

Employee Voice and Perceived Organisational Performance in Manufacturing Industries in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mediation Effect of Employee Absenteeism and Labour Turnover

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive studies on the relationship between employee voice and organisational performance, little is known about how this relationship varies based on the situation. Therefore, this study examines the influence of employees' voices on perceived organisational performance in manufacturing industries in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with employee absenteeism and labour turnover as mediating variables. A cross-sectional study design was employed, with human resource managers as the unit of observation and manufacturing industries as the unit of analysis. Data for the survey came from 126 manufacturing companies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) were used to analyse the data. The results show that employee voice has a significant positive effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.409$, $p = 0.009$) and a negative effect on employee absenteeism ($\beta = -1.595$, $p = 0.000$) and labour turnover ($\beta = -0.442$, $p = 0.029$). Furthermore, employee absenteeism exerts a significant partial mediating effect on the relationship between employee voice and perceived organisational performance ($\beta = 1.136$, $p < 0.05$), but not on labour turnover ($\beta = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$). The study concludes that employee voice significantly enhances performance both directly and indirectly by reducing employee absenteeism. The findings suggest that manufacturing industries should use employee voice mechanisms to encourage presenteeism in order to improve their performance.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The performance of manufacturing industries is a critical issue throughout the world (Mashene *et al.*, 2024). Good performance among industries determines the industry's prosperity, employment level, and the nation's economic growth. In the USA, manufacturing industries accounted for over USD 2.9 trillion (GDP) and an 8.3% share of employment (ING, 2024). In 2021, the manufacturing industries in Europe employed more than 30 million people (Eurostat, 2024). Similarly, in Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania, employment rates and GDP have increased due to the performance of manufacturing industries (Ramachandran *et al.*, 2017; Mashene *et al.*, 2024; Ogar *et al.*, 2024). In Tanzania, the sector has contributed to employment creation (about 8% of total employment) and GDP growth of up to 5% on average yearly (Wangwe *et al.*, 2014; Mashene *et al.*, 2024).

However, the current status of performance among manufacturing industries continues to be poor, characterised by an unreliable market, deficiency of workforce, negative attitude towards locally produced goods, and shortage of utilities (Kafuku, 2019). Manufacturing industries also face high labour turnover and absenteeism rates, which adversely affect their performance (Mgonja, 2017; Moon *et al.*, 2023; Palmer *et al.*, 2018; Skelton *et al.*, 2020). Between the fourth quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, for example, Tanzania's overall Index of Industrial Production fell by 5.7%, from 113.9 to 107.5 (URT, 2025). This decline was more pronounced among manufacturers of tobacco products, fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment, non-metallic products, electrical equipment, wood products, plaiting materials, and fabricated metal products (URT, 2025).

Although the Tanzanian government has implemented various strategies, such as lowering export duties and tariffs, removing import restrictions, and offering export incentives to enhance industrial performance (Lawrence, 2018), underperformance persists (Klinger *et al.*, 2023;

Silver, 2019; Xia, 2019). More significantly, few studies have examined specific human resource strategies, such as employee voice mechanisms, to address poor manufacturing performance related to labour turnover and employee absenteeism. Therefore, it became vital to examine how employee voice influences organisational performance in the manufacturing industries using employee absenteeism and labour turnover as mediating variables. It's interesting to note that, when employee voice is acted upon in the workplace, employees become loyal and committed to working for the organisation by offering solutions (Rasheed *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, when employee voice is missing, the organisation may experience employee absenteeism and labour turnover, which negatively affect organisational performance (Della Torre, 2019; Selvaraj & Joseph, 2020).

