

EMPLOYEE VOICE MECHANISMS AND JOB COMMITMENT AMONG PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the differentiated effects of Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM) on job commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State, Nigeria, responding to persistent concerns surrounding weak employee dedication, constrained upward communication, and rigid bureaucratic hierarchies within the Nigerian public service. Anchored in Social Exchange Theory, the study empirically disaggregates Employee Voice into Formal Voice (FV) and Informal Voice (IV) and investigates their respective influences on Affective Commitment (AC) and Normative Commitment (NC). A quantitative correlational survey design was adopted, with data collected from 330 non-management employees drawn from selected public sector organizations in Rivers State and analyzed using Multiple Regression techniques. The results demonstrate that Employee Voice Mechanisms significantly predict job commitment, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses ($F = 73.18, p < 0.01$). More specifically, Informal Voice emerged as the strongest predictor of Affective Commitment ($\beta = 0.49$), highlighting the centrality of interpersonal interactions, supervisory openness, and trust-based communication in fostering emotional attachment to the organization, while Formal Voice was identified as the stronger unique predictor of Normative Commitment ($\beta = 0.25$), indicating the importance of institutionalized participation structures in shaping employees' sense of obligation and moral attachment. The study concludes that employee commitment within the public sector is both relationally and structurally differentiated and recommends a dual managerial approach that strengthens informal supervisory engagement while reforming formal voice channels to enhance responsiveness, legitimacy, and the psychological contract within the Nigerian public service.

Keywords: *Employee Voice Mechanisms; Job Commitment; Affective Commitment; Normative Commitment; Public Sector; Rivers State.*

INTRODUCTION

The effective management of human capital has become a critical strategic necessity for organizations seeking sustainable performance, particularly within the complex operational context of public administration in developing economies (Alikornwo & Nwinyokpugi, 2025a). Employee voice (EV), defined as the constructive expression of ideas, concerns, and suggestions directed toward organizational improvement, is widely recognized as a vital non-monetary mechanism that benefits employees while enhancing organizational effectiveness (Dundon, Wilkinson, & Marchington, 2004). The institutionalization of employee voice mechanisms (EVM) enables organizations to harness improvement-oriented ideas, positioning EV beyond a motivational device and elevating it to a strategic prerequisite for continuous innovation, adaptability, and survival in increasingly turbulent organizational environments (Bashshur & Oc, 2015). In this regard, voice becomes a conduit through which employees participate meaningfully in organizational processes, shaping both performance outcomes and relational dynamics.

Concurrently, job commitment (JC), commonly conceptualized as organizational commitment (OC), represents a core indicator of workforce stability, motivation, and retention. Drawing from the

dominant three-component model advanced by Allen and Meyer (1990), OC comprises Affective Commitment, reflecting emotional attachment to the organization, Normative Commitment, denoting a sense of moral obligation to remain, and Continuance Commitment, which relates to perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These psychological states collectively define the nature of the employee–organization relationship and exert a decisive influence on employees' willingness to remain with, invest effort in, and align their behaviors with organizational objectives (Potočník & Anderson, 2016). Commitment therefore functions not merely as an attitudinal construct but as a binding force that sustains organizational continuity and goal attainment.

Within the Nigerian socio-economic environment, the public sector occupies a central position as the primary vehicle for policy execution and public service delivery. However, it continues to grapple with entrenched structural rigidities, bureaucratic inertia, and institutional practices that undermine employee dedication. Empirical evidence suggests that many public organizations rely heavily on rigid hierarchical and procedural communication systems that constrain genuine employee input and weaken trust between management and staff (Adegboyega et al., 2025). Such communication architectures contribute to persistent challenges including low productivity, diminished morale, and observable commitment deficits across various tiers of government administration (Pepple, Akinsowon, & Oyelere, 2023). In Rivers State, management scholarship has increasingly interrogated administrative efficiency, information management success, and strategic resource deployment across public institutions, including tertiary establishments (Alikornwo & Adiele, 2025; Adiele & Gbekee-Kalagbor, 2025). These studies underscore the enduring relevance of human capital management interventions and reveal that structural constraints continue to shape employee attitudes and behaviors, even in contexts marked by sustained intellectual engagement.

