

## **EMPLOYEE VOICE STRATEGIES AND COLLABORATION OF INSURANCE COMPANIES IN PORT HARCOURT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This work examined the relationship between employee voice strategies and collaboration of insurance companies in Port Harcourt. Objectives of the study were to examine how dimensions of employee voice strategies such as joint consultation and suggestion box enhances shared goal and knowledge sharing in the workplace. The study adopted the survey research design. The target population for this study comprised of 75 from 5 insurance companies in Port Harcourt. The entire population was used as sample. Data were collected through primary (questionnaire). A structured questionnaire designed in four point likert rating scale format was adopted for the collection of data. In the course of administering the questionnaires, the researcher was able to retrieve 71 copies. Spearman Ranking ( $r$ ) was used for the test of hypotheses via SPSS Version 23.0. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between employee voice strategies (joint consultation and suggestion box) and collaboration (knowledge sharing and shared goal) of insurance companies Port Harcourt. The study concluded that employee voice strategies enhance collaboration in the workplace. The study recommended among others that management of insurance companies in Port Harcourt should establish formal structures for joint consultation to bring together representatives from both management and employees, thereby enhancing their collaboration in the workplace; Suggestion box in the workplace should be made anonymous. This will allow employees to freely express their ideas, concerns, and suggestions without fear of retribution or judgment. By implementing an anonymous suggestion box, organizations can gather a wider range of perspectives and ideas, leading to effective collaboration, thereby attaining its predetermined goals and objectives.*

**Keywords: Employee Voice Strategies, Joint Consultation, Suggestion Box, Collaboration, Knowledge Sharing and Shared Goal.**

### **Background to the Study**

The adage that two good heads are better than one is one of the core fundamentals of industrial practices. This is premised on the fact that when two (management and employees) come together, better ideas and decisions are made which in turn accelerate the attainment of their expectations. The coming together of humans in the workplace could be termed as collaboration. The need for collaboration in the workplace arises from the recognition that human collective efforts can greatly enhance productivity, innovation, problem-solving and overall organizational success (Derek, 2023; Ribeiro, 2020).

Collaboration can help the insurance market evolve products and services more quickly. They can also deliver improved customer experience. Organisations that are creating new partnerships are not only demonstrating innovation and creativity, but are also improving efficiency and profitability. In short, effective collaboration generates new ideas and knowledge (Total Systems, 2021). When applied correctly it also drives value. We have examined the insurance market and found multiple examples of successful collaboration with measurable benefits. But in order to take advantage of the huge opportunities available from collaboration, business leaders need to be open to a new way of thinking.

The insurance market faces rapidly moving challenges. As a result, many operational strategies which have been around for decades are no longer effective. The insurance market still exists with

the sole objective to protect both individuals and companies against risk. The big difference today is that we are living in a global economy, with increasingly sophisticated customer expectations and a background of evolving risk. Therefore, promoting effective collaboration serves as a veritable tool to attaining predetermined goals and objectives among insurance companies. However, the above could be enhanced when employees who are the core harnessers of other organisation's resources are put into considerations by management during decision making. This is because employees are humans and are endowed with ideas that can make an organization turn a new leaf of success. The call for the inclusion of their ideas makes way for the adoption of employee voice strategies in the workplace. In light of the above, the researcher was geared to examine the relationship between employee voice strategies and collaboration of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

