can be influenced by the employees. Scope refers to the level of involvement that the employee has with issues such as ability to influence decisions at a large level, consultation given by the employee or no opinion sought from the employee (Dundon et al, 2007). Range refers to the different types of issues that can be influenced by the employees and the importance that is given to these issues. These issues would include job security, type of work, pace of work, setting of wages and provision of training and learning (Dundon et al, 2007).

Autonomy is another important concept that relates to power and influence. This means what is the level of independence that the employee or employee groups have in their operation and on giving opinions, feedbacks or complaints to the management (Butler, 2005).

### ***4. Trust***

Trust between the employer and the employee has an effect on management of employee voice because trust represents the confidence that the employer and employee have in each other's actions and consideration of one another's well-being. It is important because a trusted employer shows that the employee is able to give their opinions with confidence and do not feel under-represented. A trusted employee shows that the employee is working for better performance of the organisation and is providing ideas for improving performance. Beachmount and Hunter (2005) found that difficulties in trust can arise in two types of situations. One is when the organisation reinterprets the employees' voice at different levels of organisation and the resulting recommendations and outcomes are different from the issues and recommendations given by the employees. A second type of trust difficulty is when the organisations taken an action that may affect the employees without their consultation.

The previous literature on employee voice the factors that influence employee voice provides an overall picture of what could be the possible factors that affect employee voice in this study. This literature would provide the basis for identification of proposed factors that could influence employee voice in the study conducted for this research.

## **2.7 Outcomes of influential factors on non-union employee voice**

Dundon and Gollan (2007) explain that the macro and micro environmental factors interact with one another in the organisation and can lead to three outcomes for non-union employee voice in the organisation: union avoidance, ideological hostility, and irrational and rational employee behaviour.

### **2.7.1 Union Avoidance by Organisations**

Union Avoidance is the situation when unions are either suppressed or substituted by the organisation. Suppression of the employees includes exploitations and intimidation by the employer so that the employee voice is blocked from going outside the organisation. Substitutions are HR practices that supplement the need for union organisations through effective HR policies. In both the situations, the idea is to keep the employee problems within the organisations and avoid the interference of an external union in the affairs of the business operations. The disadvantage for the employees in such a scenario is the monopoly of the employer. The employer, on the other hand, provides a certain degree of power to the employees without relinquishing control over them.

### **2.7.2 Ideological Hostility**

Union avoidance can be the result of difference in ideological perspectives about union organisations. Some employers are taking aggressive actions to ensure that trade unions are avoided in organisations because of their hostility towards unions. This ideological hostility can often be manifested in the non-union voice mechanisms that are incorporated in the organisations to ensure that the ideology of unions is not encouraged or supported.

### **2.7.3 Balance between the irrational and rational employer behaviour**

Non-unionization of an organisation is considered an irrational employer behaviour taken to mitigate the fear of trade unions making demands for increase in wages, better work conditions, job security, complaint procedures, inclusivity in decision making and better employee relations. In order to address this fear, the organisations ironically end up offering incentives of better wages, job security and work environment for employees to avoid unionized environments. In other words, the employer often ends up adding cost to the organisation to derive benefits of a non-unionized organisation.

When the balance between the employee benefits and costs is not maintained, the employee may find unions a more attractive option for representation.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Employee Voice is an important part of human resource management for an organisation that is crucial for firm performance and maintaining competitive advantage in the industry. With the development of business environment and advances in technology, service oriented firms are on the rise that put more importance on the skills and talent of their workforce. With these developments, there are firms that are encouraging management of employee voice through channels other than employee unions. Management of employee voice in non-union firms is a complex process and there are many factors that affect the channels of representation and the outcomes of different types of employee representation. This chapter analysed the various factors and outcomes of management of employee voice in a non-union organisation as has been discussed in previous literature. The review of the literature has provided a foundation for further research on the subject and carrying out the study. The next chapter will explain the methodology that will be used in the study to study employee voice in non-union organisations.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodology that is followed through the research to achieve the research objectives discussed in the first chapter. The literature review in the previous chapter provided an overview of the research studies that have been done on employee voice in a non-union organisation. This chapter outlines how this research is going to be carried out to contribute the literature on employee voice in non-union organisations.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

This research attempts to identify the factors that affect employee voice in non-union organisations. To achieve this, the research reviewed the literature and identified the potential factors that could affect employee voice. It is these identified potential factors and their relationships with individual employee variables that are validated by this research to achieve the purpose of this research. This means that this is an explanatory research that is used for showing relationships and showing cause and effect (Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun, 2005). Such a research can be studied using experimental or non-experimental research approach. While experimental methods may be a good choice for research approach to test the hypothesis, this research uses a non-experimental quantitative research approach as it is an appropriate research method to test and confirm a proposed hypothesis within the limitations of time and resources. The quantitative methods of research are objective methods of research that provide a rational perspective on the situation. They are deductive methods that show the existing situation in the form of numbers and explain the facts with an emphasis on prediction (Kaplan, 2004). They are based on making observation on the situation as it is and draw conclusions about hypothesis testing (Kaplan, 2004). The quantitative methodology does not include subjective views of human beings but instead poses an external frame of reference (Neuman & Neuman, 2004). This research study follows the realist paradigm of research which means that the research situation is viewed from an objective point of view but it is also understood that the researcher's knowledge will help in making the observations (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000).

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The data collection for this research is done with the help of surveys of employees working in non-union organisations. Surveys are a good technique for testing hypothesis and will therefore be an appropriate choice for this research (Kane and I'Reilly-DeBrun, 2005). It is a standard technique for getting a large number of responses to set questions about the hypothesis. The surveys were both descriptive and analytical in nature to determine the importance of the identified factors and understand their relationship with individual employee variables in the organisation. While a descriptive survey helps in simply understanding the existing situation, analytical surveys help in identifying what kind of cause and effect relationships are present between two factors (Kane and O'Reilly-DeBrun, 2005). The survey gave the perspective of the employees on what they think are the most important factors and how so these factor change with individual employees.

Surveys were done in the form of questionnaires that were given online to the sample population. Online questionnaire ensured a higher rate of response and helped in collation and storage of data for data analysis in the next stage of the research. The questionnaires were designed to include background information and details of their employment. The questionnaire also included questions where the employees rated the importance given to the identified factors that affect employee voice in the organisation on a Likert scale. The Likert scale will be designed to include the opinion about the importance of the factor ranging from least important to most important. The potential factors that affect employee voice were identified from literature review. The final questionnaire that was used for the study is given in Appendix 1 of the dissertation.

The sample population for these surveys include the employees working in non-union organisations in Ireland. Non random sampling was used to include a sample size of 50 employees. Out of these, 36 fully completed survey responses are expected. A pilot survey will be done with 2 people to validate the questionnaire and make improvements. After the pilot study, the questionnaire was improved to change the language of certain questions so that they are understood by the respondents in a better manner. Once the survey was done, the responses were collated and stored for further analysis.



### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The analysis of the survey data includes both descriptive analysis and exploratory analysis of the statistical data. The descriptive analysis gave the general background information about the population and the mean, median and mode for each of the Likert scale ratings from the survey. Exploratory statistics included correlation analysis to reveal the relationships between the ratings and the relationship of each rating with other variables such as employment details of the employee and other profile details. The level of significance for each of the relationships was determined to see which relationships were most important for the study. The results of the survey were discussed in detail to give the final factors that affect employee voice in non-union organisations.