Empirically, the study adds to the literature on the direct and indirect relationship between employee voice and organisational performance (Gritti, 2022; Kura & Alkashami, 2021; Singh & Vanka, 2019) by testing a model that positions employee absenteeism and labour turnover as mediators. Theoretically, the study sheds light on the voice-loyalty theory, which posits that employee absenteeism and labour turnover shape the voice-organisational performance linkage at work (Allen, 2015; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2018). Subsequently, this study reveals knowledge regarding the direct and indirect link between employees' voice and organisational performance in Tanzanian contexts. Yet, available studies in Tanzania have mainly linked employee voice and working conditions outcomes (Council, 2021), leaving the linkage between organisational performance, employee absenteeism, and labour turnover in the manufacturing industry under-researched.

1.2 Theory Underpinning and Hypotheses

1.2.1 The Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (EVL) Theory

The EVL theory, as proposed by Hirschman (1970), guides this study. EVL specifies that when employees experience dissatisfaction at work, they tend to either leave the organisation or voice their problems (Sjöberg, 2017). The first reveals a

temporary absence from work or a permanent quit from the organisation without attempting to address organisational issues (Nwizia & Saale, 2022). Conversely, the second is a voice that allows employees to expose their problems and suggest solutions to their organisational difficulties as an alternative to employee absenteeism and labour turnover (Sjöberg, 2017). Once a voice is acted upon, employees become loyal and committed to improving organisational performance rather than being absent or leaving (Akinwale, 2019; Ebimobowei *et al.*, 2019; Nwizia & Saale, 2022). Therefore, the theory links employee voices with performance through exit behaviours (absenteeism and labour turnover).

1.2.2 Relationship of Employee Voice and Organisational Performance

The relationship between employee voice and organisational performance has been well established by scholars and practitioners (Gritti, 2022; Kura & Alkashami, 2021; Singh & Vanka, 2019). Most organisations nowadays rely on their employees' ideas to achieve competitive advantages (Song *et al.*, 2022). Through employee voice mechanisms such as collective bargaining, departmental meetings, general meetings, newsletters, joint consultative committee meetings, notice boards, emails, suggestion boxes, formal surveys, organisational policy, and intranet-shared information, workers may feel valued and encouraged to perform effectively (Akinwale, 2019; Ayop and Ishak, 2023; Pandey *et al.*, 2023). Hence, H1: The employee voice is positively related to organisational performance.

1.2.3 The Relationship between Employee Voice, Employee Absenteeism and Labour Turnover

Employee voice through various mechanisms significantly relates to employee absenteeism and labour turnover (Adham, 2022; Nwizia & Saale, 2022; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2018). Employees may decide to stay in the organisation and express their discomfort to managers rather than being absent or leaving (Allen, 2015). Therefore, H2: Employee voice is negatively associated with employee absenteeism. H3: The employee voice is negatively related to labour turnover.

1.2.4 Mediation Role of Employee Absenteeism

Extant literature has established a direct relationship between employee voice and organisational performance (Gritti, 2022; Wilkinson

et al., 2020). However, the effect depends on the absenteeism level at work (Allen & Tselmann, 2014; Sjöberg, 2017). Therefore, H4: Employee absenteeism is negatively correlated with organisational performance. H6: Employee absenteeism mediates the relationship between employees' voice and organisational performance.

1.2.5 Mediation Role of Labour Turnover

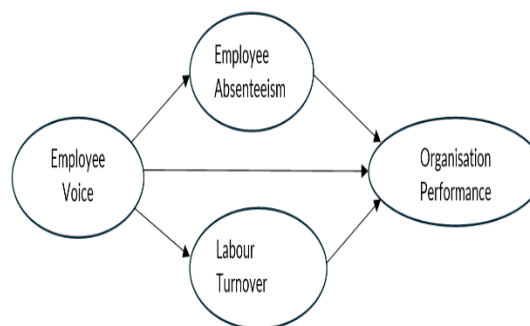
The effect of employees' voices on organisational outcomes depends on the rate of labour turnover (Ebimobowei *et al.*, 2019). Labour turnover can act as a barrier to the positive relationship between employee voice and organisational performance (Helen *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, H5: Labour turnover is negatively related to organisational performance. H7: Labour turnover mediates the relationship between employee voice and organisational performance.