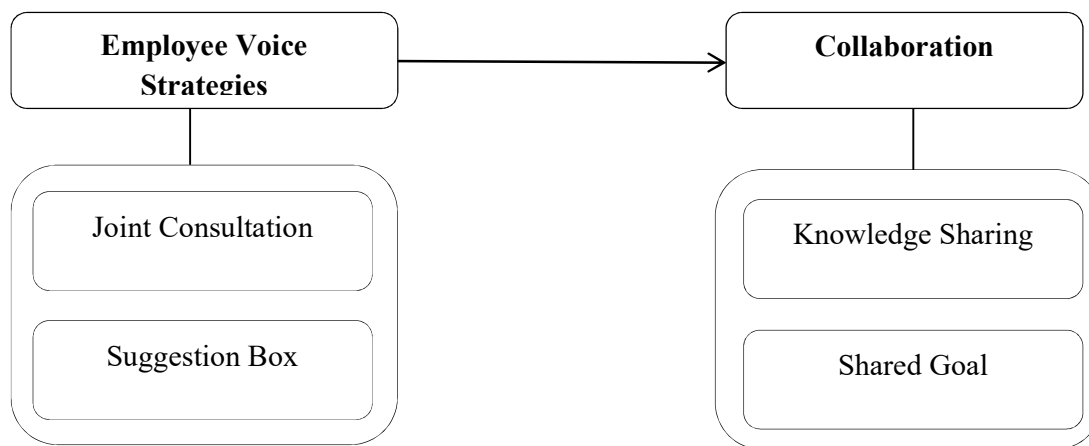
### Problem of the Study

It is undisputed there are situations where individuals or teams sometimes fail to effectively work together by sharing knowledge and as well achieving a shared goal. The above hinders the success of organisations. Among others, poor collaboration could be traceable to inadequate adoption of employee voice strategies in the workplace. Ineffective or inadequate approaches used by organizations to encourage employees to express their opinions, concerns, and suggestions within the workplace crave a grave danger to the collaboration of the organisation.

Poor engagement of employees in meaningful discussions and decision-making processes among others via joint consultation stifles the flow of ideas for the betterment of the organisation. Also, mere showcasing of suggestion box without making use of it when it comes to decision making could portend disunity and poor collaboration in the workplace.

In every business entity viable ideas are mostly needed to run the business, thus providing employee voice strategies is essential as it tend to bring together the ideas of both management and employees in a harmonized manner for better operations and performance. Google search has shown there the relationship between employee voice strategies and collaboration of insurance companies in Port Harcourt is yet to be established, hence the conduct of this study.

### Conceptual Framework



**Fig. 1.1:** Conceptual Framework Showing Relationship between Employee Voice Strategies and Collaboration.

**Source:** Researcher's Conceptualization, 2024.

### Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between employee voice strategies and collaboration of insurance companies in Port Harcourt. However, specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
2. Investigate the relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
3. Ascertain the relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
4. Determine the relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt?
3. What is the relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt?
4. What is the relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested to guide the study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
- Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

### **Concept of Employee Voice Strategies**

Voice is a "soft" management approach (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013) and a strong antecedent of employee engagement (Rees et al., 2013). According to Lucas et al. in Jha et al. (2019), employee voice is the capacity of employees to contribute to the decision-making in an organization. It is a mechanism for productive cooperation between employer and employee to increase the long-term sustainability of the firm and economic welfare of workers (Emelilifeonwu & Valk, 2018). In the light of the above, employee voice strategies refer to the various approaches and mechanisms implemented by organizations to encourage and facilitate employees' participation in decision-making processes, as well as their expression of opinions, concerns, and suggestions within the workplace. These strategies aim to create an inclusive and participatory work environment that values employee input and empowers them to contribute to the organization's harmonious work environment and success (Fontein, 2021; Elder, 2023). The importance of employee voice strategies lies in their ability to enhance organizational performance, promote employee engagement and satisfaction, collaboration, foster innovation and creativity, and contribute to a positive work environment. Implementing effective employee voice strategies can lead to numerous benefits for both employees and organizations. In the light of the above, this study dimensionalized employee voice strategies into joint consultation and suggestion box.

**Joint Consultation:** Joint consultation is a process in which individuals or groups come together to discuss on matters of mutual interest or concern. It involves the exchange of ideas,

perspectives, and information with the goal of reaching a consensus or making informed decisions (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2018). In joint consultation, management and employees come together to discuss various aspects of work, such as organizational policies, procedures, work design, job roles, health and safety measures, and employee welfare initiatives. The process typically involves regular meetings or forums where representatives from both sides share information, exchange ideas, and engage in constructive discussions (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). The goal is to reach mutual agreements or consensus on issues that affect the workplace and find solutions that benefit both parties.