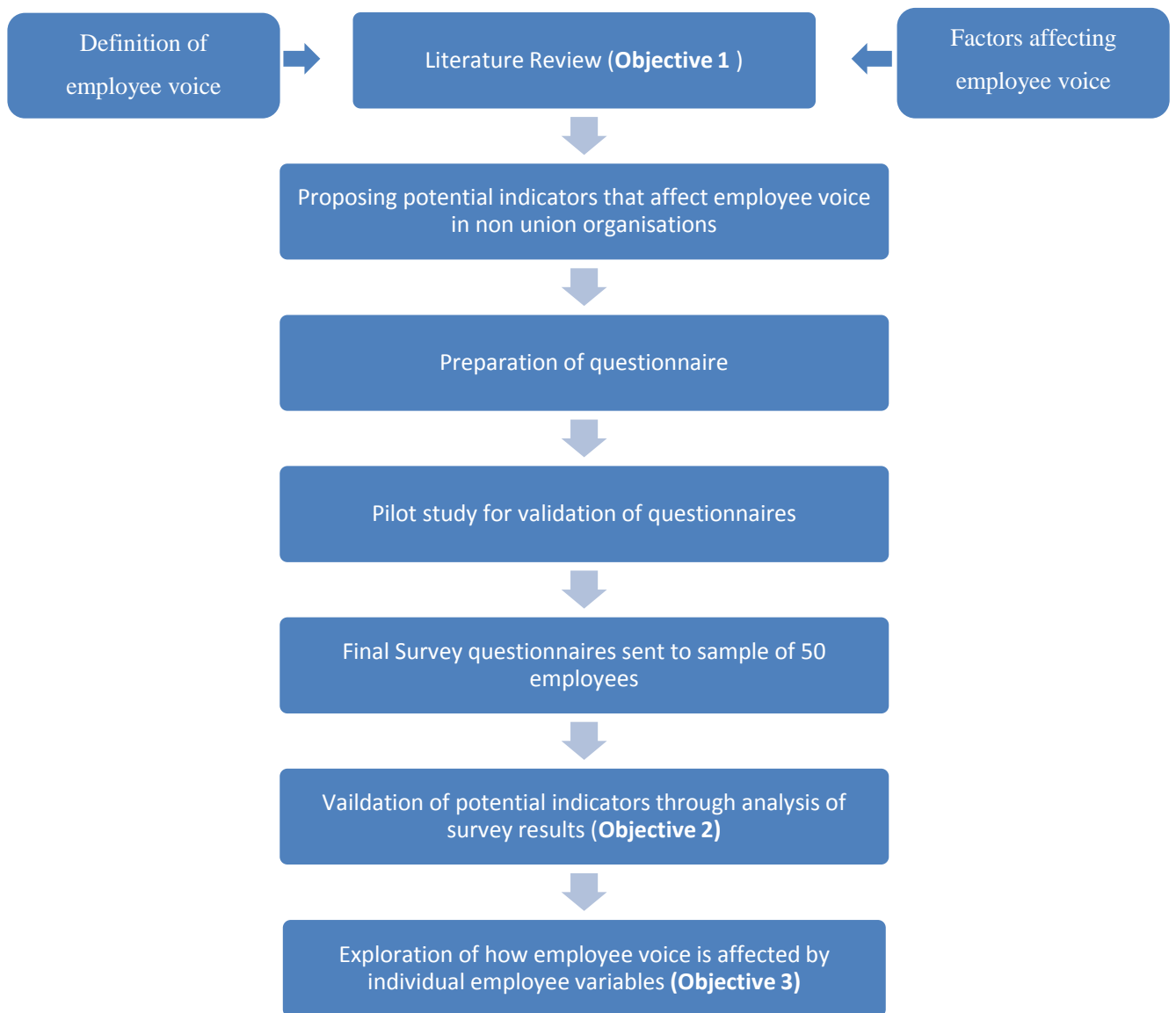
### **3.5 Limitations**

The limitations of this study are that the research uses non-random sampling for selecting sample for data collection. This may lead to bias of information provided by the research. Another limitation is the small sample size of the study that may not be representative of the entire population under study. The quantitative research approach of this study provides an overview of the research subject but does not go deeper to explore the factors that could affect employee voice. This is a limitation of quantitative research approach.

### **3.6 Research Plan**

The research plan along with the activities that were included in the research is shown in the figure below.

**Figure 2 Research Plan followed for the study**



### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter explained the research approach and research techniques that will be followed in this study. This provides a background and plan for conducting the study and analysing the results. The next chapter discusses results from the data collection carried out during the study.

## **CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

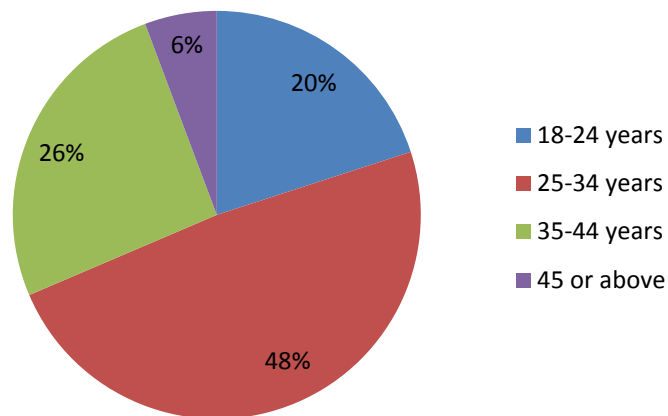
This chapter describes the results obtained from the surveys conducted for the research. An online survey questionnaire was distributed among people who were employed in Ireland as either full time or part time employees and their perspectives on employee voice and channels of employee voice were recorded. The survey was conducted from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and a total of 36 responses were received. This chapter presents the results of the survey in three sections. Section one gives the basic details of the participants. Section two describes the channels of employee voice and their effectiveness in the respondents' organisation. Section three presents the ratings that were given by the respondents about the factors that affect employee voice. Section four presents a detailed correlation analysis between various factors and their relationships with the age and work experience of the participants and how the participants have rated the channels for employee voice in their own organisations.

### **4.2 Basic Details of Participants**

The basic details of the participants are recorded to understand the background of the people and if this background would have any effect on the key findings of the factors that affect employee voice in non-union organisations. The details were given in terms of their age, gender, work experience and employment details.

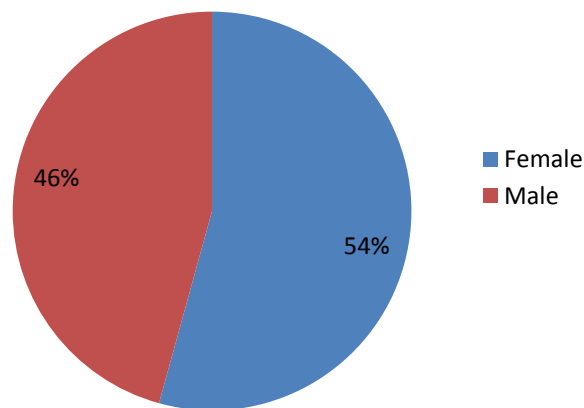
The age of the participants mainly ranged between the ages of 25 years to 44 years. As shown in Figure 3, 48% of the participants were between 25-34 years and 26% of the participants were between 35-44 years. This means that most of the participants were neither too young nor too old and would have had a certain level of maturity and life experience that would influence their responses. The predominant age range is the same as the working age of an individual.

**Figure 3 Age of Participants**



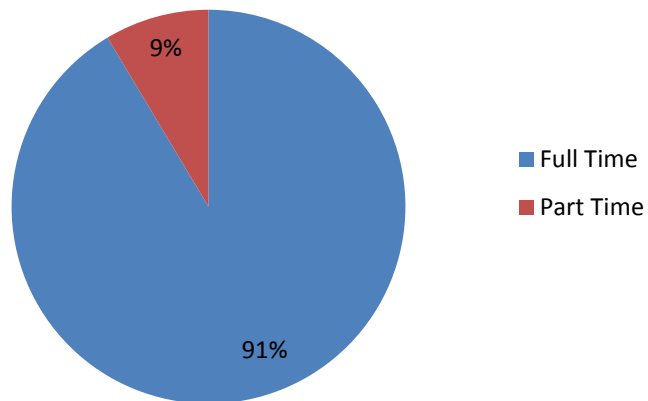
The gender of the participants showed relatively even distribution between males and females. As shown in Figure 4, 54% of the participants were females and 46% of the participants were males. Therefore, the perspectives about employee voice of the participants would represent the opinions of both the genders evenly.

**Figure 4 Gender of the participants**



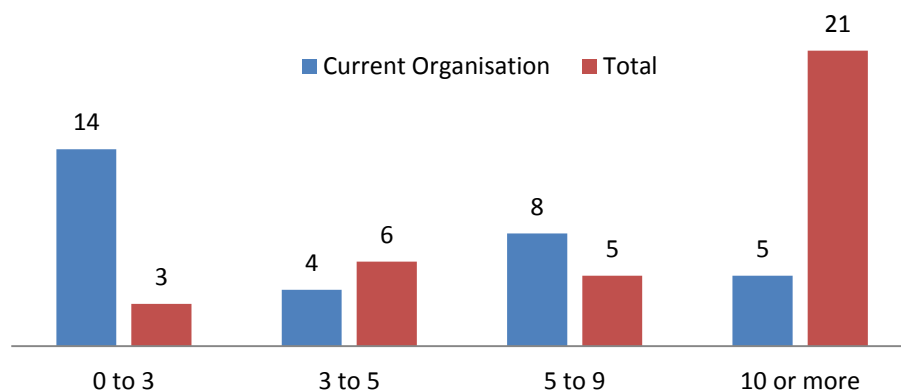
In terms of the type of employment, 91% of the survey participants were full-time employees. This means that the results of the survey predominantly represent opinions of employee that are employed full time in the organisation. It is important to understand this as the perspectives of full time employees and part time employees about the importance of employee voice may differ. Figure 5 shows the type of employment of the participants and found from the survey results.