1.2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 describes the link between the predictor variable (employee voice), mediating variables (employee absenteeism and labour turnover) and the outcome variable (organisational performance) in Tanzanian manufacturing industries.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design and Study Area

The research utilised a cross-sectional research design, which was selected because it allowed examination of relationships at a particular point in time. The survey occurred between September 2022 and April 2023 in the Dar es Salaam region, which ranks first among Tanzania's top manufacturing hubs with 29.4% of its manufacturing industries, followed by Manyara

(12.6%), Arusha (6.7%), Kagera (5.8%), Mbeya (5.4%) and Mwanza (4.2%) (Andreoni, 2017).

2.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The target sample population was 629 manufacturing industries obtained from BRELA in 2021/2022. Simple random sampling was employed to select 245 industries using a sampling fraction of $245/629 = 0.3895$ (see Table 1). The

sample size was calculated through Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967, cited by Israel, 2013):

$$n = N / [1 + N(e^2)] \dots\dots (1)$$

Where: N = population size, n = sample size, e = 0.05

$$n = 629 / [1 + 629(0.05)^2] = 245$$

Table 1
Sampling Distribution

Manufactured Products	Industries per products	Sampling Fraction	Sub-Sample
1. Food products	68	0.3895	26
2. Beverage's products	37	0.3895	14
3. Tobacco products	4	0.3895	2
4. Machinery and transport equipment	49	0.3895	19
5. Wood products	29	0.3895	11
6. Textile products	27	0.3895	11
7. Leather products	18	0.3895	7
8. Basic and Fabricated metal products	53	0.3895	20
9. Electrical, electronic and optical products	27	0.3895	11
10. Printings and paper products	27	0.3895	11
11. Refined petroleum products and Gas	6	0.3895	3
12. Chemical products, soap and detergents	48	0.3895	18
13. Medicinal, pharmaceutical, and botanical products	14	0.3895	5
14. Plastic and rubber	148	0.3895	58
15. Non-metallic mineral products	74	0.3895	29
Total	629		245

2.3 Data Collection Method

Survey questionnaires were employed to collect data from human resource managers in the selected manufacturing industries. Human resource managers were chosen because they are more informed and responsible for employee voice practices (Della Torre *et al.*, 2021). Mixed-mode survey designs (paper mail, online surveys, and telephone surveys) were used to minimise coverage and non-response errors (Saksvik *et al.*, 2017). The study distributed 245 questionnaires and collected 126 (response rate of 51.4%). The percentage of respondents based on category of industries were food products (10.3%), beverage products (7.9%), textile products (3.2%), machinery and equipment (2.4%), wood products (6.3%),

fabricated metal (6.3%), computer, electronic and optical products (4.8%), printing and reproduction of recorded media (6.3%), chemicals, cosmetics, fibres, soap and detergents (3.2%), rubber and plastic products (18.3%), basic metal and non-metallic materials (10.3%), and other materials (20.6%).

2.4 Measurement of Variables

Organisational performance (OP) was measured using quality of products, quality of service, level of productivity, rate of innovation, development of new products, sales, profit, market share and cost management, similar to Delaney and Huselid (1996) and Ahmed *et al.* (2022), using a five-point scale relative to rivals (Beard & Dess, 1981;

McCracken *et al.*, 2001). Employee voice was measured using items adapted from Wanrooy *et al.* (2011) and Holland *et al.* (2017), capturing the presence of collective bargaining, departmental meetings, general meetings, regular newsletters, joint consultative committee meetings, notice boards, email, suggestion boxes, formal surveys, organisational policy, and intranet-shared information (coded 1 = present, 0 = absent). Employee absenteeism was measured by average days absent per year (Tregaskis, 2015). Labour

turnover was calculated as a percentage rate per year (Tregaskis *et al.*, 2007). Table 2 describes variables in detail.

