

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND NORMATIVE COMMITMENT IN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
IN RIVERS STATE**

Dr. Victor Barinua

Victor.barinua@iaue.edu.ng

**Ignatuis Ajuru University of Education ,
Rumuolumeni , Port Harcourt, Rivers state.**

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The study adopted a survey research design, with data collected from 200 employees across banks, the Rivers State Police Command, and Rivers State University using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypothesized relationship. Findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between sense of community and normative commitment ($r = 0.661$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who perceive a high level of belonging, connectedness, and support in their workplace are more likely to feel morally obligated and loyal to remain with their organizations. The study concluded that fostering a supportive and cohesive work environment is crucial for enhancing employees' normative commitment. It recommends that service organizations implement policies that promote teamwork, inclusivity, recognition, and social support to strengthen employee loyalty and ensure organizational stability.

Keywords: Sense of Community, Normative Commitment,

Introduction

Background to the Study

In contemporary organizational settings, particularly within service-oriented sectors, the quality of interpersonal relationships and shared values among employees has become increasingly important in shaping work attitudes and behaviors. One of the key constructs that captures this relational dynamic is sense of community, which refers to the feeling of belonging, mutual support, and connectedness among members of an organization. A strong sense of community fosters trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility, thereby enhancing employees' identification with organizational goals and values (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In service organizations, where teamwork and interpersonal interaction are essential for effective service delivery, cultivating a sense of community is particularly critical.

Closely related to this is the concept of normative commitment, which reflects an employee's sense of obligation to remain with an organization. Normative commitment is grounded in moral and ethical considerations, where employees feel that staying with the organization is the right thing to do due to loyalty, social norms, or perceived indebtedness (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Unlike affective commitment, which is based on emotional attachment, normative commitment is driven by a sense of duty and responsibility toward the organization. This form of commitment is especially relevant in environments where organizational culture emphasizes loyalty, shared values, and long-term relationships.

The interaction between sense of community and normative commitment is of significant importance in organizational studies. A workplace characterized by strong interpersonal bonds and mutual support is likely to foster a sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate through loyalty and continued membership. Empirical evidence suggests that employees who experience a high sense of community are more likely to internalize organizational values and develop a stronger sense of duty to remain with the organization (Rego & Cunha, 2008). This implies that the social environment

within organizations plays a crucial role in shaping employees' commitment beyond mere contractual obligations.

In the context of service organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria, the need to understand this relationship is even more pressing. These organizations operate in a dynamic and often challenging environment characterized by economic instability, infrastructural limitations, and increasing competition. Employees in sectors such as banking, education, and public service are required to work collaboratively and maintain high levels of service quality. However, challenges such as weak organizational culture, limited employee engagement, and poor interpersonal relationships may undermine both sense of community and normative commitment, thereby affecting organizational performance and sustainability.

Although previous studies have examined workplace spirituality, organizational commitment, and related constructs, many have focused primarily on affective and continuance commitment, with limited attention given to normative commitment, particularly within the Nigerian context. Furthermore, existing research has often treated sense of community as a general aspect of workplace spirituality without explicitly examining its direct influence on normative commitment. This creates a gap in the literature, as the moral and obligation-based dimension of commitment remains underexplored in relation to workplace social dynamics.

This gap establishes the point of departure for the present study. There is a need to empirically investigate how sense of community influences normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. By focusing on this relationship, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into how organizational social environments can foster a sense of duty and loyalty among employees, thereby enhancing retention and organizational effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute to both theory and practice by offering context-specific evidence on the role of interpersonal relationships in shaping normative commitment within service organizations.