**Figure 5 Type of Employment**



The numbers of years of work experience of the participants in their current organisation and their total work experience was important to understand the time they had spent in the current organisation and how it had affected their opinions about employee voice. The perspectives about employee voice may differ as one gains more experience. Figure 6 shows the results of the survey representing the work experience of the participants. The figure shows that 38% of the participants had spent less than three years working in their current organisation. In comparison, another 38% of the participants had spent more than five years in their current organisation. Therefore, the overall results of the survey would represent both old and relatively new employees. The total work experience of the participants was predominantly ten years or above. More than 72% of the respondents had a total work experience of more than five years.

**Figure 6 Work Experience of the participants**



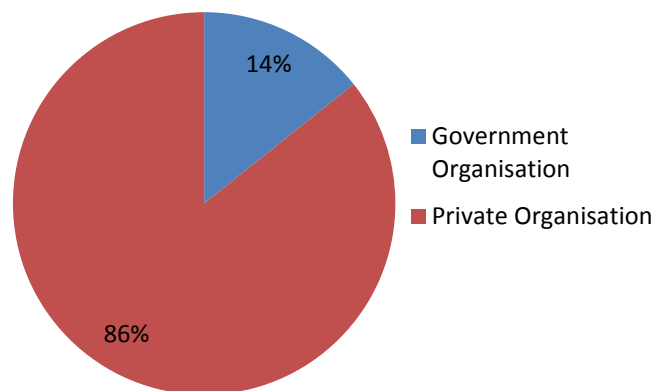
The next section will describe the details of the current organisations of the participants and the channels of communication and employee voice provided in the organisation.

### 4.3 Employment Organisations of participants

This section gives details about organisations in which the survey respondents were employed in terms of the type of organisation, industry and size. The job title of the participants is examined in terms of their position in the hierarchy of organisation structure. This section also discusses the channels of communication available to the employees to give suggestions and opinions or make complaints or requests.

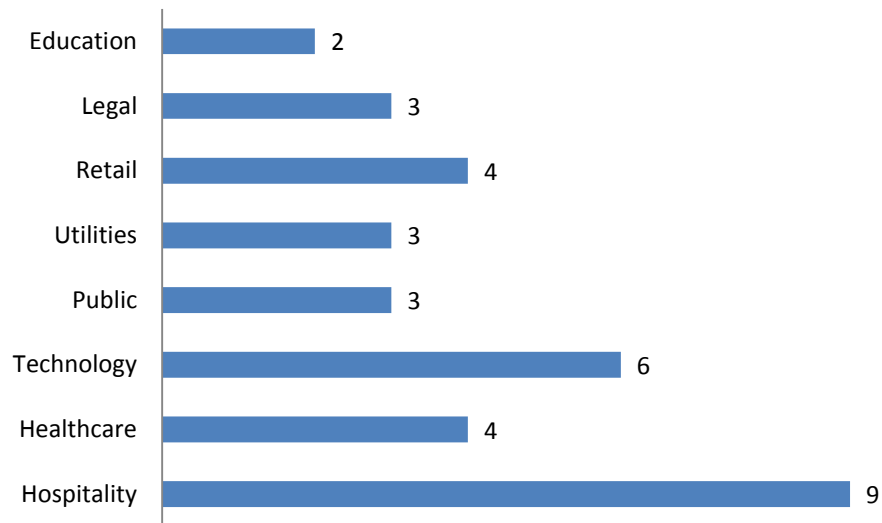
The organisations of the survey respondents were primarily privately owned organisations. Figure 7 shows that 86% of the organisations were private while 14% of the organisations were government organisations. Therefore, the opinions of the employees may be influenced by the type of organisation in which they work as different organisations have different style of management.

**Figure 7 Type of Organisation**



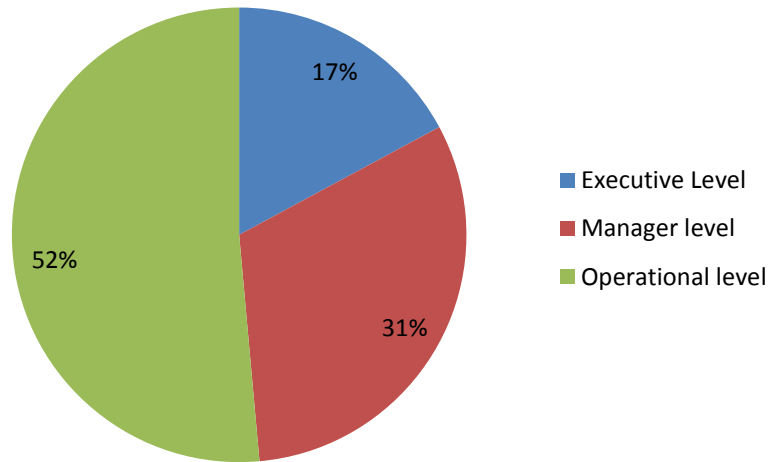
The participants were working in various types of industries and these industries have been categorized into eight different categories (Figure 8). The maximum numbers of participants were working in the hospitality sector mainly in restaurants and bars. Another important industry that emerged during the survey was the technological sector that was represented by six participants. This distribution shows the influence of different industries on the perspectives about employee voice among the employees.

**Figure 8 Type of Industries that participants were working in**



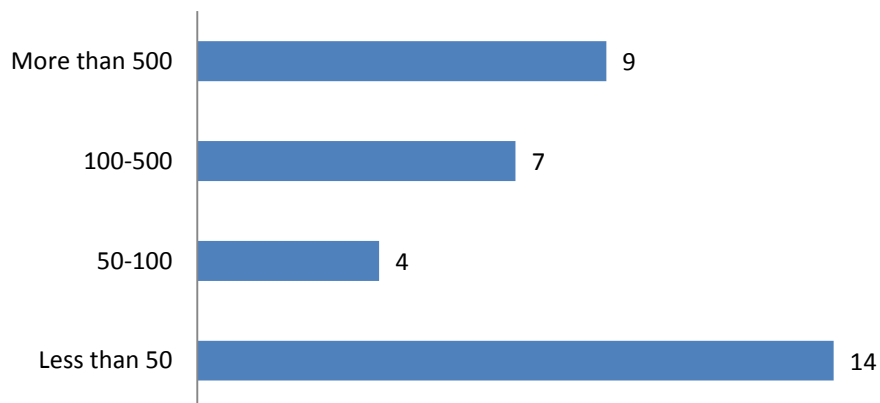
The job titles of the participants were translated to their relative positions in the organisation structure hierarchy that was divided into three levels- operational level, managerial level and executive level. Executive level included the participants who were the either the owners of the organisations or a part of the top management. Operational level represented the employees that worked at the basic level of operations of the organisation and were supervised by managers. The managerial level represented the middle level managers that manage the operational level employees and report progress to the executive level. During the analysis of the results of the survey, it was found that more than 50% of the participants represented the operational level employees (Figure 9). Managerial level employees represented 31% and executive level represented 17% of the employees respectively. This means that the sample population predominantly represents the operational level employees that may influence the results of the research.

**Figure 9 Position of the participants in their organisations**



The number of employees in the organisation would represent the potential size and scale of the organisation. A higher number of employees may also be more likely to have an employee union in place to represent the opinions of the employees. In the survey, it was found that most of the organisations were employing less than 50 employees. Figure 10 shows that 38% of the organisations employed less than 50 employees in total and 25% of the organisations employed more than 500 employees in total. Therefore, the sample represents organisations of all sizes in terms of number of employees employed

**Figure 10 Number of employees working in the organisation of the participants**

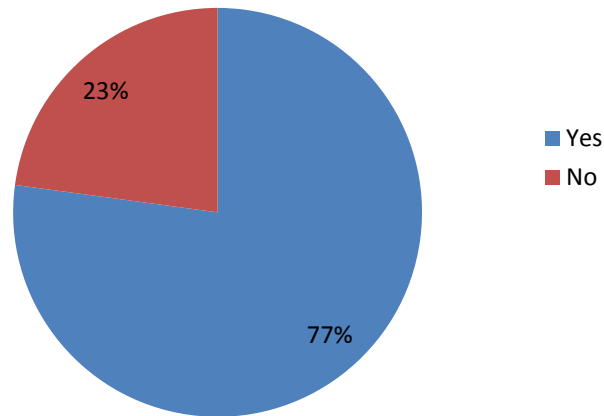


It was discussed in the literature review that working in a team can influence the opinion about employee voice among the employees. Most of the participants worked in teams.