To explain how managerial practices related to participation and communication translate into internalized employee commitment, an appropriate theoretical foundation is required. Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally proposed by Blau (1964), provides a compelling explanatory lens by positing that voluntary human actions are guided by expectations of reciprocal returns. Within organizational settings, SET suggests that employees perceive their commitment, engagement, and discretionary efforts as responses to favorable treatment, perceived fairness, and organizational support (Moates, 2007). Communication systems that facilitate authentic employee voice operate as relational mechanisms that mediate interactions, foster trust, and strengthen long-term commitment bonds (Adegboyega et al., 2025). When organizations actively solicit employee input and demonstrate responsiveness, they convey respect and benevolence, signaling that employee contributions of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources are valued. Such signals encourage reciprocal responses manifested through heightened Affective Commitment and strengthened Normative Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Notwithstanding the theoretical consensus that employee voice mechanisms should enhance job commitment, empirical clarity remains limited regarding the relative effectiveness of distinct voice modalities within the highly bureaucratic context of the Rivers State public service. Recent gubernatorial pronouncements warning against negligence, indiscipline, and dereliction of duty within the civil service point to a persistent and deeply rooted behavioral commitment challenge (Fubara, 2024). While the state government has demonstrated responsiveness to extrinsic employment concerns such as timely salary payments and benefit settlements (Ibas, 2025), evidence suggests that intrinsic dimensions of commitment, particularly emotional attachment and voluntary obligation, remain fragile (Pepple et al., 2023). Although local scholarship has robustly examined human resource practices, competence development, and organizational efficiency, it has not systematically interrogated the differentiated structural and relational efficacy of specific employee voice mechanism dimensions on distinct components of job commitment (Nwinyokpugi & Nnona, 2022; Nwinyokpugi & Alikornwo, 2022; Ekweozor & Obara, 2020; Zeb-Obipi & Kpurunee, 2021). This study therefore seeks to empirically validate the relative predictive strengths of formal and informal employee voice mechanisms on Affective and Normative Commitment, providing

context-specific evidence capable of informing targeted structural and relational interventions within the Rivers State public service.

Statement of the Problem

Although organizational scholarship establishes a strong theoretical relationship between Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM) and Organizational Commitment (OC) (Bashshur & Oc, 2015), a significant empirical gap persists regarding the practical effectiveness of differentiated voice mechanisms within the highly hierarchical and resource-constrained public sector of Rivers State. Persistent concerns about declining work ethics, weak dedication, and indiscipline within the state civil service (Fubara, 2024) indicate that existing communication and participation structures are not yielding the expected attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. This suggests that formal and informal channels for employee expression may be functionally inadequate or constrained by the rigid procedural character of public sector bureaucracy (Adegboyega et al., 2025).

Theoretically, Social Exchange Theory posits that both formal mechanisms, such as grievance procedures and consultative committees, and informal mechanisms, such as open supervisory interactions, should promote commitment by fostering perceptions of fairness, trust, and reciprocal obligation (Blau, 1964). However, within the Rivers State public service, the extent to which these distinct voice modalities translate into meaningful employee commitment remains empirically unclear. In practice, employee participation often appears symbolic rather than substantive, limiting its capacity to generate emotional attachment or moral obligation toward the organization. This ambiguity constrains managerial and policy efforts, as administrators lack evidence-based guidance on which voice mechanisms exert stronger influence on specific dimensions of commitment.

The absence of empirical specificity concerning the relative effects of Formal Voice on Normative Commitment, and Informal Voice on Affective Commitment, represents a critical problem for public sector human resource management in Rivers State. Without rigorous, context-sensitive validation of these relationships, interventions aimed at improving employee dedication risk remaining generic, misdirected, and ineffective. Consequently, the central problem addressed by this study is the lack of systematic empirical evidence clarifying how differentiated employee voice mechanisms contribute to core components of job commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State. Addressing this gap is necessary for informing policies and managerial practices that promote reciprocal, trust-based relationships capable of strengthening commitment within the public service.