2.5 Data Analysis

The Partial Least Squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 aided the data analysis. PLS-SEM was selected because it produces better results when analysing complex models (Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

Table 2
Variable Description

Variable	Description	Measures
Dependent Variable		
OP	Performance indicators: quality of products, level of productivity, rate of innovation, development of new products, sales, profit, market share, and cost management system.	Likert scale
Independent Variable		
EV	Presence of collective bargaining meetings Presence of general meetings at the workplace Presence of department meetings Presence of a joint consultative committee meeting Presence of suggestion schemes at the establishment Presence of intranet meetings at the workplace Use of email at the establishment Presence of notice boards at the establishment Presence of an open organisation policy at the establishment Presence of employee surveys at the establishment Presence of newsletters at the establishment	Dummy (1=presence, 0=absence)
Mediating Variable		
EA	Average number of days employees were absent from work per year	Count
LT	Labour turnover rate: percentage rate per year	Rate (%)

3.0 Results

3.1 PLS Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3 results show that Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.5 and 0.7 thresholds, respectively. HTMT scores fell below the predetermined cutoff of 0.90, demonstrating discriminant validity. Every Variance Inflation

Factor (VIF) value was less than 5, indicating data are free of common bias problems (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Employee voice accounts for 54.3% of employee absenteeism, 4.2% of labour turnover, and 74.4% of organisational performance. F^2 (effect size) values were greater than 0.02, indicating a significant effect, except for labour turnover.

Table 3
 Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	
EV	0.948	0.955	0.657	
OP	0.947	0.955	0.702	
<i>Discriminant validity under HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio)</i>				
	EA	EV	LT	OP
EV	0.742			
LT	0.326	0.207		
OP	0.872	0.725	0.281	
<i>Saturated model results</i>				
	R ²	Adj. R ²	F ²	VIF
EA → OP			0.843	2.355
EV → EA	0.543	0.540	1.190	1.000
EV → LT	0.042	0.034	0.044	1.000
EV → OP	0.744	0.738	0.064	2.197
LT → OP			0.000	1.122

Model fit: SRMR (Standardised Mean Root Square Residual): 0.107
 Note(s): EV = Employee Voice, EA = Employee Absenteeism, LT = Labour Turnover, OP = Organisational Performance

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

The study employed bootstrapping to examine the indirect influence of employee voice on organisational performance mediated by employee absenteeism and labour turnover, following Hair *et al.* (2019). The findings in Figure 2 and Table 4 show the estimates of all study variables.

Table 4 shows that employee voice has a positive influence on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.409, p = 0.009$), supporting H1. Employee voice has a negative influence on employee absenteeism ($\beta = -1.595, p = 0.000$) and labour turnover ($\beta = -0.442, p = 0.05$), supporting H2 and H3. There is a significant negative relationship between employee absenteeism and organisational performance ($\beta = -0.713, p = 0.000$), supporting H4. The relationship between labour turnover and organisational performance was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.003, p > 0.05$), so H5 was not supported. The influence of employee voice on organisational performance through employee absenteeism is significant ($\beta = 1.136, p = 0.000$), supporting H6.

The mediating role of labour turnover was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.001, p = 0.996$), so H7 was not supported.