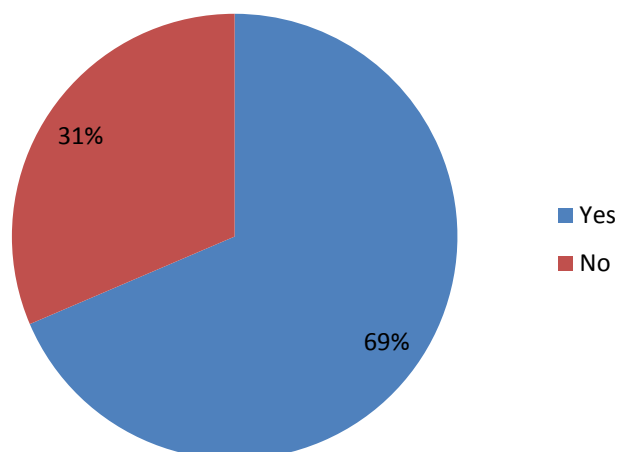
Figure 11 shows that 77% of the survey respondents worked in teams which mean the survey results may show an inclination towards working in a team being an important factor affecting employee voice.

**Figure 11 Participants working in a team**



The human resource or employee relations department in the organisations is mainly responsible for managing the employee and employer relationships and maintenance of employee well-being. Figure 12 shows that 69% of the organisations already had an human resources department in place. This means that the human resource department should be playing an important role in managing employee voice in these organisations.

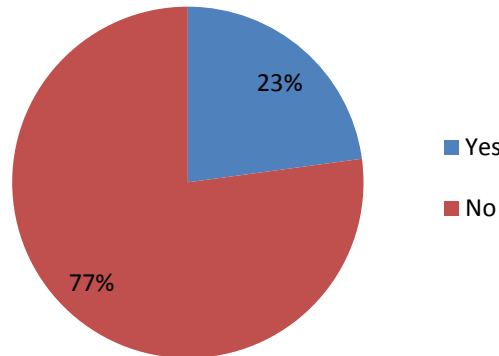
**Figure 12 Presence of HR department in the organisation**



The participants were asked if they had an employee union present in their organisation. This result mainly divides the organisations that have employee unions and those that

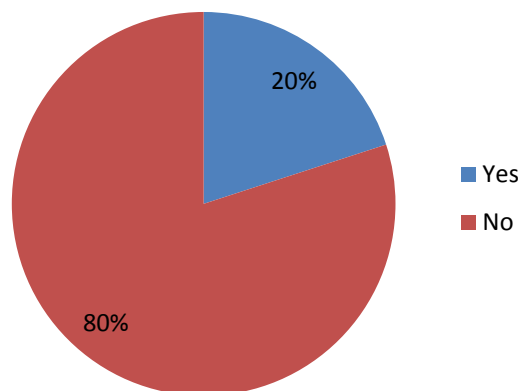
do not. It was found that 77% of the organisations did not have employee unions. Figure 13 shows the pie chart representing the presence of employee unions in the organisations of the survey participants.

**Figure 13 Presence of employee unions in organisations**



Out of the organisations that did have employee unions, only 20% of the participants were a part of these unions. This means that the unions that are present in the organisations do not represent their departments. This shows that most of the participants were essentially employees where there were no employee unions for them. Figure 14 shows the distribution of participants that were a part of employee unions among the organisations where employee unions were found to be present.

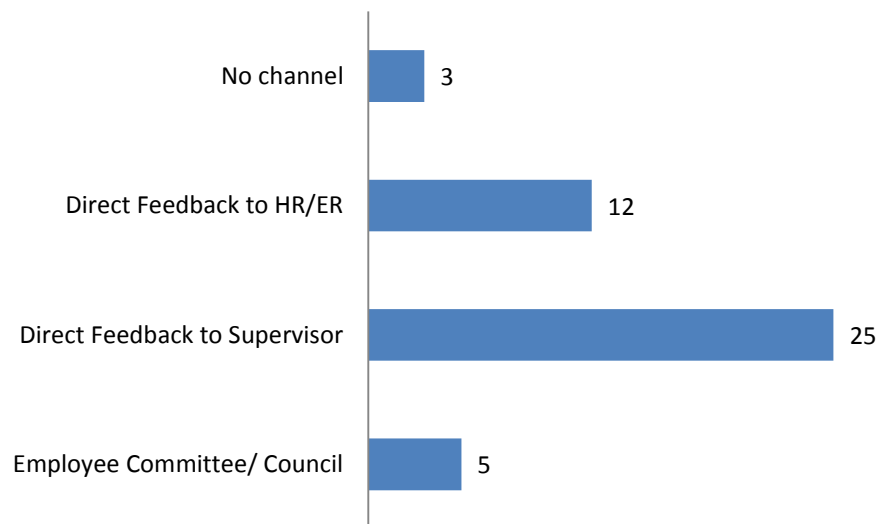
**Figure 14 Employees part of the employee union in organisations where employee unions are present**



The participants were then asked about their interactions and medium of communication with their employer. In case the participants had any suggestions, opinions or feedback for the organisation, the medium through which these opinions were shared were mainly through direct feedback to the immediate supervisor of the employee. Direct feedback to the human resource department was another important

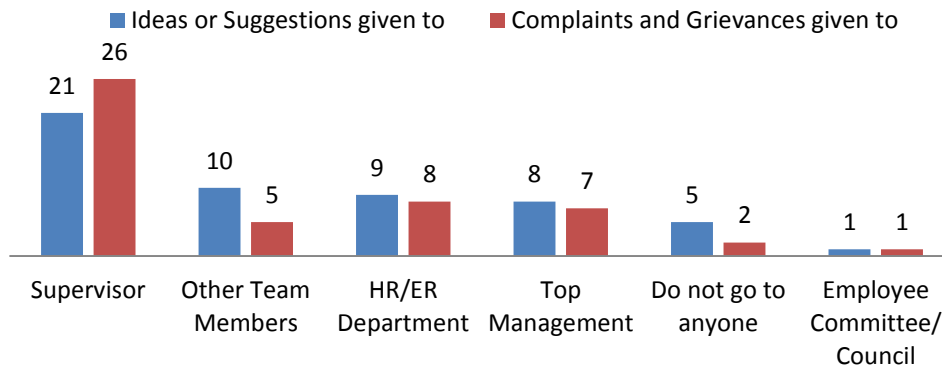
medium for the participants to share their opinions. Figure 15 shows the responses of the survey participants for the medium that they used to share their feedback with the organisation. It is interesting to find that three participants did not have any channel of feedback in their organisation.

**Figure 15 Medium provided to the employees for sharing feedback with the organisation**



Although there may be many mediums provided by the organisation to the employees to provide feedback, it was found that some of the main points of contact for the participants for sharing their positive and negative feedback were different. As shown in Figure 16, both types of feedback are predominantly given directly to the supervisor. For positive feedback such as suggestions for improvement, all channels are used extensively including discussion with other team members, contacting the top management of the organisation, reaching the HR and discussion in the employee council. However, there were also more responses that suggested that they would not go to anyone for giving positive feedback. In case of negative feedback, the point of contact was mainly the supervisor followed by contacting the HR department and the top management. The instances of not going to anyone in case of a complaint or a request are much lower.

**Figure 16 Point of contact for the participants for giving suggestions and making complaints**



The participants were then asked how often they felt that their concerns were addressed and feedback was given importance. They were also asked how often they felt they were given representation to express their voice in the organisation. The participants rated their answers according on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 representing ‘never’ and 5 representing ‘all the time’. Table 1 shows the mean, median and mode of the ratings given by the participants. It was found that the participants felt that their concerns were addressed most of the time but they felt that their voice was represented in the organisation only some times. This means that employees are satisfied with the organisations’ reactive initiatives when a concern is raised or requests are made by the employees but at the same time, the employees do not feel equally satisfied with the proactive initiatives taken by the organisations to provide the employees with opportunities for providing feedback and opinions.