Statement of the problem

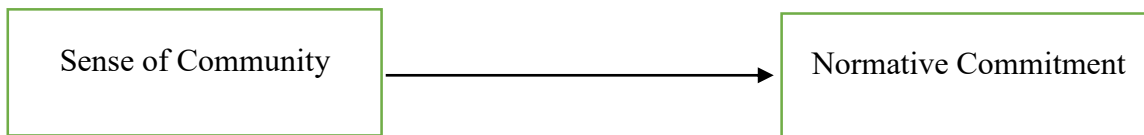
In recent years, service organizations have increasingly recognized the importance of fostering strong employee commitment as a means of enhancing performance, service quality, and organizational sustainability. Despite this recognition, many organizations continue to experience challenges related to employee loyalty, retention, and willingness to remain with the organization. In particular, normative commitment, which reflects employees' sense of moral obligation to stay with an organization, appears to be weakening in many contemporary workplaces. Employees are increasingly driven by personal interests and external opportunities rather than a sense of duty or loyalty, thereby posing a threat to organizational stability and continuity (Meyer & Allen, 1991). One of the critical factors that may influence normative commitment is the sense of community within the workplace. A strong sense of community, characterized by trust, mutual support, and shared values, is expected to foster a feeling of belonging and obligation among employees (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). However, in many service organizations in Rivers State, there is evidence of weak interpersonal relationships, poor teamwork, and limited employee engagement. These conditions may undermine the development of a sense of community, thereby reducing employees' willingness to remain committed to the organization out of a sense of obligation.

Furthermore, while several studies have examined organizational commitment, much of the existing literature has focused on affective and continuance commitment, with relatively less attention given to normative commitment, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria. Similarly, although sense of community has been explored as a dimension of workplace spirituality, its specific influence on normative commitment remains underexplored. This lack of empirical focus creates a gap in understanding how workplace social dynamics contribute to obligation-based commitment among employees in service organizations. In addition, service organizations in Rivers State operate in a challenging environment characterized by economic uncertainty, infrastructural constraints, and increasing competition. These challenges may further weaken organizational culture and employee relationships, making it difficult to build a strong sense of community that can foster normative

commitment. As a result, organizations may face increased employee turnover, reduced cooperation, and diminished organizational effectiveness.

Therefore, the problem of this study lies in the limited understanding of the extent to which sense of community influences normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. Without adequate empirical evidence on this relationship, organizations may find it difficult to implement effective strategies for enhancing employee loyalty and sustaining long-term performance. This study is thus necessitated to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment, with a view to providing practical insights for improving organizational commitment and effectiveness.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher Conceptualized (2017)

The predictor variable (Sense of Community) was adopted from Ashmos, and Duchon, (2000) and the criterion variable (Normative Commitment) was adopted from Meyer and Allen (1991).

Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State.

Research Question

What is the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State?

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: Sense of community has no significant relationship with normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Concept of Sense of Community

The concept of sense of community has been examined from multiple disciplinary perspectives, each offering unique insights into its meaning, dimensions, and implications within organizational settings. Broadly, sense of community refers to the feeling of belongingness, mutual support, and shared identity among members of a group, which fosters cooperation and collective responsibility (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). However, its interpretation varies across psychological, sociological, organizational, and workplace spirituality perspectives.

From a psychological perspective, sense of community is viewed as an individual's perception of belonging and emotional connection to a group. McMillan and Chavis (1986) conceptualized it as comprising four key elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. This perspective emphasizes how individuals internalize group identity and derive emotional security and satisfaction from their relationships within the group. In organizational contexts, employees who experience a strong psychological sense of community are more likely to feel valued and supported, which positively influences their attitudes and behaviors. From a sociological perspective, sense of community is seen as a product of social interactions, shared norms, and collective identity within a group or society. It focuses on how social structures, cultural values, and patterns of interaction shape individuals' sense of belonging (Pretty, Bishop,

Fisher, & Sonn, 2007). In this view, sense of community is not only an individual feeling but also a social construct that emerges from continuous interaction and shared experiences. Within service organizations, this perspective highlights the importance of organizational culture, teamwork, and communication in fostering a cohesive work environment.

From an organizational behavior perspective, sense of community is considered a critical component of workplace relationships and organizational climate. It is often associated with teamwork, collaboration, trust, and mutual respect among employees. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) described it as a dimension of workplace spirituality that reflects employees' experience of connection with others at work. This perspective emphasizes that when employees feel part of a supportive community, they are more likely to exhibit positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior.