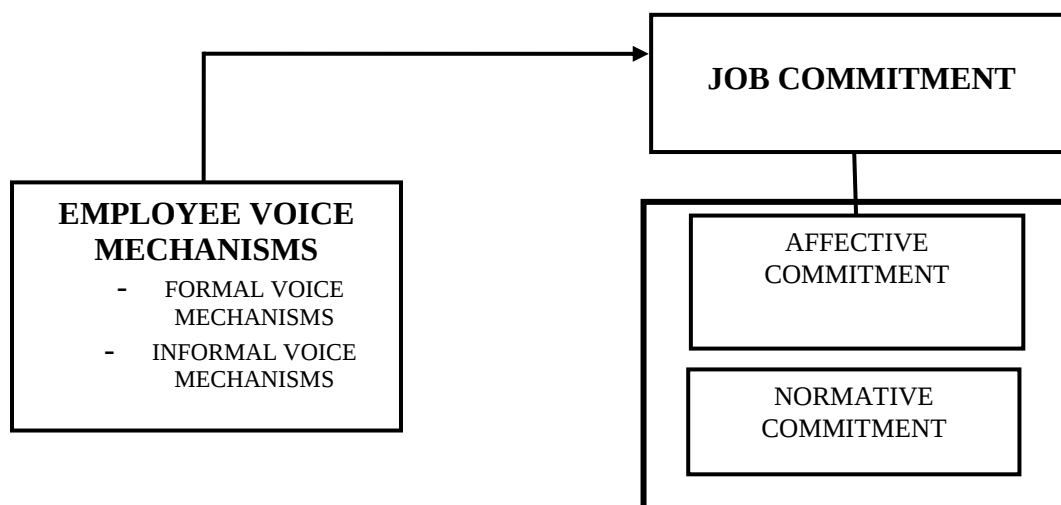


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Employee Voice Mechanisms and Job Commitment among Public Sector Workers in Rivers State

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM)

Employee voice is conceptually understood as an employee's deliberate effort to communicate constructive ideas, challenging information, and relevant suggestions aimed at promoting organizational improvement rather than merely offering criticism (Mowbray, Wilkinson, & Tse, 2015). Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM) represent the various formal and informal channels through which such communications are facilitated (CIPD, 2024). Conceptually, employee voice can be classified into two primary typologies based on the level of formality and directionality: direct and indirect voice mechanisms (Wilkinson, Donaghey, & Dundon, 2013). Direct mechanisms involve employees communicating ideas or concerns personally to supervisors or managers, often in real-time interactions, whereas indirect mechanisms operate through formal representative structures or collective platforms, such as committees, unions, or institutional feedback systems, which aggregate and channel employee input to management. This typology provides a framework for understanding how employees engage with organizational processes and the extent to which voice mechanisms influence commitment, satisfaction, and organizational performance.

Formal and Informal Employee Voice Mechanisms

Formal Voice mechanisms consist of structured, institutionally established channels such as formal grievance procedures, scheduled meetings, and indirect representation through joint consultation committees (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016). These formalized processes represent organizational obligations and standardized investments designed to process employee input systematically and ensure procedural fairness. They align closely with the employee relations and human resource management perspective of voice, emphasizing formal accountability and institutionalized participation (Adegboyega et al., 2025; Wilkinson, Gollan, Lewin, & Marchington, 2010). Through these mechanisms, organizations signal recognition of employee contributions while embedding voice within codified procedures that reinforce legitimacy, fairness, and normative expectations.

