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Chapter Title: Employee Voice as a route to Wellbeing

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Abstract

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The purpose of this chapter is to explore the link between employee voice and wellbeing to understand how speaking out can enhance individual and collective wellbeing in the workplace. Voice has been conceptualised differently by ER, OB and HRM scholars, but when studying voice as a route to wellbeing, the combination of literatures provides a holistic insight capturing macro, meso and micro level influences on voice. A literature review identified that a number of variables that are common to both literatures provide some insight into the different ways that voice could contribute towards wellbeing. However, direct exploration between voice and wellbeing has been limited. In this chapter, four theoretical underpinnings have been identified which provide insight into how voice could serve as a route to wellbeing: Job-Demands Resources, Behavioural Approach and Inhibition, Psychosocial Safety Climate and Psychological Safety. In summary, voice is likely to be considered a resource but the need to voice could turn into a demand where psychological safety is low. Individuals are not likely to speak out if it feels risky, instead feeling inhibited and avoiding possible retaliation or ostracism. On the other hand, an organisation which prioritises wellbeing as well as productivity is likely to have a voice system which encourages employees to speak up and managers to take action on issues and concerns which affect wellbeing. Future directions indicate an interesting opportunities for both theoretical advancement and organisational change.

Introduction

> "Getting workers to voice provides a win-win solution to a central organizational problem - how to satisfy workers' needs while simultaneously achieving organizational objectives" (Strauss 2006:778).

Voice has traditionally been considered a way of enabling employees to express dissatisfaction and change situations which are not amenable to them (Hirschman 1970). In this way, voice can be considered a critical mechanism for employees to improve working conditions and enable them to change situations which may lead them to feel exhausted or to withdraw from the workplace (Sherf et al. 2020). However, individuals are sometimes reluctant to voice concerns about personal circumstances to a manager for fear of embarrassment or adverse career outcomes (Milliken et al. 2003; Brinsfield 2013). Therefore, when considering voice and wellbeing, it could be that individuals do not voice concerns about their own wellbeing as readily as concerns which affect the wider organisation.

From an employment relations (ER) perspective, ER scholars have long been aware that voice is not just a mechanism for employees to raise grievances but is also associated with higher worker productivity and lower exit (Freeman and Medoff 1984). Over the years, more evidence has

supported a link between higher levels of subjective wellbeing and greater labour productivity (Isham et al. 2019) and it has been found that an absence of voice, known as silence, could be highly detrimental to wellbeing as well as a cause of lower productivity (Sherf et al. 2020). However, despite evidence to support this tension, there appears to have been very little direct exploration of the way that voice can be encouraged for employee wellbeing.

Key to understanding voice and employee wellbeing are three important characteristics of the employment relationship. Firstly, employees sell their labour in exchange for payment, which means that they need to be willing and able to work if they are to be useful to the organisation. Secondly, the employment relationship between individuals and the organisation is unequal given that most individuals are required to take on work for financial reasons and therefore are wary of having their employment terminated by upsetting those that employ them. This situation holds true for employees and managers at all levels of the organisation. Thirdly, the employment relationship shifts over time in line with different economic and political contexts (Colling and Terry 2010). This means that employee wellbeing might be seen by organisations as less of a priority than organisational performance during an economic downturn and therefore employees may be less likely to speak up if their ability to gain other employment is limited. This concurs with Hirschman's theory which argues that the lack of opportunities for exit reduces propensity to voice (Hirschman 1970).

The topic of voice has been addressed from a number of different perspectives including organizational behaviour (OB), employment relations (ER) and human resource management (HRM). Recent literature reviews combining these perspectives have highlighted that voice can be underpinned by a wide range of motivations and desired outcomes (Klaas et al. 2012; Wilkinson et al. 2020a). However, these disciplines diverge quite significantly in how they conceptualise and study voice. As a result of this divergence the extant research on voice is very much within self-contained siloes (Wilkinson and Fay 2011; Kaufman 2014). When considering each of these perspectives in relation to wellbeing, it is possible to see that each provides a different insight into the way that voice and wellbeing could be linked. For example, voice occurs, is influenced by, and can be examined at the societal level (macro), the organisational or departmental level (meso), and the individual level (micro). The macro level refers to the regulatory framework which determines organisational policy around voice. It is at this level that there is a dominance of ER scholars who examine state support and other institutional mechanisms which vary between countries and regions. The meso level, where much HRM research takes place, relates to the voice systems that organisations establish and the extent to which these are utilised in practice. At the micro level in contrast, the field of OB examines the individual-level motivators and inhibitors to voice, such as dispositions, attitudes and perceptions, emotions and beliefs (Wilkinson et al. 2020a). While the ER literature can set the context, the focus of our chapter is primarily the meso and micro levels and therefore draws heavily on HRM and OB perspectives of voice.