**Table 1 Participants ratings about how often they felt represented and how often their concerns were addressed**

	Addressing of concerns and listening to feedback	Voice being represented in the organisation
<b>Mean</b>	3.51	3.26
<b>Median</b>	4	3
<b>Mode</b>	4	3

The next section addresses the key question of the research on identification of the factors that affect employee voice in a non-union organisation.

#### **4.4 Factors affecting Employee Voice**

Ratings were taken from the participants about their opinion of the importance of certain factors that could potentially contribute to or affect representation of employee voice in an organisation. There were a total of 15 factors that were identified during the literature review that can potentially affect the employee voice in a non-union organisation. Table 2 shows the mean, median and mode of the responses given by all participants in the order of importance. The averages of each of the ratings are shown in a graphical form in Figure 17. The results show that all the factors were rated as above average and somewhat important for representation of employee voice in a non-union organisation. Taking the mean, median and mode into consideration for all factors, the personality of the supervisor was rated as the most important factor that affects employee voice. This result can be related to the previous result about the immediate supervisor being the most important contact for the employee for giving suggestions and making complaints. This shows the significance of the role of the supervisor or line manager in an organisation. The second and the third most important factors are related to the relationship between the employee and the organisation that should be based on trust and positive elements. Feeling of being a valued member of the organisation makes an employee feel like they are contributing to the organisation and are a part its profits and losses. This is an important factors that affect employee voice as being a valued member means the employees also feel that their opinions matter to the organisation and will be considered for decision making. Similarly, recognition of the work done shows that the employee has contributed to the organisation and plays an important role in the organisation's performance. Sharing of opinions, concerns and comments is important because this is one of the direct mechanisms for representation of employee voice in a non-union organisation. A good working environment ensures that the employees are happy and their opinions are heard. These are the factors that scored an average of over 4 out of 5 meaning a score of above 80% in terms of their importance. Other important factors that were also identified as important were job security, training and learning and salary. These three factors represent the perks that come with employment in an organisation. Many of these factors could deter or contribute to expression of employee voice. Strong relationship within the team provides a channel for sharing opinions about matters among the employees that could potentially lead to a coordination action against a pressing issue. Quality of work that is done and autonomy of work is indirectly related

to the value that is given to the employee and employee satisfaction. Interestingly, acceptance of employees' opinions and suggestions was rated as less important than sharing of opinions and concerns. This means that the employees are more concerned about expressing their opinions and for the organisation to listen to their feedback rather than the organisation taking any action regarding the feedback. Informal relationship between the employee and the supervisor was rated as the least important by the participants.

**Table 2 Factors affecting employee Voice in non-union organisation**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreeable and approachable personality of supervisor</b>	4.34	5	5	86.86
<b>Trust between employee and organisation</b>	4.29	5	5	85.71
<b>Good relationship between employee and organisation</b>	4.23	4	5	84.57
<b>Feeling like a valued member of the organisation</b>	4.17	5	5	83.43
<b>Good working environment in the workplace</b>	4.14	4	4	82.86
<b>Recognition for work done by employee</b>	4.09	4	5	81.71
<b>Sharing of my opinions, comments and concerns</b>	4.03	4	5	80.57
<b>Job security</b>	3.97	4	3	79.43
<b>Training and learning</b>	3.97	4	4	79.43
<b>Salary</b>	3.94	4	4	78.86
<b>Strong relationship with team and other employees</b>	3.89	4	4	77.71
<b>Quality of work that I get to do</b>	3.83	4	3	76.57
<b>Acceptance of my opinions, comments and concerns by supervisor and management</b>	3.80	4	3	76.00
<b>Autonomy</b>	3.80	4	4	76.00
<b>Informal relationship between employee and supervisor</b>	3.51	4	4	70.29

**Figure 17 Factors affecting employee voice in non-union organisation**



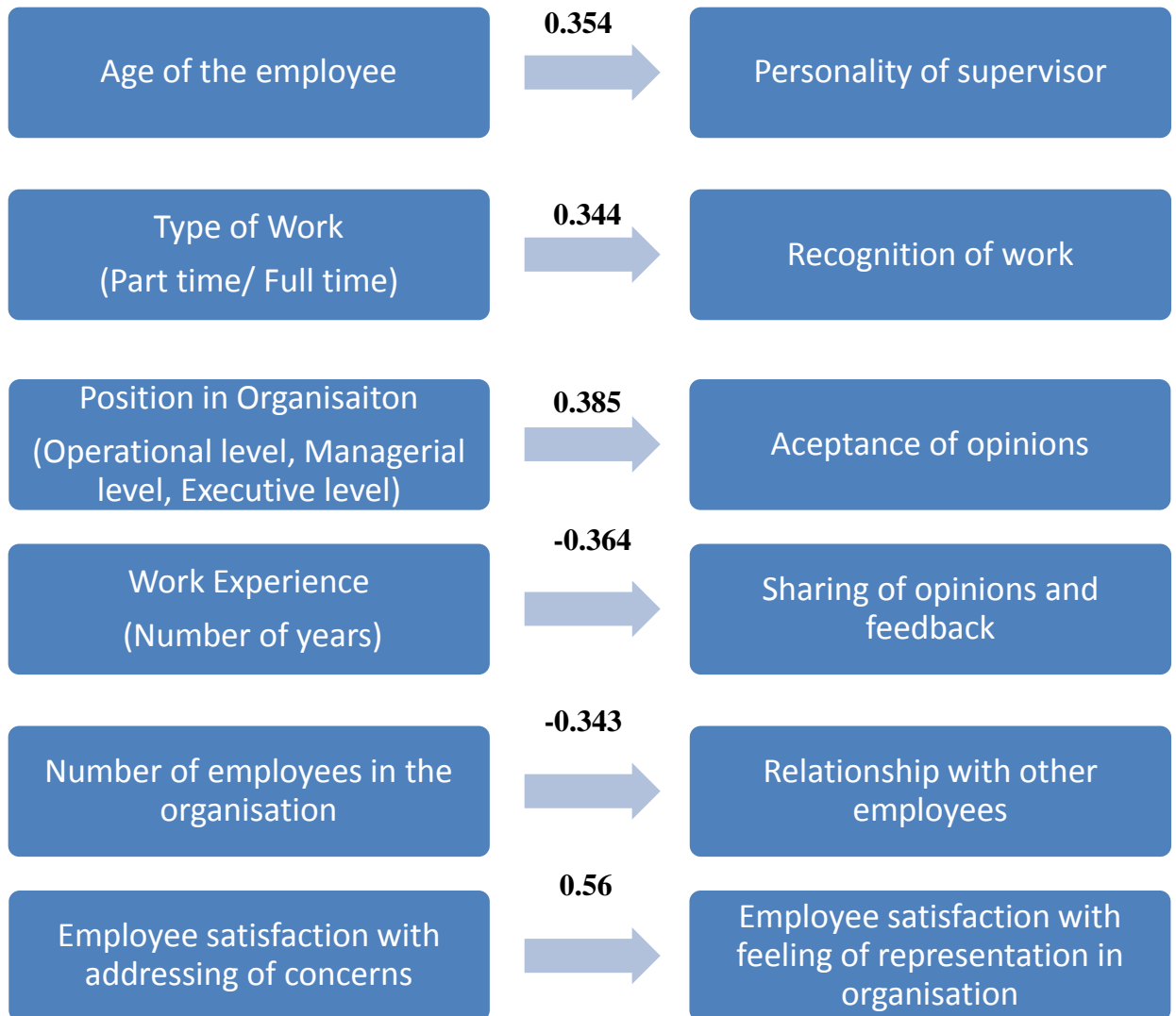
#### **4.5 Correlation Analysis between variables between participants and ratings given for factors affecting employee voice**

The ratings of the factors affecting employee voice were analysed to find a correlation between the basic details and employment details of the participants. It was found that there is a moderate relationship between age and personality of the supervisor with a correlation of 0.354. This means that as a person's age increases, the personality of the supervisor was potentially more important for representation of their employee voice. There was also a positive correlation relationship between the type of work and importance of recognition of work. The recognition of work was more important for participants who were working full time than those working part time (0.344).

It was found that as the position of the participant increased from operational level to executive level, the acceptance of the opinions was more important for expressing their employee voice (0.385). Interestingly as the work experience of the participants increased in their current organisation, sharing of opinions was less important showing a correlation factor of -0.364. The number of the employees in the organisation were directly correlated with the importance given to the relationship with other employees for showing employee voice. Both the variables showed a positive correlation of 0.343. The feelings of addressing of concerns were strongly correlated to the feeling of

employee voice being represented in the organisation with a correlation factor of 0.56 with a significance level of 0.01. The various correlation relationships discussed between the variables are shown in Figure 18.

