

SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES OF SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The study adopted a survey research design, with a population of 519 employees drawn from banks, the Rivers State Police Command, and Rivers State University. A sample size of 226 employees was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, and respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to assess respondents' perceptions of sense of community and affective commitment, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesized relationship using SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that employees generally perceive a moderate to high sense of community in their workplaces, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships, support, and inclusion. Similarly, affective commitment among employees was moderate to high, reflecting emotional attachment, loyalty, and pride in their organizations. The correlation analysis showed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between sense of community and affective commitment ($r = 0.870$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who experience a strong sense of belonging and support are more likely to develop emotional attachment to their organizations. The study concluded that sense of community is a critical predictor of affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. It recommended that organizations should foster supportive, inclusive, and collaborative work environments, promote employee participation in decision-making, and adopt leadership practices that emphasize relational connectedness to enhance employees' emotional attachment and organizational loyalty.

Keywords: sense of community, affective commitment

Introduction

Background to the Study

The contemporary workplace has increasingly shifted from a purely transactional environment to one that emphasizes social connectedness, shared values, and psychological attachment. Within this evolving context, the concept of sense of community has emerged as a critical dimension of workplace spirituality and organizational behavior. Sense of community refers to employees' feelings of belongingness, mutual support, and emotional connection within a work group or organization. In service org

anizations where employee interaction, collaboration, and customer engagement are central to performance this construct becomes particularly salient. Scholars argue that when employees perceive a strong sense of community, they are more likely to develop positive work attitudes, including heightened levels of commitment to their organization (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Affective commitment, defined as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement an employee has with their organization, represents one of the most desirable forms of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with strong affective commitment remain with an organization because they *want* to, rather than because they *need* to or *ought* to. Prior empirical studies have demonstrated that affective commitment is associated with beneficial outcomes such

as increased job performance, reduced turnover intentions, and enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Consequently, understanding the antecedents of affective commitment has become a focal point for both researchers and practitioners.

Existing literature suggests that social and relational factors within the workplace play a significant role in shaping employees' emotional attachment to their organizations. A strong sense of community fosters trust, cooperation, and shared identity among employees, which in turn enhances their emotional bonds with the organization (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Rego & Cunha, 2008). In service organizations, where teamwork and interpersonal interactions are integral to service delivery, the presence or absence of a communal work environment can significantly influence employees' attitudes and behaviors. Employees who feel isolated or disconnected are less likely to exhibit strong affective commitment, whereas those who experience inclusion and camaraderie tend to develop deeper organizational attachment (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

Despite the growing body of research on workplace spirituality and organizational commitment, there remains a contextual gap in understanding how these constructs operate within developing economies, particularly in Nigeria. Service organizations in Rivers State operate within a dynamic socio-economic environment characterized by infrastructural challenges, workforce diversity, and increasing competitive pressures. These conditions may affect interpersonal relationships and the overall sense of belonging among employees. Furthermore, organizational practices in many Nigerian service firms often prioritize performance outcomes over relational and psychological factors, potentially undermining the development of a strong sense of community.

Empirical studies conducted in Western contexts have largely established a positive relationship between sense of community and affective commitment (Milliman et al., 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008). However, the applicability of these findings to the Nigerian context remains uncertain due to cultural, structural, and institutional differences. For instance, collectivist tendencies in Nigerian society may amplify the importance of communal relationships at work, yet organizational realities may not fully support such social integration. This creates a disconnect that warrants empirical investigation.

Moreover, there is a paucity of localized studies specifically examining the interplay between sense of community and affective commitment within service organizations in Rivers State. Most existing Nigerian studies on organizational commitment have focused on factors such as leadership, compensation, and job satisfaction, with limited attention given to workplace spirituality dimensions. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of how relational workplace factors contribute to employee commitment in the service sector.

Given these gaps, there is a compelling need to investigate how sense of community influences affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. Establishing this relationship will not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge but also provide practical insights for managers seeking to enhance employee retention and performance through improved workplace relationships. The present study, therefore, departs from prior research by focusing specifically on the communal aspect of workplace experience within a Nigerian service sector context, thereby addressing both theoretical and empirical deficiencies in the literature.