When it comes to voice about wellbeing, there is an important distinction between individual wellbeing and collective wellbeing. Each individual has different requirements which are not necessarily catered for through one-suits-all decisions that are made about working conditions and arrangements. The OB literature has focused on direct voice between employee and manager and therefore provides a good insight into the individual influences that shape voice for employee wellbeing. However, given its focus on informal prosocial voice which captures voice about improvements which will benefit all employees, its insights are likely to be more relevant to

wellbeing issues which affect employees collectively. Similarly, the ER literature which has focused on formal indirect voice, is also more likely to provide a good insight into voice which affects collective employee wellbeing. In this way, it is possible to see that both OB and ER conceptualisations of voice have blind spots when it comes to individual wellbeing issues. Finally, HRM conceptualisations of voice have focused on garnering insight into systemic issues which affect wellbeing but there has been more of a focus on organisational performance. As highlighted earlier, employee wellbeing does affect organisational performance and therefore, for organisations to perform well, it is important that employees take an interest in their own wellbeing and speak out to ask for what they need and that organisations facilitate this..

The fact that individual wellbeing is important but appears to have been somewhat neglected in the extant literature highlights a need for this chapter to focus on how individuals, managers and HR departments can contribute towards an organisation which harnesses voice as a route to ensuring individual employee wellbeing. The chapter will therefore tease out the common threads from both the voice and silence and wellbeing literatures and use theoretical underpinnings and constructs within each type of literature to suggest a way forward. Each literature provides different insights into the question of how employees can use voice to protect and enhance their wellbeing yet when attempting to understand how voice and wellbeing are linked, a number of significant gaps are highlighted. Therefore, this chapter acts as a call to action for scholars to devote more attention to the links between voice and wellbeing. The outline for this chapter is as follows. Firstly, voice and wellbeing will be defined and a brief overview of the overlaps in the literature provided. Next, one key area which acts as an important lens to understand how voice can serve as a route to wellbeing will be highlighted: Whose responsibility is voice about wellbeing? Finally, directions on key areas for further research will be discussed.

Defining Voice

The focus of ER scholars is about voice as the expression of worker interests that are separate and distinct from those of the firm, and as a vehicle for employee self-determination (Budd 2004; Barry and Wilkinson 2016;Wilkinson et al. 2020b). Employees seek voice to have some input into decisions that have a material impact on what they do in the workplace. Formal institutions, such as trade unions, collective bargaining, joint consultation and grievance procedures are viewed as important in facilitating genuine employee voice so as to deal with any dissatisfaction with their working conditions.   The field of ER was one of the first to identify the concept of voice as important for organisational functioning. One of the earliest definitions of voice and which provides the common intellectual foundation for all voice scholars is "any attempt at all to change, rather than escape from an objectionable state of affairs whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilise public opinion" (Hirschman, 1970:30). Hirschman emphasised voice as a constructive response to dissatisfaction and highlighted the importance of employees having access to mechanisms through which they could redress situations which caused them concern rather than exit. His Exit-Voice-Loyalty model identified that workers usually chose either to remain with the organisation and voice their concerns in an attempt to rectify them, which he argued demonstrated loyalty, or they chose to exit the organisation. His model was expanded several years later by the addition of neglect (now known as the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect model) meaning that employees might remain with the organisation but be neglectful in their duties rather than exiting (Rusbult et al. 1998). Neglect can be defined as "passively allowing conditions to deteriorate through reduced interest or effort, chronic lateness or absences, using company time for personal business, or

increased error rate" (Rusbult et al. 1998:601). Therefore, a lack of voice could lead to absenteeism as a form of neglect which is widely recognised as an indicator of negative wellbeing. A more recent definition of ER voice refers to "all of the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say about, and influence, their work and the functioning of their organisation" (Wilkinson et al. 2020b:5). This definition acknowledges that voice encompasses a range of different subjects such as working conditions, reward, and work organisation and can occur through a variety of mechanisms such as formal and informal, direct and indirect, and individual and collective.