From a workplace spirituality perspective, sense of community is viewed as the experience of meaningful connections and shared purpose among organizational members. It goes beyond social interaction to include a deeper sense of unity, compassion, and alignment with organizational values (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003). This perspective suggests that employees seek not only economic rewards but also meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging in their workplace. Organizations that nurture this dimension are more likely to foster engagement, loyalty, and commitment among employees.

Additionally, from a management perspective, sense of community is seen as a strategic tool for enhancing organizational effectiveness. Managers play a crucial role in creating environments that encourage collaboration, open communication, and inclusiveness. By promoting a culture of trust and shared responsibility, organizations can strengthen employees' sense of community, which in turn enhances commitment and performance (Rego & Cunha, 2008).

In summary, sense of community is a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional, social, and organizational elements. While the psychological perspective emphasizes individual feelings of belonging, the sociological perspective focuses on social structures and interactions, and the organizational and workplace spirituality perspectives highlight its role in enhancing employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. Understanding these different perspectives provides a comprehensive foundation for examining how sense of community influences normative commitment in service organizations.

Concept of Normative commitment

Normative commitment is a key dimension of organizational commitment that reflects an employee's sense of moral obligation to remain with an organization. It is grounded in the belief that staying with the organization is the "right" or appropriate thing to do, often influenced by internalized values, social norms, and feelings of loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Unlike affective commitment, which is based on emotional attachment, or continuance commitment, which is driven by perceived costs of leaving, normative commitment is rooted in a sense of duty and ethical responsibility toward the organization. From a theoretical perspective, normative commitment emerges through socialization processes within the organization. Employees develop this form of commitment when organizational values and norms are internalized over time, leading them to feel a personal obligation to remain and contribute to organizational success. Meyer and Allen (1991) argued that such commitment may also arise from prior investments made by the organization in the employee, such as training, support, or career development opportunities, which create a sense of indebtedness and reciprocity. From a social exchange perspective, normative commitment is influenced by the principle of reciprocity, where employees feel compelled to repay the organization for benefits received (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When organizations treat employees fairly, provide support, and create a positive work environment, employees are more likely to respond with loyalty and a sense of obligation. This reciprocal relationship strengthens normative commitment and encourages employees to remain with the organization even in the face of alternative opportunities. Normative commitment can also be viewed from a cultural perspective, particularly in collectivist societies

where loyalty, duty, and long-term relationships are highly valued. In such contexts, employees may feel a stronger moral obligation to remain with their organization due to societal expectations and cultural norms that emphasize commitment and responsibility. This highlights the role of cultural context in shaping the intensity and expression of normative commitment within organizations. Empirically, normative commitment has been associated with positive organizational outcomes, including reduced turnover intentions, increased loyalty, and enhanced cooperation among employees (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). However, it may not always lead to high performance if employees remain in the organization out of obligation rather than genuine motivation. Critics argue that excessive reliance on normative commitment may result in compliance rather than engagement, as employees may stay with the organization even when they are not fully satisfied or motivated. In the context of service organizations, normative commitment is particularly important because it supports stability, continuity, and long-term relationships with clients and stakeholders. Employees who feel a strong sense of obligation are more likely to uphold organizational values, adhere to ethical standards, and contribute to collective goals. Therefore, organizations can enhance normative commitment by fostering supportive work environments, promoting shared values, and investing in employee development. Normative commitment represents an obligation-based attachment to the organization, shaped by socialization, reciprocity, and cultural influences. It plays a crucial role in sustaining employee loyalty and organizational stability, especially in service-oriented environments where commitment and continuity are essential for effective performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory and the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment, as they provide a comprehensive explanation of how sense of community influences normative commitment among employees in service organizations.