Informal Voice mechanisms, in contrast, are ad hoc, spontaneous, and primarily rely on direct interpersonal interactions. Examples include daily discussions with line managers, team briefings, and casual upward communication (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016). The effectiveness of informal voice depends heavily on a supportive organizational climate and the presence of psychological safety, which is often cultivated through leadership behavior and relational trust (Rasheed, Mehmood, & Arfeen, 2021). Informal interactions are particularly critical in contexts where formal HR systems are underdeveloped or ineffective, as they allow employees to express concerns, suggest improvements, and influence decision-making in real time (Wilkinson et al 2013). Empirical evidence links the use of informal voice to higher employee satisfaction and better-informed organizational decisions (Dundon et al 2004). Together, formal and informal voice mechanisms provide complementary pathways through which employees can engage with organizational processes, each contributing differently to the development of affective and normative commitment.

Conceptualization of Job Commitment (JC)

Job Commitment, also referred to as Organizational Commitment (OC), is broadly defined as a psychological state that influences an employee's decision to continue membership in an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The widely accepted three-component model by Allen and Meyer (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1991) categorizes commitment into Affective Commitment (AC), Normative Commitment (NC), and Continuance Commitment (CC), each reflecting distinct motivational and attitudinal dimensions. This framework provides a foundation for understanding how employee engagement, loyalty, and discretionary effort are shaped within organizational contexts, particularly in highly bureaucratic public service environments such as Rivers State.

Affective Commitment (AC) represents an employee's emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees with strong AC remain because they genuinely want to, motivated by positive work experiences, alignment of personal and organizational values, and perceived organizational support (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In practice, AC is often fostered when employees perceive that their voice, especially through informal, relational

channels like supportive supervisory interactions is heard, valued, and acted upon. Social Exchange Theory explains this as a reciprocal relationship: when employees feel emotionally supported and recognized, they respond with loyalty, engagement, and discretionary effort, enhancing affective attachment.

Normative Commitment (NC) arises from an employee's sense of obligation or moral duty to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This obligation often reflects a repayment mechanism for benefits received, including career development opportunities, training, or other organizational support. Formal Voice mechanisms, such as grievance procedures, consultative committees, and structured participation forums, play a critical role in shaping NC by signaling organizational fairness, transparency, and institutionalized recognition. When employees perceive that the organization upholds its procedural promises, a moral imperative to reciprocate emerges, reinforcing normative commitment.

Continuance Commitment (CC) relates to an employee's awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization, such as forfeiting accrued benefits, social ties, or accumulated experience (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In the Nigerian public sector, CC often interacts with tangible considerations, such as stable income, pension entitlements, or access to institutional resources. While CC is primarily extrinsically motivated, it can be indirectly reinforced through both formal and informal voice channels: employees who experience effective communication, participation, and support are more likely to perceive value in remaining, even when extrinsic incentives dominate.

For public sector workers in Nigeria, job commitment reflects a combination of relational and structural influences, highlighting the interplay between affective and normative dimensions. Both AC and NC are strongly aligned with the principles of Social Exchange Theory, where employees' voluntary contributions and loyalty are shaped by perceived organizational support, responsiveness, and fairness (Pepple et al., 2023). By linking Employee Voice Mechanisms to these dimensions of commitment, organizations can design targeted interventions: fostering informal relational interactions enhances affective attachment, while strengthening formal procedural channels reinforces normative obligations. Collectively, this integrated understanding provides a practical and theoretical basis for addressing commitment challenges in resource-constrained, hierarchical public sector environments.

Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), as articulated by Blau (1964), provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM) and Job Commitment (JC). SET posits that social relationships develop over time into trusting, loyal, and reciprocal commitments when exchanges are perceived as fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial. In organizational contexts, employees interpret the presence and responsiveness of EV channels, particularly those that facilitate constructive, promotive input, as indicators that the organization values their contributions, well-being, and organizational citizenship (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012).

According to SET, employees' commitment is shaped by their perception of the quality of exchanges with the organization. When workers perceive that their organization invests in their welfare, recognizes their input, and provides meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making, they are more likely to develop Normative Commitment as a sense of obligation and moral reciprocity. Simultaneously, such positive relational exchanges foster Affective Commitment, strengthening emotional attachment, identification, and involvement. Even Continuance Commitment can be indirectly reinforced when employees perceive that their continued presence is reciprocated by organizational support, creating both relational and structural incentives to remain.