As can be seen, ER scholars have tended to focus on voice as a means of expressing collective grievances and protecting or advocating for better working conditions. On the other hand, OB scholars have moved more towards an understanding that voice is an individual behaviour, and as such tends to take place on a more idiosyncratic basis between employee and manager. An OB definition of voice defines it as "informal and discretionary communication by an employee of ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems, or opinions about work-related issues to persons who might be able to take appropriate action, with the intent to bring about improvement or change" (Morrison 2014:174). As a result, OB voice can be considered to be about facilitating constructive change for the organisation or the work unit through individual action (Tangirala and Ramanujam 2012; Morrison 2014) but like ER voice, is less about improving individual situations in the workplace and more about collective gains.

With regards to encouraging voice, ER scholars would consider it important to give employees opportunities to be involved in decisions about their wellbeing and working environment via the provision of formal voice mechanisms. On the other hand, OB scholars would consider that employees would find a way to speak up directly to their manager if they so desired, placing less emphasis on the need to provide formal voice mechanisms and placing more emphasis on the creation of a voice climate which fosters informal voice (Morrison 2011) This difference has manifested a change in perspectives over appropriate voice mechanisms with the ER literature focusing heavily on the value of collective formal voice mechanisms such as trade unions and works councils, whereas the OB literature has focused on direct informal voice between the employee and manager such as email and face to face meetings.

In contrast to the ER and OB views of voice which place the employee and the manager as central to voice in the organisation, the HRM literature has adopted a processual view of how voice can be harnessed and used. Drawing to some extent on both OB and ER disciplines, HRM perspectives of voice have tried to integrate the behavioural insights from OB into the system level approach of HRM (Wilkinson et al. 2020a). As a result of this processual view, voice has become recognised as an integral part of High Performance Work Systems which are designed to improve organisational performance through voice (Harley 2014).

Despite the differences in perspective on voice, the extant literature tends to assume that voice can only be defined as voice when it is targeted at an authority figure in the organisation who can make a change to the existing situation. Empirical evidence has confirmed the importance of the power differential between voicer and target which is required for voice to be effective (McClean et al. 2013). In other words, for voice to be effective it should be to an authority figure, which suggests that talking to peers, colleagues, friends or family cannot be classed as voice because of their lack of direct power to influence outcomes. From a HRM perspective, this means voice systems are important to allow voice to take place but in practice a focus on organisational performance forces managers to make a choice between prioritising their energies on managing worker wellbeing or managing performance (Guest 2017).

Voice which captures employee perspectives is important for allowing employees to have their interests taken into account during organisational decision making. In essence, voice provides employees with an opportunity to have some control over their working lives which is important in terms of wellbeing and dignity (Wilkinson and Barry 2016). However, it could be that employees do not always voice their needs or take part in activities designed to find out their views on decisions. As a result, the way that employees use voice is largely shaped and influenced by opportunities for voice, the way that managers encourage and respond to voice, and the attitude of the organisation to the value that employee voice can provide to the organisation.

In summary, the OB voice and silence literature has placed a large emphasis on the idiosyncratic relationship between a manager and their employees, and has largely neglected a wider focus on the organisational or group dynamics which may also shape voice (see Morrison and Milliken 2000 for an exception). On the other hand, the HRM/ER literature has focused on the role of systems and mechanisms as a way of understanding how voice can be fostered but it has tended to neglect the way in which motivations for voice shape outcomes. Taken together, there is an opportunity for understanding voice as a route to employee wellbeing from micro, meso and macro levels.

Defining Wellbeing

Wellbeing can be defined as "the positive affective states associated with happiness and meaningfulness at work" (Avey et al. 2012:25). There is disagreement amongst scholars about how wellbeing should be defined with it once being described as "intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure" (Thomas 2009:11). There is even disagreement as to whether positive and negative affect in terms of psychological wellbeing even appear on the same continuum or might be distinct constructs, the implication being that achieving positive wellbeing may be more difficult than simply targeting areas which seem to negatively affect wellbeing (Dodge et al. 2012). Nevertheless, there have been attempts to define and measure it, leading to a large number of indicators of positive and negative wellbeing. Furthermore, there is strong evidence to show that being at work is good for mental and physical wellbeing (Waddell and Burton 2006; Diener and Chan 2011).