**Figure 18 Correlation relationships between employee individual variables and importance of factors affecting employee voice**



#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter showed the results that were obtained from the survey conducted for the research and analysed those results using basic statistics techniques of frequency distribution, mean, median and mode. The different variables were also explored by using correlation analysis to find the potential relationships between different factors and how employee voice can be affected by employee and organisation characteristics. These results will now be explained in the next chapter. The findings from the literature



review and the survey will be reviews to see how far the research objectives have been obtained.

## **CHAPTER 5      DISCUSSION**

### **5.1    Introduction**

The details of the results of the survey conducted for the research was given in the previous chapter along with the statistical analysis of the responses recorded for each of the survey questions. This chapter would discuss the findings of the survey. The results will be interpreted to see how the findings have implications on the achievement of the research objectives. The discussion is divided into three sections.

### **5.2    Discussion of findings**

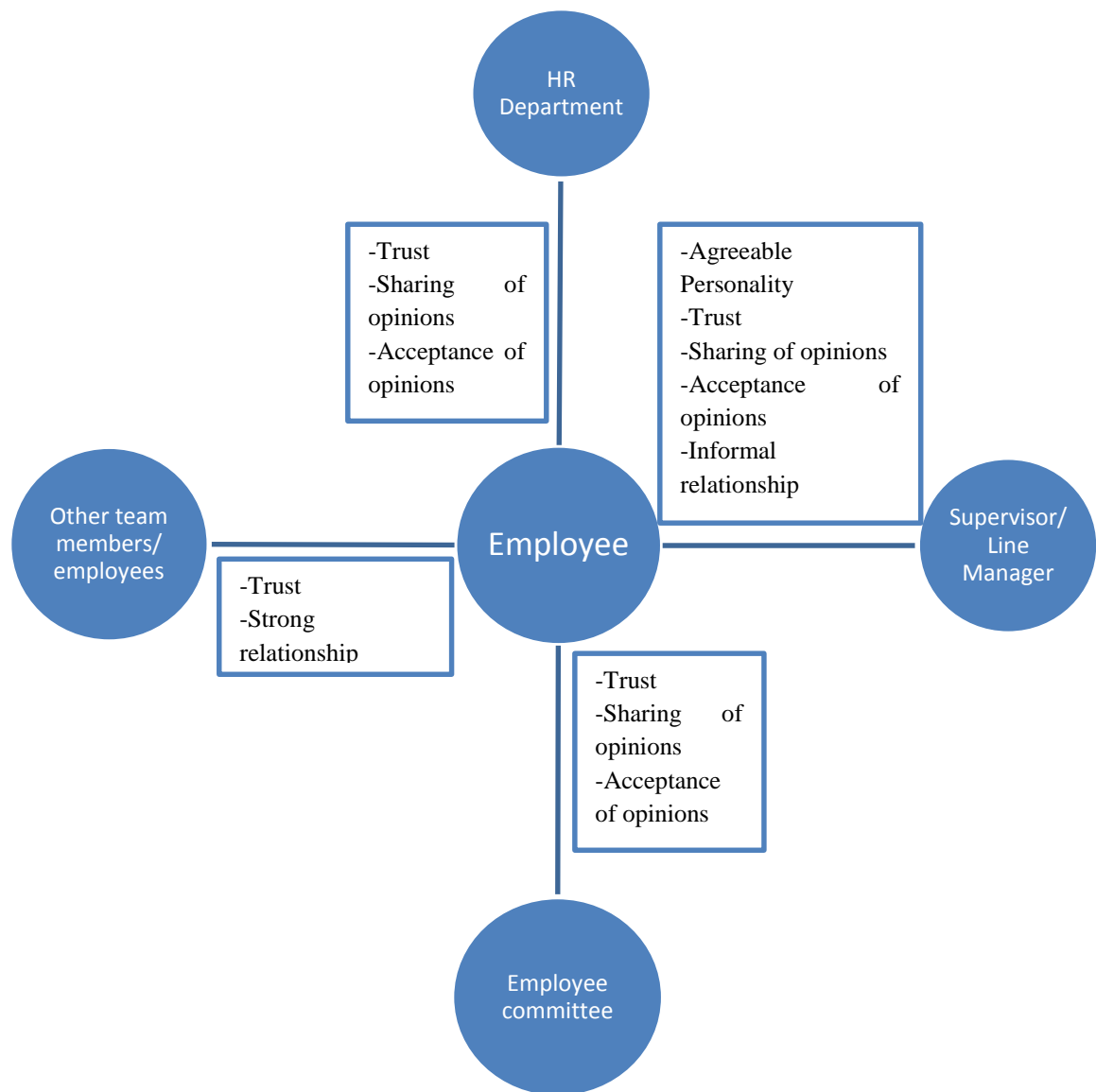
The survey provided details about the profile of the survey participants, their employment details and their ratings for the factors that they perceive as important for employee voice. The section of the questionnaire about the ratings of importance of the factors that affect employee voice in an organisation are the key results for this study. The relationship of the basic details and employment details of the respondents with their ratings presents an interesting case of how the perspective towards certain factors would change in different situations.

The literature review discussed that the number of firms having an employee union is decreasing rapidly. Out of the 36 respondents, only 23% had an employee union in their organisation out of which only 20% of the employees were a part of the union in their organisation. As suggested by literature, most of the other organisations have replaced employee unions with non-union channels of human resource departments and reliance on direct feedback to the supervisor. The point of contact for participants for ideas and suggestions or making a complaint or a request have become highly reliant on immediate supervisors of the employee, human resource departments of the organisation and other members of the team. If the employee does not feel comfortable in communicating with any of the non-union channels for expressions of concerns or opinions, it can be counter-productive for the firm. As found in the results of the survey, some employees decide to not give feedback or make complaints to anyone in the firm. This is a very important revelation in the survey as such behaviour among employees can lead to employee frustration, dissatisfaction ultimately leading to the high levels of employee turnovers in the firm.

The employees were mostly satisfied with the way their concerns were addressed in the organisations showing a mean rating of 3.5 on a scale of 1 to 5 for satisfaction. The employees were however not as satisfied with respect to their feeling of belonging and being represented in the organisation. This shows that the employees' organisations in the survey that are largely non-union firms have channels of communication for the employees that can provide the basic function of helping and supporting employees with their complaints and concerns but lack in taking a proactive role to make the employees feel that they are a part of the organisation and are important representatives.

From the ratings of the importance of the factors that affect employee voice in an organisation, the agreeable personality of the supervisor was rated as the most important with 86.8% level of importance from the respondents. As the feedback to supervisors and hierarchical structure of communication in organisations has gained importance with the absence of employee unions, supervisors and line managers are the key personnel in the organisation that provide a two way communication between the top management and the employees. The employee give their requests or suggestions to their supervisors and it is up to these supervisors whether or not they take action or communicate these requests or suggestions to the top management of the company. With this central role of supervisors, the friendly personality of the supervisor plays a key role in ensuring that employees are able to approach their supervisor and communicate their feedback without any concerns for bias, reproach or counter-action from the supervisor. For this reason, it is only understandable that personality of supervisor is a top priority of all employees in any non-union organisation. Similarly, the relationship between the employee and the organisation and the level of trust between the employee and the organisation are represented by the people who are in direct contact with the employee and thus represent the organisation for the employee. The relationships with people who have direct interactions with employees such as the HR, supervisor, other team members etc. form the organisation relationships for the employee. It is these relationships that influence the expression of employee voice in a non-union organisation. These relationships between employees and organisations in the context of non-union organisations are represented in the Figure 19.