Social Exchange Theory, as propounded by Blau (1964) and further developed by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), explains social behavior in terms of reciprocal exchanges between individuals and organizations. The theory posits that relationships are built on mutual obligations, where individuals respond to favorable treatment with positive attitudes and behaviors. Within organizational settings, when employees perceive a strong sense of community characterized by trust, support, and mutual respect, they are likely to reciprocate such positive experiences with a sense of obligation to remain with the organization. The fundamental assumption of this theory is that employees engage in continuous evaluation of their interactions with the organization, and when these interactions are perceived as beneficial, they develop a moral duty to reciprocate. However, the theory has been critiqued for its tendency to overemphasize rational and transactional aspects of relationships while underestimating emotional and intrinsic motivations that may also influence employee behavior. Despite this limitation, Social Exchange Theory is highly relevant to this study as it explains how supportive workplace relationships and a strong sense of community can foster normative commitment through reciprocal obligations.

Complementing this is the **Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment** developed by Meyer and Allen (1991), which conceptualizes commitment as comprising affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Normative commitment, the focus of this study, reflects an employee's sense of obligation to remain with an organization due to moral or ethical considerations. The model assumes that employees develop normative commitment through socialization processes, organizational investments, and internalization of organizational values. It also suggests that different forms of commitment may coexist but have distinct antecedents and outcomes. A major critique of the model is that the three components may overlap conceptually, making it difficult to clearly distinguish between them in empirical studies (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Nevertheless, the model remains widely accepted due to its comprehensive approach to understanding employee commitment. Its relevance to this study lies in its ability to clearly position

normative commitment as an outcome variable influenced by workplace conditions such as sense of community.

In application, these theories jointly provide a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment. Social Exchange Theory explains the mechanism through which employees reciprocate supportive and inclusive work environments with a sense of obligation, while the Three-Component Model clarifies how such obligation manifests as normative commitment. In service organizations in Rivers State, where interpersonal relationships and teamwork are essential, fostering a strong sense of community can enhance employees' feelings of duty and loyalty, thereby strengthening normative commitment and promoting organizational stability.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies have provided substantial evidence on the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment, particularly within organizational and service-oriented contexts. For instance, Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) conducted a study titled "Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment" within the service and corporate sectors in the United States. The study adopted a quantitative survey design, collecting data from employees across multiple organizations using standardized questionnaires. The findings revealed that sense of community significantly influenced employees' organizational commitment, including normative commitment, as employees who felt a strong sense of belonging and connection developed a greater sense of obligation to remain with their organization. The study concluded that fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment enhances employees' loyalty and sense of duty.

Similarly, Rego and Cunha (2008), in their study "Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment: An empirical study" conducted among employees in the service industry in Portugal, employed a cross-sectional survey design and analyzed data using regression techniques. The findings indicated that sense of community had a significant positive effect on normative commitment, suggesting that employees who experience strong interpersonal relationships and shared values are more likely to feel morally obligated to stay with their organization. The study concluded that workplace relationships play a crucial role in shaping obligation-based commitment and recommended that organizations promote teamwork and trust to strengthen employee commitment.

In another study, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) carried out a meta-analysis across multiple industries, examining the antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment. Using a large dataset from various empirical studies, the researchers found that organizational factors such as supportive work environments and shared values significantly contribute to the development of normative commitment. The study concluded that employees who perceive a sense of belonging and organizational support are more likely to develop a sense of obligation toward the organization. It recommended that organizations focus on strengthening internal relationships and value alignment to enhance commitment.

Fry (2010) also contributed empirically through a study on "Spiritual leadership" conducted across service and manufacturing sectors. The study utilized a mixed-method approach, combining survey data with qualitative insights to examine the impact of leadership on workplace spirituality dimensions, including sense of community. The findings showed that leadership practices that foster a sense of community significantly enhance employees' commitment, particularly normative commitment, by promoting shared values and a sense of purpose. The study concluded that leadership is instrumental in creating environments that encourage obligation-based commitment and recommended the adoption of value-driven leadership approaches.

Furthermore, Gellatly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006) investigated the combined effects of commitment components on employee behavior across public and private sector organizations using a quantitative survey design. The findings revealed that normative commitment, influenced by workplace relationships and organizational support, contributes to desirable workplace behaviors

such as cooperation and organizational citizenship. The study concluded that fostering a strong sense of community can enhance normative commitment and improve organizational outcomes. It recommended that organizations integrate employee engagement strategies with relationship-building initiatives.