Crucially, the quality, authenticity, and responsiveness of communication serve as the primary conduit through which social exchange occurs. Employee Voice Mechanisms, both formal and informal, operationalize these exchanges by providing structured and spontaneous channels for employees to express ideas, concerns, and suggestions. When these mechanisms function effectively, they facilitate trust-building, mutual respect, and loyalty, thereby enhancing the

multidimensional nature of job commitment (Adegboyega et al., 2025). SET thus explains not only why employee voice matters but also how different types of voice mechanisms translate into distinct components of commitment within hierarchical and resource-constrained public sector environments.

Empirical Review

Global research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between employee voice and organizational commitment. Systematic reviews indicate that employee voice and affective commitment are related but conceptually distinct constructs that are critical to overall organizational performance (Machokoto & Dzvimbo, 2022). Research employing structural equation modeling in international contexts has confirmed that inclusive leadership fosters an organizational climate that encourages voice behavior, which in turn predicts affective commitment (Rasheed et al., 2021; Gherghina et al., 2020). Comparative studies further reveal that transparent, two-way, and context-sensitive communication frameworks strengthen cohesion and long-term commitment, particularly shaping normative commitment (Adegboyega et al., 2025). In the Nigerian context, Akinwale (2019) showed that specific voice drivers, especially employee participation and the supervisor-subordinate relationship, are significantly associated with productive work behavior, suggesting that relational voice mechanisms contribute to desirable organizational outcomes. Additionally, studies on job attitudes confirm that commitment in Nigeria is strongly influenced by emotional factors (Ishola et al., 2024) and perceptions of fairness in communication (Olatunji & Adepoju, 2022).

A critical review of local scholarship in Rivers State provides empirical support for examining EVM as an antecedent to job commitment by highlighting factors such as administrative systems, HR practices, and organizational effectiveness. Research on competence and responsiveness by Ekweozor and Obara (2020) in deposit money banks demonstrated that environments with high employee competence enhance the feasibility of voice, as capable employees are more likely to express ideas effectively (Ng & Feldman, 2012). This theme is complemented by Obara and Alikornwo (2025), who linked information-seeking behavior and employee self-efficacy, confirming that self-efficacy is essential for proactive voice behavior.

Studies on participation and commitment antecedents further strengthen the local empirical base. Zeb-Obipi and Kpurunee (2021) found that on-the-job training is significantly associated with employee commitment in Nigerian firms, reflecting the SET principle that organizational investment should be reciprocated with loyalty. Nwinyokpugi and Nnona (2022) emphasized the importance of supervisory benevolence in supporting informal voice mechanisms, highlighting effective boss-subordinate relationships as key to mitigating commitment loss, particularly in banking sector settings. These findings support the expectation that informal voice contributes significantly to affective commitment.

Research examining HRM and structural support for voice indicates that robust formal mechanisms are critical for translating employee input into organizational outcomes. Ekweozor and Omah (2025a) focused on human resource analytics and decision-making success, underscoring the need for data-driven systems to enhance HR functions. Similarly, Ekweozor and Omah (2025b) demonstrated that strategic talent management and career development policies foster employee commitment and retention, linking formal HR investments to normative commitment outcomes.

Studies on administrative systems and ethical voice highlight contextual challenges in the Rivers State public sector. Onyenma and Ekweozor (2020) found that environments characterized by corporate malfeasance suppress ethical voice and erode both affective and normative commitment. Obara and Adiele (2025) showed that government ministries promoting proactive information sharing achieve more accurate and timely administrative outcomes, creating conditions necessary for effective voice management. Additionally, Alikornwo, Adiele, and Omunakwe (2024) demonstrated that employee development initiatives in tertiary institutions serve as investments that, according to SET, should foster commitment. Collectively, these streams of research, including Obinna and Ekweozor (2024)'s work on HR management and operative leadership, indicate that

institutional structure, leadership quality, employee competence, and organizational efficiency are critical antecedents to the effective utilization of voice mechanisms and the development of job commitment in Rivers State.

Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which posits that organizational investments in employee participation are reciprocated with psychological attachment, and considering the need to differentiate the effects of voice modalities in a hierarchical bureaucratic setting, the following null hypotheses were formulated. These hypotheses link the differentiated dimensions of the predictor variable, Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM), to the two core measures of the criterion variable, Job Commitment (JC):

H₀₁: Employee Voice Mechanisms, both Formal and Informal, have no significant positive relationship with Affective Commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State.

H₀₂: Employee Voice Mechanisms, both Formal and Informal, have no significant positive relationship with Normative Commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design anchored on a correlational survey approach in order to examine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between Employee Voice Mechanisms and Job Commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The target population comprised all registered non-management staff on Grade Level 07 and above drawn from strategically selected Ministries and Parastatals within the State public service structure. A sample size of 370 respondents was determined using the statistical sample size determination framework advanced by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), while respondent selection was carried out through a stratified random sampling technique to guarantee proportional representation across the identified public institutions, in line with established methodological prescriptions for heterogeneous populations (Adoki and Gabriel, 2018). Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five point Likert scale, yielding a response rate of 89.2 percent with 330 questionnaires adjudged usable for analysis. The research instrument comprised two validated scales, namely the adapted Voice Behavior Scale capturing both formal and informal voice dimensions, and the Meyer and Allen Organizational Commitment Questionnaire consisting of 18 items measuring affective commitment and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Olatunji and Adepoju, 2022). Reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot study, with Cronbach's Alpha α coefficients for all constructs exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 as recommended in social science research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26.0, employing descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' characteristics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation to establish relational patterns, and multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive contributions of formal and informal voice mechanisms to each component of job commitment at a significance level of $p < 0.05$, thereby ensuring adequate empirical rigor and analytical robustness consistent with correlational research standards (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

RESULTS

The empirical results generated from the analysed data are presented across three major outputs, namely descriptive statistics and reliability analysis, bivariate correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The first stage focuses on the descriptive statistics and internal consistency of the study variables.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha α coefficients of the constructs and their respective dimensions examined in the study.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliability of Study Variables

Construct	Dimensions	Items (N)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Employee Voice Mechanisms (EVM)	Formal Voice	9	2.85	0.92	0.79
	Informal Voice	7	3.98	0.71	0.85
Job Commitment (JC)	Affective Commitment (AC)	9	3.55	0.88	0.83
	Normative Commitment (NC)	9	3.12	0.95	0.77

The results in Table 1 indicate that all constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha α values ranging from 0.77 to 0.85, thereby exceeding the minimum reliability threshold recommended for behavioural research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The comparatively low mean score for Formal Voice ($\bar{X} = 2.85$) suggests limited effectiveness or utilisation of institutionalised communication channels within the public sector, whereas the high mean score for Informal Voice ($\bar{X} = 3.98$) reflects a strong dependence on informal and interpersonal modes of expression. Affective Commitment ($\bar{X} = 3.55$) and Normative Commitment ($\bar{X} = 3.12$) both recorded values above the scale midpoint, indicating moderate emotional attachment and moral obligation among employees. Collectively, these findings suggest that while public sector workers in Rivers State exhibit reasonable levels of job commitment, informal voice mechanisms appear to play a more prominent role in shaping employees' engagement than formalised voice structures.