The Relationship between Voice and Wellbeing

The quest to understand how best to encourage voice has resulted in a literature replete with the exploration of antecedents to voice (e.g. Morrison 2014; Kaufman 2015). Table 1 shows that a number of indicators of negative and positive wellbeing have also been identified as antecedents of voice and silence. The result is a wide array of variables which can be difficult to translate into practice and use to predict when voice is most likely to take place. However, a clear pattern appears to be that silence is more common than voice, especially for such issues as unfair treatment of self or others, unethical behaviour, concerns about the performance of manager or colleagues, disagreement with organisational decisions or personal issues and concerns (Milliken et al. 2003; Brinsfield 2013). In other words, issues that are likely to lead to negative wellbeing. The reasons cited for silence frequently involve fear of damaging relationships with managers or colleagues, retaliation or ostracism (Milliken et al. 2003) and are likely to be associated with forms of voice which challenge the status quo or prevent damaging behaviours in the workplace.

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Despite a number of variables which provide a link between the voice and silence and wellbeing literatures, there has been very little direct exploration of the direct link between voice and wellbeing. Therefore, in order to make sense of the ways in which voice might serve as a route to wellbeing, four theoretical underpinnings have been identified which aim to help interpret the findings in each literature to identify possible links and provoke new avenues of research: The Job Demands-Resources Model (Schaufeli and Taris 2014); Behavioural Approach and Inhibition System (Carver 2006), Psychosocial Safety Climate (Dollard et al. 2012) and Psychological Safety (Edmondson 1999). Each of these theoretical underpinnings provides an opportunity to consider the micro and meso organisational levels of analysis, important to a fuller understanding of voice at the macro level.

Job-Demands Resources Theory

The Job-Demands Resources theory argues that an individual can use their resources (work-related and personal) to buffer demands or challenges encountered in the workplace (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Its fundamental premise is that job demands and resources have the potential to shape motivation and fitness for work through the management and avoidance of burnout and disengagement (Han et al. 2020). Job demands refer to "those physical, social or organizational aspects that require sustained physical or mental effort" (Demerouti et al. 2001:501) whereas resources refer to the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that help an individual to reduce job demands, achieve work goals or stimulate personal growth (Demerouti et al. 2001). Dodge and colleagues suggest that wellbeing is the "balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges [demands] faced" (2012:230). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is used extensively in the wellbeing literature to provide guidance on the types of variables which count as resources and those which count as demands (see Schaufeli and Taris 2014 and Bakker and Demerouti 2017 for reviews of the JD-R model and wellbeing). In this way, it is an effective tool to identify the types of demands which may lead to withdrawal, exhaustion and subsequent burnout, and the types of resources that may help to prevent it (Schaufeli and Taris 2014). For example, drawing on the wellbeing literature, harassment, unfair treatment, and work pressures constitute job demands which if not addressed, lead to outcomes including disengagement, absenteeism, intention to leave and physical and mental health problems (Schaufeli and Taris 2014). Although the JD-R theory considers that when demands and resources are utilised effectively it ensures an equilibrium for the employee (recognised as positive wellbeing), the JD-R model is limited in its ability to guide individuals on how to manage their demands and resources to achieve this outcome (Bakker and Demerouti 2017).

Linked to the JD-R theory is the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll 1989) which examines how individuals, when under stress, choose to either protect existing resources or use the opportunity to build additional resources as a way of moving forward. A meta-analysis of 55 studies showed a negative association between job stress and voice, meaning that when people experience stress, they are more likely to remain silent than voice. Job stress, which is considered to be a demand, included factors such as a lack of job autonomy, poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues and managers, or feelings of risk when speaking up about dissatisfaction (Ng and Feldman 2012). It is possible that individuals do not always speak out when they are dissatisfied, because they may find that speaking out increases rather than reduces their stress. As such, speaking out may act as an additional demand rather than a resource (Hirst et al. 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider that the variables that cause an individual to speak out or remain silent can be experienced as either resources or demands according to a set of different circumstances. To predict

how an individual may use voice in relation to their wellbeing, a picture of their overall perceived demands and resources is needed.