**Figure 19 Relationships between employee and organisation and the factors affecting them**

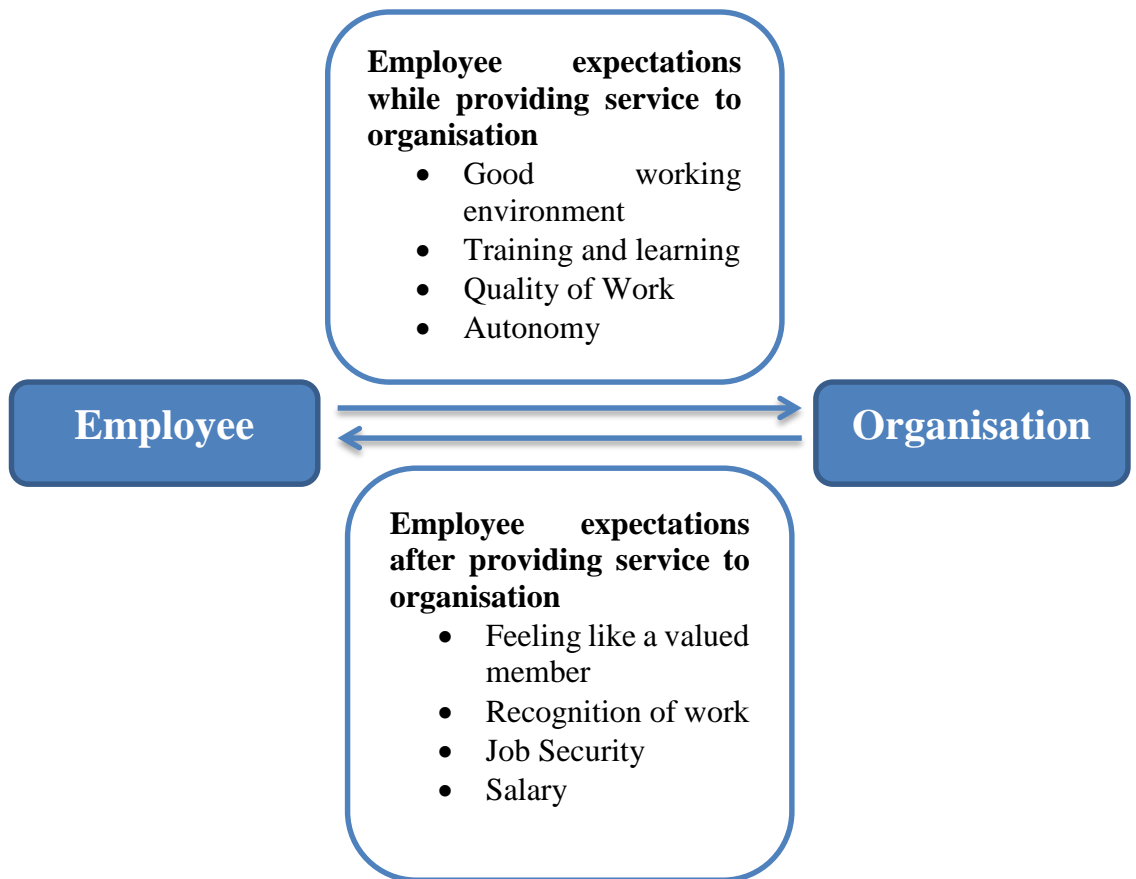


The factors that influence employee voice are centred around these relationships between the employee and the organisation. The factors that are identified in the results of the survey can be represented in the form of the factors that affect each of these relationships to provide a structured model for an organisation to understand the employees' perspectives of employee voice. As shown in Figure 17, the relationship between the supervisor and the employee is the most important and has the most effect on the representation of employee voice followed by the importance of the human resources department. In case an employee committee is present in the organisation, this committee may replace the HR department for managing employee voice and the same factors that apply to HR may be transferred to the employee committee or council. As discussed in the literature review, a trusting and strong relationship with other team

members can be empowering for the employee and may have a collective influence on employee voice and employee representation in the organisation. An informal group of team members with collective concerns or similar suggestions may have a much stronger influence in expressing their opinions and bringing about change in the organisation.

When the employee works in an organisation, the employee expects certain provisions from the organisation that would facilitate the work. In return for the work done by the employee, the employee expects to be acknowledged, recognised or rewarded for his or her efforts. Many of the factors that affected employee voice of the respondents were based on this give and take relationship between the employee and the organisation. These factors are shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 20 Relationship between employee and organisation based on employee expectations**



The figure shows that when the employee is providing services to the organisation, the factors that are important for the employee for representation in the organisation are a

good working environment, training and learning, good quality of work and autonomy in work all of which would contribute to a better performance of the employee and better results for the firm. These are the factors that indirectly benefit the organisation because they lead to better quality of work that is provided by the employee. On the other hand, the employee expects certain perks in return for his effort that show their representation in the organisation and are an expression of their employee voice. These factors are recognition of the work done, job security, salary and feeling like a valued member of the organisation. Out of these factors, feeling of being a valued member of the organisation and recognition of work were rated as more important factors affecting employee voice than others. Among the factors important for delivery of good work by the employee, good working environment was rated as the most important factor that would help in good performance. Good working environment can be directly be related back to the various relationships that an employee has with the organisations as explained in Figure 17.

Overall, the most important factors that affect employee voice in a non-union organisation are factors that affect the various relationships between the employee and the organisation, primarily the relationship between the supervisor and the employee. The other factors that affect employee voice are the provisions for the employees for good performance and the rewards that are given by the employees for their good performance.

The correlation relationships between the various variables provide an interesting insight into how the importance of factors may be affecting employee voice can change in different situations. All the correlations that were described were of a significance level of less than 0.05 that makes them relevant for discussion and further analysis. The personality of the supervisor became more important as the age of a person increased which means that with life experience of age, the employees give high importance to the relationship between them and their supervisor that would enable them to express their concerns and give feedback. The recognition of work was found to be more important for full time employees as full time employees would tend to be more dedicated towards their work and would want the organisation to reward them with recognition for their dedication and effort. The acceptance of opinions with higher levels of hierarchy was an expected result as the importance of the an employee and their opinions would gain more importance in top levels of the organisation structure.

The opinions from higher positions in the organisation ladder are more likely to be relevant for improvement of performance of the organisation and are thus more likely to be trusted and accepted. Similarly, the higher number of employees in the organisation resulted in more importance given to relationship with other employees because these relationships would become much more relevant for an employee when working with a number of people in a large office. Employee satisfaction with addressing of concerns was strongly correlated to employee satisfaction with feeling of representation. This means that when an employee feels that their concerns are being addressed, they also feel more represented or that when the employee feels more represented, they are more likely to be satisfied with the addressing of their concerns. This relationship should be studied further to understand which of the variables is the 'cause' and which one is the 'effect' in this relationship. An identification of the cause and effect relationship could be helpful in designing strategies for employee representation in a non-union organisation.

An interesting insight from the correlation relationships was that as the work experience of a person increased, they gave less importance to sharing of opinions with the organisation. If this result is seen in context of the relationship between age and personality of the supervisor, it can be concluded that the mature and experienced employees are more interested in having a good working relationship with their supervisors that would help them in their job performance than in sharing of their feedback and opinions with the supervisors. Less importance to sharing of opinions can be because of many reasons like lack of belief in organisations for acceptance of feedback. This finding can be explored more deeply in further research on employee voice and its relationship with increasing experience of employees.

The survey of the employees for this study revealed very interesting insights into how employee voice is perceived by employees in non-union organisations and which are the factors that the employees think are most representative for their employee voice. The relationships between the various employment and personal variables of the participants with the factors provided a thorough examination of how the factors may be affected among different individuals. The proposed factors affecting employee voice that was identified from the literature review were validated from this research and have been further explored in two different models in the discussions. The final factors and

models show the overall results of the research and fulfil the objective of exploring the factors affecting employee voice in a non-union organisation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the results from the survey and analysed them to find how the factors that affect employee voice can be categorized into two concise models representing the employee relationship with the organisation. The first model showed the different type of relationships that an employee has within the organisation and how each of these relationships affected employee voice. The second model explores the employee expectations from organisation for better job performance and employee expectations from organisation after the work has been completed. These two models sum up the overall findings of the survey and fulfil the objectives of the research.



## **CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research explored the representation of employees in non-union organisations and the factors that influence employee voice. The literature review of the study was based on understanding the meaning of employee voice from the perspective of both a union organisation and a non-union organisation. Previous research on the subject suggested that both the macro-environment and micro-environment of an organisation determines the type of channel that they use for employee representation in the organisation. While the macro-environment factors are important for the choice of representation channel, the factors that affect employee voice once these channels are selected are largely influenced by the micro-environment of the organisation. This research identified the firm-level indicators that could potentially affect employee voice for the employees in a non-union organisation and conducted a quantitative study through surveys would understand the level of importance that the employees would give to each of these identified factors. The results of the survey found that all of the identified factors that could potentially affect employee voice were rated with importance above the average rating. The factors were mainly related to three types of relationship that an employee has with the organisation. The first relationship shows that there are various representatives of organisation for the employees in the form of supervisor, HR department, team members etc. and each of these relationships is affected by different factors that influences the employees' voice in a different manner. The second relationship is the expectations of the employee from the organisation to give some basic provisions to the employee that will facilitate in better job performance. The third relationship is the expectations of the employee from the organisation to reward the employee for good job performance. The importance given to the factors that affect employee voice are further influenced by certain individual variables of the employee such as age, work experience, type of work, number of employees in the organisation, and position in the organisation. It was also found that employee satisfaction with addressing of concerns was strongly correlated with employee satisfaction with feeling of representation in the organisation that would require further exploration to understand the significance of these variables on employee voice and representation in a non-union organisation.