Bivariate Correlation Analysis

The bivariate relationships among the study variables were examined using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Bivariate Correlation Matrix of Study Variables (N = 330)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Formal Voice	1			
2. Informal Voice	0.15**	1		
3. Affective Commitment (AC)	0.28**	0.55**	1	
4. Normative Commitment (NC)	0.35**	0.31**	0.68**	1

*Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).*

The correlation results reveal statistically significant and positive associations among all the study variables at $p < 0.01$, indicating meaningful linear relationships. Informal Voice demonstrated the strongest relationship with Affective Commitment ($r = 0.55$), suggesting that relational and interpersonal voice channels are closely linked with employees' emotional attachment to their organisations. Formal Voice showed a stronger association with Normative Commitment ($r = 0.35$) than with Affective Commitment ($r = 0.28$), implying that institutionalised voice mechanisms are more closely aligned with employees' sense of moral obligation and duty to remain within the organisation. The strong correlation between Affective Commitment and Normative Commitment ($r = 0.68$) further indicates that emotional attachment and normative loyalty are closely intertwined within the public sector context. Overall, the correlation analysis provides preliminary empirical support for the hypothesised relationships and establishes a sound basis for further multivariate analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the unique and combined predictive effects of Formal Voice and Informal Voice on the two dimensions of Job Commitment. The regression results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Job Commitment

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t value	p value	VIF	Model Summary
Affective Commitment (AC)	Formal Voice	0.11	2.15	0.032	1.02	$R^2 = 0.31$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.30$; $F(2, 327) = 73.18^{**}$
	Informal Voice	0.49	9.87	0.000	1.02	
Normative Commitment (NC)	Formal Voice	0.25	4.90	0.000	1.02	$R^2 = 0.19$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.18$; $F(2, 327) = 37.89^{**}$
	Informal Voice	0.18	3.51	0.001	1.02	

*Note: ** Significant at $p < 0.01$. VIF values indicate absence of multicollinearity.*

The regression results indicate that both models were statistically significant, confirming the predictive relevance of Employee Voice Mechanisms to Job Commitment within the Rivers State public sector. For Affective Commitment, the model explained 31 percent of the total variance, with Informal Voice emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$), while Formal Voice exerted a weaker but statistically significant influence ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.032$). This pattern underscores the centrality of informal and relational voice interactions in fostering employees' emotional attachment to their organisations. In the case of Normative Commitment, the regression model accounted for 19 percent of the variance, with Formal Voice demonstrating a stronger unique contribution ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) relative to Informal Voice ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that structured and institutionalised voice mechanisms play a more salient role in shaping employees' perceived obligation and sense of reciprocity. Consequently, the null hypotheses were rejected, affirming that Employee Voice Mechanisms significantly predict both affective and normative components of job commitment in the Rivers State public sector.

Discussion of Findings

The empirical evidence strongly supports the fundamental premise of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which posits that organizational commitment is shaped by the mechanisms provided for employee input. The analysis confirms that the impact of voice mechanisms is differentiated across commitment components, offering nuanced guidance for strategic Human Resource Management interventions in highly bureaucratic settings (Adegboyega et al., 2025).

The finding that Informal Voice is the strongest predictor of Affective Commitment, with a beta coefficient of 0.49, indicates that emotional attachment in the public sector is primarily forged at the micro-level of the employee-supervisor relationship. When management provides prompt, genuine, and ad hoc interaction, employees perceive a supportive organizational culture. This exchange fosters trust and psychological safety, which are essential for developing affective commitment (Moates, 2007; Rasheed et al., 2021). The reliance on informal voice is consistent with the low mean score reported for formal voice, suggesting that when institutional mechanisms are perceived as unresponsive or restrictive, employees resort to immediate relational channels to ensure their input is heard and valued (Wilkinson et al., 2013). These findings align with local evidence emphasizing the critical role of effective boss-subordinate relationships in mitigating commitment loss (Nwinyokpugi & Nnona, 2022). Improving affective commitment, which is crucial for voluntary performance and discretionary effort, therefore requires substantial investment in supervisory training and the cultivation of inclusive leadership behaviors (Qing et al., 2020).