Behavioral Activation and Behavioral Inhibition Systems

Behavioural approach describes how an individual is motivated towards the achievement of a rewarding goal such as promotion, whereas behavioural inhibition describes how an individual is motivated away from a negative outcome such as losing their job or damaging relationships with colleagues and managers (Carver 2006). Behavioural inhibition is strongly correlated with negative emotions such as fear and anxiety (Carver and White 1994; Morrison et al. 2015) and frequent triggering of BIS can have a wellbeing cost by increasing fatigue, stress or strain (Sherf et al. 2020). Behavioural approach and behavioural inhibition have been used as ways of describing how an individual may respond when their personal sense of power is threatened (Morrison et al. 2015). Personal sense of power can be defined "as the perception of one's ability to influence another person or other people" (Morrison et al. 2015:551). Morrison and her colleagues found that individuals who feel powerful in their ability to influence others are more likely to voice because they are focused on the successful outcomes (BAS motivated). On the other hand, those who feel less powerful in their ability to influence others are less likely to voice because they are focused on the risks associated with voicing (BIS motivated) (Morrison et al. 2015). These findings were supported more recently by Sherf and colleagues (2020) who combined the BAS/BIS approach to study the effect of perceived impact (similar to personal sense of power) and psychological safety on burnout, using voice as a mediator. They found that silence was positively and significantly associated with burnout more strongly than voice was negatively associated with burnout (Sherf et al. 2020 :24). This would suggest that increasing voice may not be as successful at reducing negative wellbeing as reducing silence may be for reducing negative wellbeing. Therefore, voice may not best serve as a route to wellbeing directly, but as a way of preventing negative wellbeing in the first place. Furthermore, Sherf and colleagues (2020) found that psychological safety does not directly increase voice. Instead they found that it reduced triggers of the BIS, meaning that silence was less likely where psychological safety existed, but in order to encourage voice, a heightened perceived impact was required to trigger the BAS so that voice could take place.

Table 2 shows examples of how voice and silence related to wellbeing could manifest when shaped by approach and inhibition tendencies.

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Psychosocial Safety Climate

Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) describes an organizational climate which gives more priority to employee psychological safety and health than organisational or employee productivity (Dollard and McTernan 2011; Loh et al. 2020). The premise of a PSC is that in enables employees to feel able to safely use resources in order to reduce work-related demands (Dollard et al. 2012; Loh et al. 2020). As a result, an organisation with a PSC is characterised by workplace policies, practices, and procedures that facilitate employees being able to ask for what they need in order to prevent burnout, stress and exhaustion (Dollard and Bakker 2010).

PSC is considered to be an extension of the JD-R theory owing to studies which have shown that the different elements of a PSC act as a strong lead indicator of workplace psychological health, largely

through its influence on the job design and socio-relational aspects of the work environment (Afsharian et al. 2019; Loh et al. 2020). A PSC is measured using four different elements which can be seen to be conducive to voice. Firstly, organizational communication refers to encouraging employees to voice about psychological health concerns whether that be using formal or informal mechanisms. Secondly, management commitment reflects the willingness of management to make decisions and undertake prompt action to correct threats to psychological health once they become aware of them. Third, management priority underpins a constant reinforcement of the prioritisation of psychological health over productivity through policies, procedures and processes. Finally, organizational participation ensures mechanisms are in place so that different parties including employees, worker unions, and occupational health and safety representatives can take part in decisions about psychological wellbeing.

Organisations with a PSC are more likely to have higher levels of wellbeing (Dollard et al. 2012) and higher levels of voice (Kwan et al. 2016). As such, it has been described as a moderator of moderators (Loh et al. 2018), placing it as a fundamental enabler for both voice and wellbeing. Furthermore, interest in PSC is growing with currently over 60 research outputs highlighting its negative relationship with occupational health issues (Loh et al. 2020).

Psychological Safety

One variable which is considered to be important in the voice and silence literature and has been studied extensively is that of psychological safety. Psychological safety can be defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives it to be safe to express himself or herself at work" (Liang et al. 2012:80). One key source of psychological safety for employees comes from the relationship they have with leaders and managers (Detert and Burris 2007). Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between high relationship quality and voice (Van Dyne et al. 2008; Botero and Van Dyne 2009) with there being a widespread acknowledgement that spending time investing in building relationships is beneficial for voice. It is an important prerequisite for certain types of voice such as upward challenge (Brooks 2018) and prohibitive voice (Liang et al. 2012) and in encouraging employees to share emotions (Chamberlin et al. 2017). An absence of psychological safety suggests that employees perceive voice as risky and hence are less likely to voice (Morrison 2011) and individuals who are not able to voice are more likely to suffer from burnout (Sherf et al. 2020). It is Important to note that a perceived lack of openness to employee voice and fear of retaliation are considered to be organisational stressors in the wellbeing literature (Ng and Feldman 2012) meaning that remaining silent has the potential to reduce feelings of overall wellbeing.

Although appearing similar, Psychosocial Safety Climate and Psychological Safety can be differentiated (Loh et al. 2020). When considering their level of analysis, PSC is a meso-level indicator and as such, is focused on understanding what happens at the organisation level to facilitate the psychological wellbeing of employees. On the other hand, Psychological Safety can be considered a micro-level indicator which measures aggregated individual-level data to determine the extent to which the interpersonal relationship between an employee and their manager can be characterised by trust to speak out (Walumbwa and Schaubroeck 2009). Psychosocial Safety Climate has been found to be a better predictor of wellbeing than Psychological Safety (Idris et al. 2012) suggesting that to make more progress in understanding how voice can serve as a route to wellbeing, a shift in focus is required.