Statement of the problem

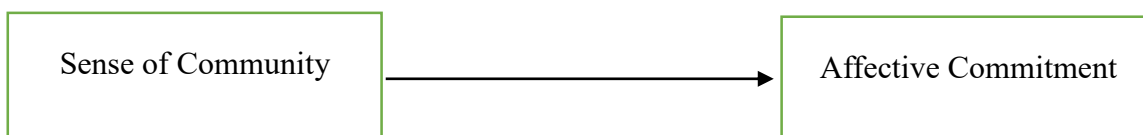
Despite the growing recognition of the importance of employee commitment in enhancing organizational effectiveness, many service organizations continue to experience challenges related to low employee morale, weak emotional attachment, and high turnover intentions. Affective commitment, which reflects the emotional bond employees have with their organization, remains a critical determinant of employee retention, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). However, evidence suggests that employees in many service-oriented organizations, particularly in developing regions,

often exhibit diminished levels of such commitment, thereby undermining organizational stability and service quality. One of the key factors that has been theoretically and empirically linked to affective commitment is the sense of community within the workplace. Sense of community, characterized by feelings of belongingness, mutual trust, and interpersonal connectedness, is believed to foster positive work attitudes and strengthen employees' emotional ties to their organization (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). In service organizations, where teamwork, collaboration, and interpersonal interactions are essential for effective service delivery, the absence of a strong sense of community can result in employee disengagement, reduced cooperation, and poor service outcomes.

In the context of Rivers State, service organizations operate in a complex and often demanding environment marked by economic pressures, infrastructural limitations, and increasing competition. These conditions may exacerbate workplace stress and weaken interpersonal relationships among employees. Observations and anecdotal evidence suggest that many employees in these organizations experience feelings of isolation, lack of support, and limited social cohesion within their work environment. Such conditions are likely to hinder the development of a strong sense of community, which in turn may negatively affect their level of affective commitment. Although prior studies have established a positive relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions, including sense of community, and organizational commitment in other contexts (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008), there is a noticeable lack of empirical research focusing specifically on this relationship within service organizations in Rivers State. Existing studies in Nigeria have largely emphasized factors such as leadership style, compensation, and job satisfaction, with insufficient attention given to relational and psychological constructs like sense of community. This creates a significant gap in the literature, as the social dynamics of the workplace may play an equally important role in shaping employee commitment.

Furthermore, the extent to which sense of community influences affective commitment in the unique socio-cultural and organizational context of Rivers State remains unclear. Without empirical evidence, managers and policymakers may lack the necessary insights to design interventions that foster a supportive and cohesive work environment capable of enhancing employee commitment. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The point of departure for this study lies in addressing the identified gap in localized empirical research and providing a deeper understanding of how workplace relational dynamics influence employees' emotional attachment to their organizations.

Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher Conceptualized (2017)

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

Objective of the Study

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

Research Question

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

Research Hypothesis

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

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Sense of community

The concept of sense of community has gained considerable attention in organizational and social psychology due to its relevance in fostering interpersonal relationships, cohesion, and shared identity within groups. Sense of community generally refers to the feeling of belongingness, emotional connection, and mutual commitment that individuals experience within a group or social system. It encompasses the perception that members matter to one another and to the group, and that their needs will be met through their association with the collective (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Although originally rooted in community psychology, the construct has been widely adapted to organizational contexts to explain how workplace relationships influence employee attitudes and behaviors. In contemporary organizational literature, sense of community is often conceptualized as a dimension of workplace spirituality, reflecting the quality of interpersonal relationships and the degree of connectedness among employees (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018). It emphasizes shared values, trust, cooperation, and a supportive work environment where individuals feel respected and included. When employees perceive a strong sense of community, they are more likely to engage in collaborative behaviors and develop positive emotional attachments to their organization. This is particularly important in service organizations, where teamwork and human interaction are central to effective performance.