Additionally, a study by Solinger, Van Olffen, and Roe (2008), titled "Beyond the three-component model of organizational commitment", examined employees in various European organizations using a quantitative research approach. The findings suggested that normative commitment is significantly shaped by social and relational factors within the workplace, including a sense of community and shared identity. The study concluded that traditional models of commitment should incorporate social dynamics to better explain employees' sense of obligation. It recommended that organizations focus on building strong interpersonal connections to sustain commitment.

Overall, these empirical studies consistently demonstrate that sense of community is a significant predictor of normative commitment across different industries and contexts. Employees who experience strong interpersonal relationships, shared values, and a supportive work environment are more likely to develop a sense of moral obligation to remain with their organization. However, despite these findings, there remains a need for context-specific studies within service organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria, to further validate these relationships and provide localized insights for managerial practice.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design, which is appropriate for examining the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The survey design enables the collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents, allowing for the analysis of perceptions, attitudes, and relationships among variables (Creswell, 2014). The population of the study comprised 519 employees drawn from selected service organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. These organizations included commercial banks, the Rivers State Police Command, and Rivers State University. The population was considered suitable because employees in these sectors are directly involved in service delivery and are expected to exhibit varying levels of interpersonal relationships and organizational commitment. The source of the population was obtained from official staff records from the Human Resource Departments of the respective organizations (Rivers State University Human Resource Department, Rivers State Police Command Personnel Office, and HR units of selected banks in Port Harcourt, 2018).

The sample size for the study was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, which yielded a sample size of 226 respondents. To ensure adequate representation, the study employed a stratified random sampling technique, where the population was divided into strata based on the different organizations (banks, police command, and university). Proportional allocation was used to select respondents from each stratum, after which simple random sampling was applied to select individual participants. This approach minimized sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of the findings. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses on sense of community and normative commitment. The questionnaire was divided into sections, including demographic information and items measuring the study variables. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity through expert review, and a pilot test was conducted to ensure reliability and clarity of the items.

The method of data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of sense of community and normative commitment. Inferential statistics, specifically the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), were employed to test the hypothesized relationship between the variables. Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, which facilitated accurate computation and interpretation of results.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 226 questionnaires distributed, 200 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of approximately 88.5%, which was considered adequate for analysis. The returned questionnaires formed the basis for the data presentation and analysis. The use of a structured survey design, appropriate sampling technique, and robust statistical tools ensured the reliability and validity of the findings of this study.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Sense of community

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	200	1	5	620	3.10	1.550	.077	-1.476	.172	.342
Employees in my organization support and help one another when needed.	200	1	5	650	3.25	1.613	-.195	-1.655	.172	.342
I have good relationships with my colleagues at work.	200	1	5	650	3.25	1.613	-.195	-1.655	.172	.342
I feel connected to the people I work with in this organization.	200	1	5	630	3.15	1.529	-.170	-1.570	.172	.342
My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees.	200	1	5	720	3.60	1.689	-.616	-1.321	.172	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

Source: Survey Data (2018) via SPSS output version 25

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 provide insight into employees’ perceptions of sense of community within service organizations in Rivers State. From the table, the mean scores for all five items range from 3.10 to 3.60, indicating a moderate level of agreement among employees that a sense of community exists in their organizations. Specifically, the highest mean score (3.60) was observed for the item “My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees,” suggesting that employees perceive collaborative efforts as the strongest indicator of community in their workplace. Conversely, the lowest mean score (3.10) was for “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization,” which indicates that while employees engage in teamwork, some may not fully feel personally connected or emotionally integrated into the organization.