Whose responsibility is voice about wellbeing?

The previous section outlined four theoretical models which can provide an important link between the voice and silence and wellbeing literatures. The JD-R theory suggests that wellbeing is likely to be achieved by finding a balance between demands and resources. The BAS/BIS theory shows that when a personal sense of power and psychological safety are high, voice is more likely to take place because of the reduction in risks which trigger the BIS and an increase in safety which triggers the BAS. The fostering of a PSC appears to moderate the relationship between resources and demands and wellbeing, suggesting that it could be the single most important variable that links the relationship between voice and wellbeing. Finally, Psychological Safety is an important pre-requisite for voice shaped by the interpersonal relationships between employees and their managers. This section will now consider an important question which provides insight into the role of voice as a route to wellbeing: Whose responsibility is it to speak up about wellbeing?

The role of the employee

Employees have the motivation to use voice in ways which serve their wellbeing but little is known about how they choose whether to voice or remain silent about wellbeing. In much OB research, there is an underlying assumption that employees generally want to speak up. However, the focus of OB research is that voice is prosocial and that issues which are raised are common to everyone, not themselves individually. As a result, there is a view that managers should value this voice because of its potential benefits for the organisation as well as potential risks of not addressing important issues (Wilkinson et al. 2020a:100677). In some respects therefore voice can act as an early warning system for managers by highlighting issues which will become worse if they are not addressed. The JD-R theory posits that it is the role of the employee to use their own resources to buffer what they perceive to be demands. When considering their options for voice, employees have recourse to formal and informal, direct and indirect, and individual and collective voice mechanisms although in practice how viable these mechanisms are and how easy they are to navigate is another issue. So there is an onus on employees to speak up if their wellbeing is suffering. Hence, voice systems for supporting employees are important. Drawing on research about Psychosocial Safety Climate and Psychological Safety, it is possible to see that employees have a certain amount of control over the decision of whether, when, and how to speak out but ER scholars see that perceived levels of safety are likely to be shaped by wider organisational forces whereas OB scholars see this as more about their relationship with their manager.

The role of the manager

The 'working environment' is now seen as not just about issues of hazard but more general issues such as conditions of work and there is a legal requirement in EU law to ensure the health and safety of workers in every aspect related to the work. Within that based on the Robens' model of self-regulation is a statutory duty on every employer to consult with employees or their representatives at the workplace on measures for promoting safety and health at work and there is evidence that shows the benefits of worker representation and voice in OHS(Loudoun and Johnstone 2019).

We can also draw from the literature on Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) which suggests that decisions to put into place certain practices and policies which enable employees to utilise the resources which are important to them are made at the organisational level (Dollard et al. 2012). This places senior management as a key facilitator of voice climates in the organisation. However, although individual managers may be concerned about employee wellbeing, in organisations without a PSC their main focus is likely to be on organisational performance (Guest 2017). For example, although managers may recognise that employee wellbeing is important too (including their own), the strong focus on meeting performance targets means employee wellbeing is likely to be less of a priority for managers. In fact, employee wellbeing issues can be seen as a demand on managerial time which prevents managers from focusing on organisational performance. It can therefore be said that management, through agenda-setting and institutional structures, can create silence over a range of issues making it difficult for them to speak up (Donaghey et al. 2011).

The role of line managers is instrumental in ensuring voice systems are effective (Townsend and Mowbray 2020). Yet, the purpose of management has traditionally been to ensure that employees meet organisational targets. In effect, employees did not have a voice because there were no valid reasons for not being able to carry out the tasks in the ways requested by the manager. However, in contemporary organisations, where there is an expectation of bottom-up input and discretionary effort, managers are expected to manage voice from employees even if they are often ill-equipped with the skills to listen to, and deal with voice. Therefore, drawing on findings by Knoll and colleagues (2018) which showed that emotional exhaustion was more likely where silence was imposed, some important questions are raised around the extent to which managers and organisations impose silence and whether the silence is an actual inability to voice or a perceived inability to voice.