**Suggestion Box:** A suggestion box is a tool used by organizations to gather ideas, suggestions, and feedback from employees. It serves as an employee voice strategy, providing a platform for employees to express their opinions, contribute innovative ideas, and provide feedback on various aspects of the organization. The suggestion box can be physical or digital, allowing employees to submit their suggestions anonymously or openly (Robbins et al., 2018). The primary purpose of a suggestion box is to promote employee engagement and involvement in decision-making processes within the organization. It creates a sense of ownership and empowerment among employees, making them feel valued and heard. Moreover, it enhances communication between employees and management, fostering a culture of open dialogue and collaboration.

### **Concept of Collaboration**

The concept of collaboration refers individuals or teams working together to achieve a common goal or complete a specific task. It has to do with working together between employers, employees, and relevant stakeholders to achieve a peaceful and productive work environment (Edmondson & Harvey, 2017). In a collaborative workplace, employees collaborate across departments, hierarchies, and functions to solve problems, make informed decisions, and drive organizational success. Bamson and Leburu (2018) stated that collaboration is often seen as an activity that involves team members or managers and employees working together on a project. It is a process governed by a series of norms and behaviours that maximize individual contributions by leveraging the collective intelligence of all participants. It's the way a group of people collectively explores ideas to create solutions that go beyond the limited view of a single person. Joint discussions are focused on the give and take about strategies and ideas, and the outcome often leads to new ways of working (Ashkenas, 2012). Collaboration is crucial for effective and operational efficiency of an organization. Hatch, (2014) opine that mutual trust is the foundation of effective collaboration. There being many aspect to trust, but vulnerability is the aspect that most affects the collaborative process. Without vulnerable, people will not fully invest themselves or their ideas in collective efforts in the organization. Without collaboration, there will be no effective communication. Managers and employees must communicate effectively to enables collaboration success and outline the strategy on how the organization will work collaboratively. Both employees and managers must share and build ideas, constructively criticize and provide feedback (Ikechukwu, 2020). However, collaboration was measured in terms of knowledge sharing and shared goal.

**Knowledge Sharing:** Knowledge sharing refers to the exchange and dissemination of information, ideas, expertise, and experiences among individuals within an organization. It involves the voluntary sharing of knowledge to enhance learning, problem-solving, decision-making, innovation, and overall organizational performance. Knowledge sharing is a critical component of effective collaboration as it enables employees to leverage each other's knowledge and skills, leading to improved productivity and outcomes (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). When knowledge sharing is integrated into workplace collaboration, it fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement. It allows employees to tap into the collective intelligence and expertise of their colleagues, leading to better problem-solving and decision-making. Knowledge sharing

also promotes innovation by encouraging the generation and dissemination of new ideas and best practices.

**Shared Goal:** This refers to a common objective or purpose that is agreed upon and pursued by all members of a team or organization. It is a fundamental aspect of effective collaboration, as it aligns individual efforts towards a collective outcome and fosters cooperation, coordination, and synergy among team members. A shared goal provides clarity and direction, promotes unity and cohesion, and enhances productivity and performance within the workplace. When teams have a shared goal, it helps to create a sense of purpose and motivation among employees. It allows individuals to understand how their contributions fit into the bigger picture and how their work impacts the overall success of the team or organization. Additionally, a shared goal encourages open communication, trust-building, and mutual support among team members, as they collaborate towards achieving a common objective.

### Theoretical Framework

The expectancy theory was used to explain the relationship between the concepts under study. The expectancy theory was propounded by Victor H. Vroom in 1964. Vroom, a prominent American psychologist, developed the theory as a framework for understanding and predicting individual motivation in the workplace (Latham & Pinder, 2005). The theory suggests that employees' motivation to engage in voice behaviors is influenced by their beliefs about the outcomes of such behaviors.

Bringing it to the study, it implies that employees consider three key factors: expectancy (the belief that their voice will be heard), instrumentality (the belief that expressing their voice will lead to desired outcomes), and valence (the value they place on those outcomes). When employees perceive a positive expectancy-instrumentality-valence relationship, they are more likely to engage in voice behaviors which in turn enhance effective collaboration in the workplace.