The standard deviations range from 1.529 to 1.689, reflecting some variability in employee responses, but overall the responses are fairly consistent. Skewness values vary between -0.616 and 0.077, indicating slight deviations from normality. Most items are negatively skewed, implying that more employees tended to agree with the statements, while a slight positive skew in “I feel a strong sense of belonging” suggests a small proportion of employees disagreed with that statement. Kurtosis values range from -1.655 to -1.321, showing a relatively flat distribution, indicating that responses are spread across the scale rather than clustering around the mean. In summary, the findings suggest that employees in service organizations in Rivers State perceive a moderate sense of community, with teamwork and cooperation being the most prominent aspect. However, there is room for improvement in fostering stronger individual belonging and connectedness among employees.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on normative commitment

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
							Std. Error		Std. Error	
I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my organization.	200	1	5	628	3.14	1.547	.043	.172	-1.484	.342
I believe it is morally right to continue working for this organization.	200	1	5	658	3.29	1.606	-.232	.172	-1.637	.342
I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.	200	1	5	658	3.29	1.606	-.232	.172	-1.637	.342
I feel a strong sense of duty to contribute to my organization's success.	200	1	5	638	3.19	1.525	-.205	.172	-1.553	.342
I remain with my organization because I feel it deserves my loyalty.	200	1	5	728	3.64	1.675	-.661	.172	-1.254	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

Source: Survey Data (2018) via SPSS output version 25

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on employees' normative commitment in service organizations in Rivers State, reflecting their sense of obligation, loyalty, and moral responsibility toward their organizations. The mean scores for the five items range from 3.14 to 3.64, indicating a moderate to relatively high level of agreement among employees regarding their sense of duty and loyalty to their organization. The highest mean (3.64) was recorded for “I remain with my organization because I feel it deserves my loyalty,” suggesting that employees perceive loyalty as the strongest dimension of normative commitment. In contrast, the lowest mean (3.14) was for “I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my organization,” which indicates that some employees may feel less compelled by formal or moral obligations to stay, despite generally positive perceptions of loyalty.

The standard deviations range from 1.525 to 1.675, showing moderate variability in responses, suggesting that while most employees hold positive views about normative commitment, some differences in perception exist across respondents. Skewness values range from -0.661 to 0.043, showing that most items are slightly negatively skewed. This implies that a larger proportion of employees agreed with statements reflecting loyalty and moral obligation, particularly the item on loyalty. The slight positive skew for "I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my organization" indicates a small group of employees who may not feel strongly bound by obligation. Kurtosis values range from -1.637 to -1.254, reflecting relatively flat distributions across the scale. This suggests that employee responses were fairly dispersed rather than tightly clustered around the mean, indicating variability in perceptions of normative commitment. In summary, the data indicate that employees in Rivers State service organizations exhibit a moderate to high level of normative commitment, with loyalty and a sense of moral responsibility being prominent. However, fostering a stronger sense of obligation and duty could enhance overall commitment levels, particularly among employees who do not yet feel fully obligated to remain with the organization.

Ho₁: Sense of community has no significant relationship with normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State.

Table 3: Correlation on Sense of community and normative commitment

		Sense of community	normative commitment
Sense of community	Pearson Correlation	1	.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	.661**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis examining the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.661$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between sense of community and normative commitment. This means that employees who perceive a strong sense of belonging, connection, and supportive relationships within their organization are more likely to feel morally obligated, loyal, and duty-bound to remain with the organization. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) confirms that this relationship is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance, providing empirical evidence to reject the null hypothesis (Ho₁), which posited that sense of community has no significant relationship with normative commitment.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship ($r = 0.661$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that employees who perceive a high level of belonging, connectedness, and supportive interpersonal relationships in their workplace are more likely to feel morally obligated and loyal to remain with their organization. This outcome is consistent

with the study by Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003), who found that a sense of community positively influenced employees' work attitudes, including commitment, in various U.S. organizations. Their findings emphasized that employees who feel integrated into a workplace community are emotionally attached and exhibit stronger loyalty to organizational goals. Similarly, Rego and Cunha (2008) observed in Portuguese organizations that a sense of community significantly predicted normative commitment, suggesting that interpersonal relationships and shared values are critical in shaping employees' sense of obligation and loyalty.