Scholars have further argued that sense of community is not merely about social interaction but also about the depth and quality of those interactions. It involves elements such as membership, influence, integration, and emotional connection, which collectively shape how individuals relate to one another within a group (Pretty, Bishop, Fisher, & Sonn, 2007). In organizational settings, these elements translate into employees feeling valued, having a voice in decision-making, and experiencing a sense of shared purpose. Such conditions foster psychological safety and enhance employees' willingness to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals. Empirical studies have demonstrated that sense of community is associated with a range of positive organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Rego & Cunha, 2010; Milliman et al., 2018). When employees feel connected to their colleagues and perceive a supportive work environment, they are more likely to exhibit loyalty and dedication to the organization. Conversely, a weak sense of community can lead to feelings of isolation, disengagement, and decreased motivation, which may negatively impact organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, sense of community is influenced by organizational culture, leadership style, and management practices. Leaders who promote inclusiveness, open communication, and teamwork are more likely to cultivate a strong sense of community among employees (Fry, 2010). Organizational practices such as team-building activities, participatory decision-making, and recognition of employee contributions also play a significant role in strengthening communal bonds within the workplace. In contrast, rigid hierarchies and lack of support may hinder the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships. In sum, sense of community represents a critical relational construct that underpins employee interaction and organizational cohesion. Its relevance in modern organizations, particularly within the service sector, lies in its ability to foster a supportive and collaborative work environment that enhances employee well-being and organizational performance. Understanding this concept is therefore essential for organizations seeking to improve both individual and collective outcomes.

Affective commitment

Affective commitment is a central construct in organizational behavior that describes the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement an employee has with their organization. It represents the extent to which employees remain with an organization because they *want* to, rather than because they feel obligated or perceive high costs of leaving (Meyer & Allen, 1991). As one of the three components of organizational commitment—alongside continuance and normative commitment affective commitment is widely regarded as the most desirable form due to its strong association with positive work outcomes.

In essence, affective commitment reflects an employee's psychological bond with the organization, characterized by shared values, a sense of belonging, and pride in being part of the organization. Employees with high affective commitment tend to internalize organizational goals and align their personal objectives with those of the organization. This alignment fosters intrinsic motivation, leading employees to go beyond formal job requirements in contributing to organizational success (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Such employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, enthusiasm, and a willingness to exert extra effort in their roles.

Scholarly literature emphasizes that affective commitment develops through positive work experiences, including supportive leadership, fair treatment, recognition, and meaningful work (Rego & Cunha, 2010; Meyer et al., 2002). When employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they are more likely to develop strong emotional ties. Additionally, interpersonal relationships and a supportive work environment play a critical role in strengthening affective commitment, as employees are naturally inclined to remain in environments where they feel respected and connected.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that affective commitment is linked to a variety of beneficial organizational outcomes. These include higher job performance, increased organizational citizenship behavior, lower absenteeism, and reduced turnover intentions (Meyer et al., 2002; Gellatly, Meyer, & Luchak, 2006). Unlike continuance commitment, which is based on the perceived costs of leaving, or normative commitment, which is based on a sense of obligation, affective commitment is driven by genuine emotional attachment. As a result, it tends to produce more sustainable and voluntary forms of employee engagement.

Furthermore, affective commitment is particularly important in service organizations, where employee attitudes directly influence service quality and customer satisfaction. Employees who are emotionally committed are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors toward customers, maintain professionalism, and contribute to a favorable organizational image. Conversely, low levels of affective commitment may lead to disengagement, poor service delivery, and increased employee turnover, which can negatively impact organizational performance.

Despite its importance, the development of affective commitment may be influenced by contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and socio-economic conditions. In environments where employees experience job insecurity, limited support, or poor interpersonal relationships, affective commitment may be weakened. This underscores the need for organizations to create supportive and inclusive work environments that foster emotional attachment and a sense of belonging among employees. In conclusion, affective commitment is a vital component of organizational commitment that reflects employees' emotional connection to their organization. Its significance lies in its ability to drive positive work behaviors and enhance organizational effectiveness. Understanding the factors that influence affective commitment is therefore essential for organizations seeking to improve employee retention, performance, and overall success.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical review provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment. This study is anchored on two relevant theories: Social Exchange Theory and the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment. These

theories offer complementary explanations for how workplace relationships and emotional attachment develop within organizational settings.

Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally advanced by Blau (1964) and further developed in organizational studies, explains social behavior in terms of reciprocal exchanges between individuals and their environment. The theory posits that relationships are formed and sustained based on the expectation of mutual benefits, where individuals seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs. In organizational contexts, SET suggests that when employees perceive favorable treatment such as support, trust, and inclusion they feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, including commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The underlying assumption of the theory is that workplace interactions are governed by norms of reciprocity, and that employees respond to organizational support with increased loyalty and emotional attachment.