The prescriptive management literature has always set out an optimistic scenario in which line managers move from being holders of expert power to facilitators and hence take on new skills and responsibilities including the ability to facilitate employee voice and empowerment (Wilkinson et al. 2013). However, extant research suggests this might be a rosy view of what happens on the ground. Indeed, managers do not always believe in the employees having a say, regarding it instead as 'soft management'. Furthermore while some line managers may see the value of employee voice and input they have concerns as to how it is operationalized in the context of day to day organizational pressures (Townsend and Mowbray 2020). In many organisations voice and engagement are considered a poor second to production or service goals. As noted earlier managers may see tensions between listening to employees and dealing with production targets. In addition, the failure to reward line managers for spending the time to encourage voice may be an issue as is a lack of training on how to encourage and manage voice, this latter point speaking powerfully about the relative importance senior managers attach to the practice of voice (Fenton-O'Creevy 2001). As such, in order to encourage voice, leaders may benefit from generating opportunities for impact, rewards, or success (Sherf et al. 2020) which are likely to trigger BAS experiences in individuals.

The role of HR

The role of a Human Resources Department is to ensure that the business functions are aligned to the strategic direction of the organisation. In recent years the main focus in the HRM field has been around performance, with the high-performance work system (HPWS) approach dominant since the mid-1990s. The HPWS describes the organisation-level model of an HRM system through which investment in a strategically-aligned package of advanced, commitment-type HR practices (a focus on shared values and goals which increase organisation performance through team-working) yields higher operational-financial performance from a higher-skilled, motivated, and empowered

workforce (Kaufman et al. 2020). Despite voice being recognised as an important contributory factor to organisational performance in HPWS (Harley 2014), the emphasis has been very much on how HR practices can lead to performance outcomes with much less focus on employee wellbeing (Guest 2017). Accentuating this emphasis has been the discursive dominance of the HR business partner model as developed by Urich (see Keegan and Francis, 2010). As a result, pressures to reduce costs, increase competitiveness and achieve a tighter alignment between business strategy and HRM have led HR to lose touch with employees and employee wellbeing. An example of this was seen by Francis and Keegan when one of the HR specialists interviewed suggested "no-one wants to be an employee champion (employee advocate). They think it is ideologically unsound. I think they see it as them being in opposition to the organisation ... and it suggests their management credentials are suspect" (2006:242). Therefore, it can be said that HRM has over-emphasised its strategic role and, in an attempt to gain a seat at the top table, has neglected or ignored key components of its unique contribution. In particular, HRM's fixation on short-term performance goals and shareholder demands has led it to downplay longer-term sustainable contributions based on values and fairness for employees (Marchington 2015).

As was seen previously, OB studies of voice assume that individual voice behaviour centres around the relationship between the individual worker and management (Wilkinson and Barry 2016). Therefore, it is widely considered that individual managers have the responsibility for creating environments and contexts which make their employees feel psychologically safe when voicing. However, it may also be important to consider the influence of institutional context on individual voice behaviour (Dundon et al. 2004; Wilkinson et al. 2004). For example, Klaas and colleagues (2012) suggest that that unions reduce the perception of risk to employees by asking them to raise voice in a formal context, thereby enhancing their psychological safety through anonymity. Similarly, Bryson and colleagues (2013) reported that job-related anxiety was ameliorated when employees worked in a unionised workplace and were involved in the introduction of the changes. The literature on Psychosocial Safety Climate indicates that there are benefits in prioritising voice as a route to wellbeing so there is clearly a role for HRM to establish systems to provide supportive organisational contexts for voice (Marchington 2007).

Future Directions

The previous section highlighted that the responsibility for voice about wellbeing needs to be a joint effort driven by employees and managers, with HR departments providing a context which makes possible a balance between employee wellbeing and organisational performance. With that in mind, a number of future directions have been suggested which highlight how the examination of voice as a route to wellbeing could yield important insights which could ultimately lead to improved wellbeing outcomes for individuals in the workplace.

First, using JD-R theory to consider voice as a route to wellbeing suggests that voicing could be an important resource which could alleviate individual job demands as well as helping managers to prioritise their attention to issues which may affect organisational performance. Therefore, it is important to understand the situations in which voice can be considered a resource, and alternatively a demand, which in turn will provide a greater insight into the ways in which wellbeing needs can be catered for in the workplace.

Second, adopting a behavioural approach and inhibition perspective enables a consideration of the range of individual, organisational and societal issues which contribute to feelings of power and emotional attitudes towards voicing. Such a perspective allows scholars to think more broadly about the importance of encouraging voice about wellbeing.