Furthermore, the result aligns with Fry's (2010) spiritual leadership model, which highlights that organizations promoting connectedness, relational support, and a sense of community can strengthen employees' normative and affective commitment. In this context, employees not only feel connected but also experience a moral responsibility to contribute to organizational success, reinforcing the idea that normative commitment is influenced by social and relational factors in the workplace. The findings also reflect the theoretical underpinnings of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which posits that when employees perceive positive social interactions and support within the organization, they reciprocate through loyalty and commitment. In this study, employees' sense of community can be seen as a form of social capital that encourages them to remain with the organization due to feelings of obligation and reciprocal responsibility. In summary, the study confirms that sense of community is a vital determinant of normative commitment in service organizations. Employees who experience supportive, collaborative, and cohesive work environments are more likely to develop a strong sense of duty, loyalty, and moral obligation toward their organizations. The findings underscore the importance of nurturing interpersonal relationships and fostering inclusive cultures as strategies to enhance employee retention and organizational stability.

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between sense of community and normative commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship, indicating that employees who experience a sense of belonging, connectedness, and supportive relationships within their organizations are more likely to feel morally obligated and loyal to remain with their organizations. This underscores the critical role of workplace social cohesion and community in fostering normative commitment. Employees who perceive a supportive and inclusive environment not only develop stronger loyalty but also exhibit a sense of moral duty toward the organization. In essence, the study confirms that fostering a sense of community is a vital strategy for enhancing employees' commitment and ensuring organizational stability in the service sector.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made for service organizations in Rivers State:

1. Organizations should implement policies and programs that encourage teamwork, mutual support, and cooperation among employees, as these behaviors strengthen the sense of community and normative commitment. Regular recognition of employee achievements and the provision of social support mechanisms (e.g., mentoring, peer support groups) can reinforce employees' commitment to the organization.

By implementing these measures, service organizations can strengthen employees' normative commitment, reduce turnover, and build a more cohesive and productive workforce.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire form

Section A: Sense of Community

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	MA	D	SD
1	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	MA	D	SD
2	Employees in my organization support and help one another when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I have good relationships with my colleagues at work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I feel connected to the people I work with in this organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section B: Normative Commitment

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	MA	D	SD
1	I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I believe it is morally right to continue working for this organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I feel a strong sense of duty to contribute to my organization's success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I remain with my organization because I feel it deserves my loyalty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Instruction to Respondents

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your level of agreement with each statement. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Appendix B
SPSS output

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=VAR00001 VAR00002 VAR00009 VAR00010 VAR00011
/STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX KURTOSIS SKEWNESS.

Notes		
Output Created		19-MAR-2018 07:06:06
Comments		
Input	Active Dataset	DataSet0
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	200
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	All non-missing data are used.

Syntax		DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=VAR00001 VAR00002 VAR00009 VAR00010 VAR00011 /STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX KURTOSIS SKEWNESS.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

Correlations

		Sense of community	normative commitment
Sense of community	Pearson Correlation	1	.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	.661**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

Descriptive Statistics

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Sum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	200	1	5	620	3.10	1.550	.077	.172	-1.476	.342
Employees in my organization support and help one another when needed.	200	1	5	650	3.25	1.613	-.195	.172	-1.655	.342
I have good relationships with my colleagues at work.	200	1	5	650	3.25	1.613	-.195	.172	-1.655	.342

I feel connected to the people I work with in this organization.	200	1	5	630	3.15	1.529	-.170	.172	-1.570	.342
My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees.	200	1	5	720	3.60	1.689	-.616	.172	-1.321	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

Descriptive Statistics

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Sum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my organization.	200	1	5	628	3.14	1.547	.043	.172	-1.484	.342
I believe it is morally right to continue working for this organization.	200	1	5	658	3.29	1.606	-.232	.172	-1.637	.342
I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.	200	1	5	658	3.29	1.606	-.232	.172	-1.637	.342
I feel a strong sense of duty to contribute to my organization's success.	200	1	5	638	3.19	1.525	-.205	.172	-1.553	.342
I remain with my organization because I feel it deserves my loyalty.	200	1	5	728	3.64	1.675	-.661	.172	-1.254	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									