

**‘Voice’ without voice:
A case study of three Australian childcare centres**

**Amrita Gautam
Student Number: 43542034**

**Faculty of Business and Economics
Department of Marketing and Management
Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia**

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STATEMENT OF THE CANDIDATE

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**“Voice’ without voice: A case study of three Australian childcare centres**” is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any other degree or award in any other university or institution other than Macquarie University. Any contribution and help that I have received for this research and the preparation of my thesis have been explicitly acknowledged.

I declare that the thesis is an original piece of research and has been written by me. I also declare that all the information sources and literature utilized in this work have been appropriately acknowledged and cited. This research is approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee via Reference Number: 5201500635 dated 5th August, 2015.

Signature of the Student

Name: Amrita Gautam (Student ID 43542034)

Date:

ABSTRACT

There is an abundance of research available on employee voice. However, much of this research focuses on large organizations and there is little research on voice in small and medium sized businesses (SMEs). This study, therefore, explores what employee voice looks like in SMEs, and how different factors affect voice and its outcomes in SMEs. The study utilized semi-structured interviews in three childcare centres – one large and two small – in Sydney, Australia. The research found that context – organizational as well as industrial – affects the definition, perception and effectiveness of voice. It also highlighted that factors such as social support, emotional attachment, scope and breadth of voice, and trust among peers and managers/supervisors were crucial in shaping the definition and perception of voice in SMEs. These factors in turn affected outcomes of voice such as relationship between managers/supervisors and employees, employees' intention to quit, forms of voice utilized, employee participation in decision making and effective embeddedness of voice. The study found that the unitary stance of employees and managers/supervisors in SMEs regarding the definition and perception of voice challenges the practice of voice as indicated by the literature. The evidence suggests that exploring the role of context and factors affecting voice in different contexts is important in order to bridge the gap in voice literature.

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