A key strength of Social Exchange Theory lies in its ability to explain the relational dynamics that underpin workplace attitudes such as affective commitment. However, the theory has been critiqued for its economic and transactional orientation, which may oversimplify complex human relationships by framing them primarily in terms of cost-benefit analysis (Emerson, 1976). Critics also argue that not all employee behaviors are driven by calculated exchanges, as intrinsic motivation and moral values may also play significant roles. Despite these limitations, SET remains highly relevant to this study, as sense of community can be viewed as a form of social resource that fosters positive exchanges among employees. When employees experience a strong sense of belonging and mutual support, they are more likely to reciprocate with heightened affective commitment.

The Three-Component Model (TCM) of Organizational Commitment, developed by Meyer and Allen (1991), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the different dimensions of employee commitment. The model identifies three distinct components: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation). Affective commitment, which is the focus of this study, is considered the most desirable form because it reflects genuine emotional attachment to the organization. The theory assumes that employees develop commitment through workplace experiences that fulfill their psychological needs, such as recognition, support, and meaningful relationships (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

The Three-Component Model has been widely applied and empirically validated across various organizational contexts, making it a dominant framework in commitment research. Nevertheless, it has faced criticism for potential conceptual overlap among its components, particularly between affective and normative commitment (Solinger, Van Olffen, & Roe, 2008). Some scholars also argue that the model does not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of employee commitment over time. Despite these critiques, the model remains highly relevant to this study, as it clearly delineates affective commitment as a distinct construct influenced by workplace experiences. In this regard, sense of community can be conceptualized as a critical antecedent that enhances employees' emotional attachment to their organization.

In summary, Social Exchange Theory and the Three-Component Model provide a robust theoretical basis for examining the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment. While SET explains the reciprocal processes through which social relationships influence employee attitudes, the Three-Component Model offers a structured understanding of commitment, particularly its affective dimension. Together, these theories support the argument that a strong sense of community within the workplace can foster positive social exchanges and ultimately strengthen employees' emotional attachment to their organization.

Empirical Review

Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) conducted a study titled "Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment." The study adopted a quantitative research design using survey methodology, with data collected from employees across different organizations in the United States. Standardized questionnaires were used to measure workplace spirituality dimensions, including sense of community, and work attitudes such as organizational commitment. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between sense of community and affective commitment. Employees who experienced a strong sense of belonging and connection at work were more emotionally attached to their organizations. The study concluded that workplace spirituality, particularly sense of community, is a critical predictor of positive employee attitudes. It recommended that organizations should foster supportive and inclusive environments to enhance employee commitment.

Rego and Cunha (2008), in their study titled "Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment: An empirical study," employed a cross-sectional survey design involving employees from Portuguese organizations. Data were analyzed using regression techniques to examine the relationship between spirituality dimensions and commitment components. The findings indicated that sense of community significantly predicted affective commitment, suggesting that interpersonal relationships and shared values play a vital role in shaping employees' emotional attachment. The authors concluded that organizations that promote a sense of community are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee commitment. They recommended that managers should encourage teamwork, trust, and open communication to strengthen workplace relationships.

A study by Gellatly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006), titled "Combined effects of the three commitment components on focal and discretionary behaviors," utilized a quantitative approach with survey data collected from employees in various sectors. The study applied statistical modeling to examine how affective, continuance, and normative commitment influence employee behavior. The findings showed that affective commitment had the strongest positive relationship with desirable workplace behaviors, including organizational citizenship behavior. The study concluded that fostering affective commitment should be a priority for organizations seeking improved performance outcomes. It recommended that organizations invest in practices that enhance employees' emotional attachment, such as supportive leadership and positive work environments.

Additionally, a study by Fry (2010), titled "Spiritual leadership," adopted a mixed-method approach, combining theoretical modeling with empirical data collected from organizational settings. The study explored how spiritual leadership fosters workplace spirituality, including sense of community, and its impact on organizational outcomes. The findings indicated that leadership practices that promote a sense of calling and community significantly enhance affective commitment among employees. The study concluded that leadership plays a crucial role in creating a work environment that nurtures emotional attachment. It recommended that organizations develop leadership styles that emphasize values, vision, and relational connectedness.

Furthermore, Milliman, Gatling, and Kim (2018), in their study titled "The effect of workplace spirituality on hospitality employee engagement, intention to stay, and service delivery," employed a quantitative survey design with data collected from hospitality employees. Using structural equation modeling, the study examined the relationships between spirituality dimensions and employee outcomes. The findings revealed that sense of community positively influenced employees' intention to stay and engagement, which are closely related to affective commitment. The study concluded that fostering a sense of community enhances employee retention and service quality. It recommended that organizations should create a culture of inclusion and teamwork to strengthen employee relationships and commitment.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a **survey research design**, which is appropriate for collecting data from a large number of respondents to examine the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. Survey research is suitable because it allows for the collection of standardized information from respondents using structured instruments, providing insights into attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors across diverse organizational settings (Creswell, 2014).