Third, organisations have the ability to create psychosocial safety climates which encourage voice. Therefore, it is important to understand more about the variables which managers and HR departments can put in place to generate higher levels of voice about wellbeing.

Fourth, it is individuals themselves who gauge the extent to which they feel safe when voicing yet remaining silent has the potential to cause them psychological harm. A deeper understanding of the ways in which psychological safety can encourage individuals to speak up about wellbeing issues specifically is important.

Fifth, different sources of evidence showing that the individual employee-manager relationship leads to improvements in both voice (Detert and Burris 2007) and wellbeing (Wood and De Menenezes 2011) would suggest that a combination of the two could be more powerful. For example, it could be that high relationship quality between employee and manager leads to voice which in itself leads to higher wellbeing because voice serves as a means of contributing or sharing concerns. On the other hand, it could be that voice leads to greater wellbeing because managers are able to make changes which result in reduced demands. Future research directions here could include how individuals learn to ask for what they need, and how managers recognise voice about wellbeing specifically so certain types of voice can be prioritised.

Finally, is it possible to assume that individuals can articulate exactly what they need to ensure their own wellbeing, or do managers need to be able to read between the lines? Ultimately, voicing is about asking for what is needed, and when it comes to wellbeing, each individual has different requirements which are not necessarily catered for through one-suits-all decisions that are made about working conditions and arrangements. Therefore, research into the methods that employees use to speak up about wellbeing and the nuances that individuals use to talk about wellbeing issues would be beneficial.

Conclusion

Through the examination of four theories to understand how voice might serve as a route to wellbeing, it can be seen that voice and silence are linked to both positive and negative wellbeing in complex ways. Furthermore, following a consideration of how voice could be used as a route to wellbeing, it has become clear that the voice-wellbeing pathway is about "raising awareness of, asking for, or telling others what is needed to improve individual wellbeing". This then specifies the purpose of voice for individual wellbeing and assumes an awareness by the voicer that they are voicing specifically because they are motivated by a desire to contribute to their own wellbeing. Furthermore, it places an emphasis on the individual to get to know themselves sufficiently well so that they know what they need in order to counteract any demands. This definition does not consider voice about the wellbeing of others or voice about organisational performance because these considerations are picked up under other definitions of voice. For example, OB voice is about prosocial motives and speaking up for the greater good whereas ER and HRM perspectives on voice consider that employees speak up for their own interests which might be different to those of management. However, when considering voice about wellbeing, it must be acknowledged that individuals need to speak up for themselves regardless of managerial agendas or organisational priorities because otherwise, they are not able to function as human beings with a sense of fulfilment.

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Indicators of poor wellbeing	Indicators of good wellbeing	Link to voice literature
Absenteeism (Lamb and Cogan 2016)	Lows levels of absenteeism (Cooper and Dewe 2008)	Absenteeism is the result of a lack of voice (Dundon et al. 2004)
Presenteeism (linked to disengagement) (Isham et al. 2019)	Engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2017)	Voice leads to employee commitment (Hirschman 1970)
Increased turnover (Isham et al. 2019)	Reduced intention to leave (Van Der Vaart et al. 2013)	Voice reduces intention to leave and actual turnover (McClean et al. 2013); employee retention (Spencer 1986)
Dissatisfaction (Wood 2008)	Satisfaction (job and life) (Wood, 2008)	Job satisfaction/dissatisfaction is linked to voice behaviour (Holland et al. 2011)
Lack of control & autonomy (Schaufeli and Taris 2014)	Control and autonomy (Shaufeli and Taris 2014)	Control and autonomy is linked to propensity to voice (Tangirala and Ramanujam 2008).
Stress & Burnout (Dollard and McTernan 2011)	Engagement (Dollard and McTernan 2011)	Employee voice and engagement (Kwon et al. 2016)

Table 1. Wellbeing indicators which have also been discussed in the voice literature

Voice – BAS – asking for a specific wellbeing goal or target you want to achieve (e.g. expressing views in favour of flexible working)	Silence – BAS – intentionally remaining silent to ensure you achieve your specific wellbeing goal or target (e.g. not returning a ballot for strike action because you cannot afford it but understand that others want to strike)
Voice – BIS – speaking up to ensure a goal or target considered detrimental to wellbeing doesn't happen (e.g. providing a dissenting view against the decision to move from weekly pay to monthly pay)	Silence – BIS – consciously withholding your views to ensure an outcome detrimental to wellbeing doesn't take place (e.g. taking sick leave when you have a grievance hearing with HR)

Table 2: Examples of voice and silence using BAS/ BIS