### Procedure

The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study was 75 employees from 5 insurance companies with the Port Harcourt. This was conveniently chosen by the researcher. The entire population was used as the sample size, hence a census study. Data were collected through primary (questionnaire) and secondary (textbooks, journal articles and internet). A structured questionnaire titled "Employee Voice Strategies and Collaboration Index (EVSCI)". The questionnaire was designed in four point likert rating scale format with the following response options: Strongly Agreed (SA) 4, Agreed (A) 3, Disagreed (D) 2, and Strongly Disagreed (DS) 1. The instrument was validated by two industrial relations experts and one measurement and evaluation expert. The reliability coefficient of the instrument (0.74) was elicited using Crombach Alpha. Spearman Ranking (r) was used for the test of hypotheses. Out of the questionnaires administered, the researcher was able to retrieve 71 (95%) copies. A bivariate analysis (test of hypothesis) was done using SPSS Version 23 at 0.05 level of significance. The formula for Spearman Rank Order Correlation is stated thus:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

n = number of pairs of data

d = different between the ranking in each set of data.

Σ = Summation

**Results**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt

**Table 1 Joint consultation and Knowledge Sharing**

		Joint consultation	Knowledge Sharing
Joint Consultation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.554**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	71	71
	Correlation Coefficient	<b>.554**</b>	1.000
Knowledge Sharing	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	71	71

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Survey Data, 2024.

Table 1 above shows r value of 0.554 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>1</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt

**Table 2 Joint Consultation and Shared Goal**

		Joint consultation	Shared Goal
Joint consultation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.603**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	71	71
	Correlation Coefficient	<b>.603**</b>	1.000
Shared Goal	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	71	71

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.04 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Survey Data, 2024.

Table 2 above shows r value of 0.603 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>2</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt

**Table 3 Suggestion Box and Knowledge Sharing**

		Suggestion Box	Knowledge Sharing
Suggestion Box	Correlation	1.000	.888**
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	71	71
Knowledge Sharing	Correlation	<b>.888**</b>	1.000
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	71	71

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Survey Data, 2024.

Table 1 above shows r value of 0.888 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>3</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt

**Table 4 Suggestion Box and Shared Goal**

		Joint consultation	Shared Goal
Joint consultation	Correlation	1.000	.792**
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	71	71
Shared Goal	Correlation	<b>.792**</b>	1.000
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	71	71

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.04 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Survey Data, 2024.

Table 2 above shows r value of 0.792 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>4</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

### Summary of Findings

Based on the analyses of data, the following findings were made:

1. There is a significant relationship between joint consultation and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
2. There is a significant relationship between joint consultation and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
3. There is a significant relationship between suggestion box and knowledge sharing of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.
4. There is a significant relationship between suggestion box and shared goal of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

### Discussion of Findings

The analyses of data revealed that there is a significant relationship between employee voice strategies (joint consultation and suggestion box) and collaboration (knowledge sharing and shared goal) of insurance companies in Port Harcourt. This implies that the relationship between employee voice strategies and collaboration in the workplace is a crucial aspect of organizational success. When employees are encouraged to voice their opinions and ideas, it creates a culture of open communication and trust within the organization. This, in turn, fosters collaboration among employees as they feel valued and empowered to contribute to decision-making processes. By providing employees with a platform to voice their opinions and ideas, organizations can tap into the diverse knowledge and experiences of their workforce. This leads to increased innovation and problem-solving capabilities within teams and across departments. Collaboration becomes more effective as employees are more likely to share information, exchange feedback, and work together towards finding creative solutions.

Finally, when employees feel that their voices are heard and taken into account, it enhances their sense of ownership and commitment towards organizational goals. This increased engagement leads to higher job satisfaction and motivation levels among employees. As a result, collaboration becomes more natural as individuals are more willing to contribute their skills and expertise towards achieving shared goal.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses of data and discussion of findings, the study concluded that employee voice strategies and collaboration of insurance companies in Port Harcourt.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management of insurance companies in Port Harcourt should establish formal structures for joint consultation to bring together representatives from both management and employees, thereby enhancing their collaboration in the workplace.
2. Suggestion box in the workplace should be made anonymous. This will allow employees to freely express their ideas, concerns, and suggestions without fear of retribution or judgment. By implementing an anonymous suggestion box, organizations can gather a wider range of perspectives and ideas, leading to effective collaboration, thereby attaining its predetermined goals and objectives.

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