## **6.1 Recommendations for further research**

This research has provided some interesting insights into factors that affect employee voice in non-union organisation. Further exploration of more factors that affect employee voice can be done using qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus group discussions to get an in depth analysis of the employees perspectives on employee voice. This may lead to identification of more factors that have not already been identified in this research. The correlation relationships between the individual factors of the employees and the importance they gave to factors affecting employee voice can be explored further to understand the cause and effect of each of the variables and how far these relationships are relevant for employee voice. A particular finding that would be particularly interesting to explore is the negative relationship between the experience of the employees and the importance given to sharing of feedback. This research could not give any possible explanation for this finding and an exploration of the causes of why such a relationship exists could yield interesting and relevant results for the employee voice literature.

## REFERENCES

- Abbott, B. (2004) 'Worker Representation through the Citizens' Advice Bureaux'. In: G. Healy, E. Heery, P. Taylor and W. Brown (eds). *The Future of Worker Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ackers, P., Marchington, M., Wilkinson A. and Dundon, T. (2005) 'Partnership and Voice, with or without Trade Unions: Changing UK management approaches to organisational participation'. In M. Stuart, and M. Martinez Lucio (eds). *Partnership and Modernization in Employment Relations*. London, Routledge.
- Batt, R., Colvin, A. J., & Keefe, J. (2002) 'Employee voice, human resource practices, and quit rates: Evidence from the telecommunications industry', *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 55(4), pp. 573-594.
- Boxall, P. and Purcell, J. (2003) *Strategy and Human Resource Management*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Bryson, A. (2004) 'Management Responsiveness to Union and Nonunion Worker Voice in Britain', *Industrial Relations*, 43(1), pp. 213-241.
- Bryson, A., Gomez, R., Kretschmer, T., & Willman, P. (2007) 'The diffusion of workplace voice and high-commitment human resource management practices in Britain, 1984–1998', *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 16(3), pp. 395-426.
- Butler, P. (2005) 'Non-union employee representation: exploring the efficacy of the voice process', *Employee Relations*, 27(3), pp.272-288.
- Campling, J. and Gollan, P.J. (1999) *Bargained Out: Negotiating without unions in Australia*. The Federation Press: Sydney.
- Delery, J. E., Gupta, N., Shaw, J. D., Jenkins Jr, G. D., & Ganster, M. L. (2000) 'Unionization, compensation, and voice effects on quits and retention', *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 39(4), pp. 625-645.
- Dundon, T., Wilkinson\*, A., Marchington, M., & Ackers, P. (2004) 'The meanings and purpose of employee voice', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(6), pp. 1149-1170.
- Dundon, T., Wilkinson, A., Marchington, M., & Ackers, P. (2005) 'The management of voice in non-union organisations: managers' perspectives', *Employee Relations*, 27(3), pp. 307-319.
- Dundon, T., & Gollan, P. J. (2007) 'Re-conceptualizing voice in the non-union workplace', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(7), pp. 1182-1198.
- Freeman, R.B. and Medoff. J.L. (1984) *What Do Unions Do?.* Basic Books: New York.

- Gollan, P.J. (2006) *Employee Representation in Non-union Firms*. Sage Publications: London.
- Hall, M. (2003) 'Informing and consulting your workforce: B&Q – listening to the Grass Roots' *Case Study Report*, No:3 (4), Involvement and Participation Association (IPA), London.
- Kane, E. O'Reilly-De Brun (2005). *Doing your own research*. Marion Boyars: London
- Kaplan, D. (2004) *The Sage handbook of quantitative methodology for the social sciences*. Sage Publications.
- Kaufman, B.E. (2000) 'Accomplishments and Shortcomings of Nonunion Employee Representation in the Pre-Wagner Act Years: A Reassessment'. In Kaufman B.E. and Taras, D.G. (eds.), *Nonunion Employee Representation: History, Contemporary Practice, and Policy*. M.E.Sharpe: Armonk, New York, pp.21-60.
- Kaufman, B.E. (2003) 'High-Level Employee Involvement at Delta Air Lines', *Human Resource Management*, 42 (2), pp.175-190.
- Kersley, B., Alpin, C., Forth, J., Bryson, A., Bewley, H., Dix, G., and Oxenbridge, S. (2005) *Inside the Workplace: First Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*. Department of Trade and Industry, London.
- Lewicki, R.J. and Wietnoff, G. (2000) 'Trust and Trust Development and Trust Repair'. In Deutsch, M. and Coleman, P.T. (eds.), *The Handbooks of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*. Jossey Cass: San Francisco, pp.86-107.
- Millward, N., Bryson, A. and Forth, J. (2000) *All Change at Work?*. Routledge: London
- Neuman, W. L., & Neuman, W. L. (2006) *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*.
- Pfeffer, J. (1998) *The Human Equation*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1991) 'Towards a dynamic theory of strategy', *Strategic management journal*, 12(S2), pp. 95-117.
- Taras, D.G. and Copping, J. (1998) 'The transition from formal Non-union Representation to Unionization: A contemporary Case', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 52 (1), pp. 22-44.
- Terry, M. (2003), 'Partnership and Trade Unions in the UK', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 24 (4), pp.485-507.
- Wilkinson, A., Dundon, T., Marchington, M. and Ackers, P. (2004) 'The changing patterns of employee voice: case studies from the UK and Republic of Ireland', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 46 (3), pp.298-323.

## APPENDIX 1

### Survey Questionnaire

1. Age:

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- >50

2. Gender:  Male  Female

3. Type of Work:  Part Time  Full Time

4. Type of Industry: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Number of years of experience in current work place: \_\_\_\_ years

7. Number of years of work experience in total: \_\_\_\_ years

9. What is the type of organisation that you work in?

- Private  Government  Non-profit organisation

10. How many people do you have in your workplace?

- Less than 50  50-100  100-500  More than 500

11. Do you have a union for employees in your work place?

- Yes  No

If yes, are you a part of the union?

- Yes  No  N/A

If no, do you have any other medium of sharing your opinion or expressing your concerns or giving suggestions? (Tick all that apply)

- We have an employee committee/ council
- Direct feedback to supervisor
- Direct feedback to human resources/ employee relations division
- No channel for giving feedback
- Any other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you work in a team?

- Yes  No

13. Do you have a human resources department or employee relations department in your organisation?

- Yes  No

14. When you have ideas, suggestions or opinions about work or the workplace, who would you generally go to?

- Employees committee/ council
- Supervisor
- Other team members
- Human resources/ employee relations division
- Top Management
- I would not go to anyone
- Any other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

15. When you have a complaints or grievance or requests at the workplace, who would you generally go to?

- Employees committee/ council
- Supervisor
- Other team members
- Human resources/ employee relations division
- Top Management
- I would not go to anyone
- Any other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do your concerns and requests generally get addressed?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Very rarely
- Never

17. Do you feel you are not given enough representation in terms of expressing your voice in the organisation?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Very rarely
- Never

18. According to you what contributes to increasing the representation of employee voice. Rate in order of importance from 1 to 5, 1 being least important and 5 being most important

Sharing of my opinions, comments and concerns:  1  2  3  4  5

Acceptance of my opinions, comments and concerns by supervisor and management:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Trust between employee and organisation:  1  2  3  4  5

Good relationship between employee and organisation:  1  2  3  4  5

Informal relationship between employee and supervisor:  1  2  3  4  5

Recognition for work done by employee:  1  2  3  4  5

- Good working environment in the workplace:  1     2     3     4     5
- Feeling like a valued member of the organisation:  1    2    3    4    5
- Quality of work that I get to do:                     1     2     3     4     5
- Job security in this job:                                 1     2     3     4     5
- Salary of the job:                                         1     2     3     4     5
- Training and learning provided in the job:     1     2     3     4     5
- Autonomy at work (Able to make decisions individually):  1    2    3    4    5
- Strong relationship with team and other employees:  1     2    3    4     5
- Agreeable and approachable personality of supervisor:  1    2    3    4    5

19. What are the ways in which employee representation can be improved in an organisation?

---