

3 Giving voice to the silenced: Exploring employee voice and representation in hospitality work in Ireland

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the issue of employee voice in the hospitality sector as part of the 'fair representation' dimension of fair work. The chapter presents an overview of the theory of voice, alongside the benefits, challenges and mechanisms associated with employee voice. The legal provisions for voice in Ireland will be outlined, and empirical evidence of the extent of employee voice in hospitality employments in Ireland will be presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for policy and practice.

Introduction and how this chapter fits within a fair work agenda

This chapter, and the following four, will explore particular dimensions of fair work, in each case drawing on empirical data gleaned from one of five country studies published between 2021 and 2023, which drew on a similar methodology.

In the case of this chapter, the focus is on the dimension of 'fair representation', and the country context is Ireland.

Employee voice, alongside trade union coverage, make up the 'fair representation' dimension of fair work. Having a voice at work, either directly or through representatives, is a core dimension of fair work. It is also a critical element of human dignity. In this chapter, emphasis is placed on employee voice generally, how it is defined in the literature, and empirical evidence of employee voice processes in hospitality and tourism practice in Ireland. While trade unions will be included as one important conduit for voice, 'fair representation' through trade unions, will be explored more comprehensively in the next chapter, with the different focal context of Norway. Specifically, Chapter 4 explores the role of the trade unions in the Norwegian hospitality industry, emphasizing union