Figure 2
 PLS-SEM Path Model

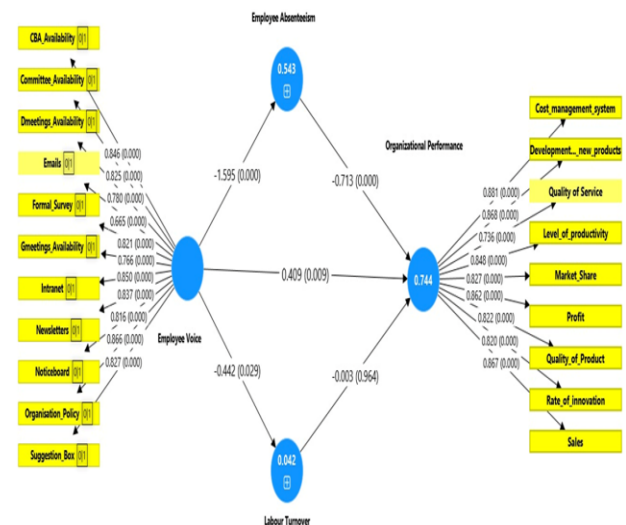


Table 4
 PLS-SEM Model Results

H ₁ -H ₇	Relationship	Original sample	Std. deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
Direct effects						
H ₁	EV → OP	0.409	0.156	2.616	0.009*	Supported
H ₂	EV → EA	-1.595	0.080	19.843	0.000*	Supported
H ₃	EV → LT	-0.442	0.202	2.191	0.029*	Supported
H ₄	EA → OP	-0.713	0.065	11.016	0.000*	Supported
H ₅	LT → OP	-0.003	0.061	0.045	0.964	Not Supported
Indirect/Mediating effects						
H ₆	EV → EA → OP	1.136	0.127	8.973	0.000*	Supported
H ₇	EV → LT → OP	0.001	0.028	0.043	0.966	Not Supported

Note(s): Critical value *p<0.05, EV (Employee Voice), EA (Employee Absenteeism), LT (Labour Turnover), OP (Organisational Performance)

4.0 Discussion

This study empirically examined the influence of employees' voices on perceived organisational performance in manufacturing industries in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The first result indicated that employee voice has a positive influence on organisational performance, meaning if it is exercised through various mechanisms, there is a high likelihood of improvement. This validates recent studies (Singh & Vanka, 2019; Shin *et al.*, 2022; Pandey *et al.*, 2023) and supports the EVL theory, which proposes that once employees exercise their voices, they become more loyal and committed to organisational success (Rasheed *et al.*, 2017).

Second, employee voice has a negative influence on employee absenteeism and labour turnover, corroborating recent research suggesting that once employee voice is exercised, the rate of employee absenteeism and labour turnover decreases (Jung & Yoon, 2019). This demonstrates that employee voice is important for workplace presenteeism and staff retention in the manufacturing industries.

Thirdly, employee absence has a significantly negative relationship with organisational performance, whereas labour turnover does not. This suggests that employee absence reduces organisational performance more directly than labour turnover. Labour turnover may have prior adaptive measures such as succession planning and

flexi-time working that mitigate its impact (Saksvik *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, employee absenteeism mediates the employee voice-organisational performance relationship. Decreasing employee absenteeism enhances organisational performance (Jung & Yoon, 2019), supporting the Exit-Voice-Loyalty theory (Gritti, 2022) and earlier research (Nwizia & Saale, 2022).

5.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the influence of employees' voices on perceived organisational performance in manufacturing industries in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with employee absenteeism and labour turnover as mediating variables. The study revealed that employees' voice reduces absenteeism and labour turnover and consequently promotes the manufacturing industry's performance. Employee absenteeism partially mediates the relationship between employees' voice and organisational performance. Therefore, when workers share their thoughts through different voice mechanisms, it creates a positive work environment that makes employees more present, which in turn improves the performance of the industry.

6.0 Recommendations

Given the above conclusions, manufacturing industries should implement employee voice

mechanisms that reduce employee absenteeism to improve industries' performance. The government of Tanzania should support policies and legal frameworks that require manufacturing industries to use employee voice mechanisms like collective bargaining, departmental meetings, general meetings, regular newsletters, joint consultative committee meetings, notice boards, emails, suggestion boxes, formal surveys, organisational policies, and intranet-shared information to promote workers' participation and decent work.

7.0 Funding Statement

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9.0 Declaration of Conflicting Interests

No potential conflict of interest to declare.

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