While less frequently utilized, formal voice mechanisms demonstrated greater unique predictive power over Normative Commitment, with a beta coefficient of 0.25. This outcome validates the SET principle that institutional investments and procedural frameworks primarily shape employees' sense of obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Formal procedures such as joint consultation, grievance systems, and administrative audit frameworks symbolize the organization's commitment to fairness and order (Alikornwo, 2025). Even in rigid bureaucracies, the existence and perceived legitimacy of these formal channels contribute to normative commitment, fostering a sense of duty grounded in institutional guidance (Adegboyega et al., 2025). Local evidence further supports this link, showing

that structured investments, such as employee development policies, strengthen commitment through clearly codified organizational practices (Alikornwo et al., 2024; Zeb-Obipi & Kpurunee, 2021). However, the lower variance explained for normative commitment ($R^2 = 0.19$) compared to affective commitment indicates that the sense of obligation is not as deeply internalized. This reflects challenges observed in the Nigerian public sector, where hierarchical communication often limits authentic engagement, creating a gap between formal systems' existence and employees' perception of responsiveness (Pepple et al., 2023).

The observed pattern—low utilization of formal voice combined with its limited predictive strength for affective commitment—reveals a structural deficit in the Rivers State public service. This operational limitation constrains the organization's ability to maximize promotive voice, which involves generating constructive, improvement-oriented ideas critical for organizational innovation (Liang et al., 2012). The implications for administrative effectiveness are significant. Research shows that organizational responsiveness depends on effective knowledge acquisition and employee development (Ekweozor & Obara, 2022). If formal EVM cannot adequately transmit strategic staff input, the administration lacks feedback loops necessary for organizational learning. Similarly, efforts to enhance agility through predictive business analytics and rapid decision-making (Ekweozor & Omah, 2025b) cannot be sustained without robust, functional systems for collecting timely employee feedback. The structural shortcomings identified by the low formal voice mean indicate that bureaucratic design, typical of Nigerian public organizations, actively limits institutional capacity for efficiency and decision-making (Adegboyega et al., 2025; Alikornwo & Nwinyokpugi, 2025b; Obara & Adiele, 2025; Zeb-Obipi & Ekweozor, 2020).

Addressing systemic issues such as poor work ethics and discipline (Fubara, 2024) therefore requires a dual approach. Organizations must cultivate relational trust through informal channels while simultaneously reforming formal systems to be more responsive and transparent. Closing this gap ensures that both structural and relational mechanisms effectively reinforce the psychological contract between employees and the organization, thereby enhancing overall job commitment (Joel et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides conclusive empirical evidence that Employee Voice Mechanisms are significant predictors of Job Commitment among public sector workers in Rivers State, Nigeria. Utilizing Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the analysis confirms that the impact of voice is highly differentiated: Informal Voice mechanisms are the decisive factor in cultivating Affective Commitment (emotional attachment), while Formal Voice mechanisms primarily underpin Normative Commitment (sense of obligation). The findings highlight a critical operational disparity where employees overwhelmingly rely on informal, relational exchanges due to perceived deficiencies in the formal, institutional communication infrastructure. Consequently, while workers exhibit moderate commitment, maximizing the critical emotional and voluntary commitment component requires a strategic shift toward strengthening supervisor-employee relationships and ensuring the authenticity and responsiveness of formal feedback systems to foster full reciprocity.

Based on the empirical findings and their theoretical implications, the following specific, actionable recommendations are provided for policymakers and management in the Rivers State public service:

1. Management should prioritize leadership development to cultivate relational trust by mandating extensive training and coaching for line managers and supervisors in inclusive leadership and psychological safety practices (Rasheed et al., 2021). This intervention addresses the strong predictive role of Informal Voice in fostering Affective Commitment, ensuring supervisors are equipped to manage the boss-subordinate relationship effectively (Nwinyokpugi and Nnona, 2022).
2. Formal systems must be reformed to ensure transparency and responsiveness, thereby strengthening Normative Commitment and enhancing perceptions of institutional fairness (Olatunji & Adepoju, 2022). Reforms should include clear procedural guidelines, measurable

response timelines, documented follow-up on employee suggestions, and the integration of data-driven human resource analytics to enhance the visibility and credibility of organizational decisions (Ekweozor and Omah, 2025b).

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