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 519 employees working in selected service organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. These organizations included banks, the Rivers State Police Command, and Rivers State University. This population represents employees who are directly involved in service delivery and are expected to exhibit varying levels of workplace commitment and sense of community. The source of this population was the official staff records obtained from the respective organizations (Rivers State University Human Resource Department, Rivers State Police Command Personnel Office, and banks' HR departments in Port Harcourt, 2018).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane's formula (1967) for finite populations was used: Thus, the sample size for the study was 226 employees. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring that employees from each organization (banks, police command, and university) were proportionally represented. Stratification ensures that the sample reflects the structure of the population, reducing sampling bias and increasing generalizability. Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected to provide equal opportunity for participation.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, designed to capture information on employees' perceptions of sense of community and affective commitment. The questionnaire included sections on demographic characteristics and items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The instrument was validated through expert review and pilot testing to ensure reliability and clarity.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using 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 affective commitment. Inferential statistics, specifically the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), were employed to test the hypothesized relationship between sense of community and affective commitment. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, which facilitated accurate computation and interpretation of statistical results.

Data Presentation and Analysis

226 employees were sampled out of which 200 copies of the questionnaire were adequately filled and returned hence form the basis of the analysis.

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	Statistic	Statistic
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	200	1	5	700	3.50	1.504	-.537	.172	-1.048	.342
Employees in my organization support and help one another when needed.	200	1	5	700	3.50	1.504	-.537	.172	-1.048	.342
I have good relationships with my colleagues and feel connected to them.	200	1	5	720	3.60	1.566	-.425	.172	-1.589	.342
I feel included in important decisions that affect my work.	200	1	5	680	3.40	1.629	-.383	.172	-1.567	.342
My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees.	200	1	5	660	3.30	1.739	-.354	.172	-1.680	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

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

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for respondents' perceptions of sense of community among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The data were collected from 200 respondents, and the analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. The results show that the mean scores for all five items range from 3.30 to 3.60, indicating that, on average, employees moderately agree that they experience a sense of community in their organizations. Specifically, the highest mean (3.60) was observed for the item "I have good relationships with my colleagues and feel connected to them," suggesting that interpersonal relationships among employees are the strongest aspect of sense of community. Conversely, the lowest mean (3.30) was observed for "My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees," indicating a slightly lower perception of organizational support for collaborative practices. The standard deviations range from 1.504 to 1.739, reflecting moderate variability in responses.

This implies that while most employees moderately agree with the statements, there is some diversity in how strongly individuals perceive the sense of community within their workplaces. Regarding skewness, all items exhibit negative values ranging from -0.537 to -0.354, suggesting a slight left-skewed distribution. This indicates that more respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with the statements, though not overwhelmingly so. The kurtosis values, ranging from -1.048 to -1.680, indicate a relatively flat distribution compared to a normal curve, showing that responses are somewhat dispersed rather than heavily concentrated around the mean. In summary, the descriptive statistics suggest that employees in service organizations in Rivers State generally perceive a moderate to high sense of community, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships, while organizational initiatives to promote teamwork and inclusion may require further strengthening. Overall, the findings highlight the presence of positive communal interactions among employees, which may serve as an antecedent for stronger affective commitment.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Affective Commitment

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
I feel emotionally attached to my organization and identify with its goals.	200	1	5	716	3.58	1.485	-.627	-.927	.172	.342
I am proud to be part of this organization and enjoy being a member of the team.	200	1	5	716	3.58	1.485	-.627	-.927	.172	.342
I would feel happy if I spent the rest of my career with this organization.	200	1	5	740	3.70	1.543	-.547	-1.469	.172	.342
I feel a strong sense of loyalty towards my organization.	200	1	5	702	3.51	1.607	-.502	-1.452	.172	.342
I genuinely care about the success and reputation of my organization.	200	1	5	681	3.40	1.713	-.472	-1.566	.172	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

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

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for respondents' perceptions of affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The data were collected from 200 respondents, and analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. The results indicate that the mean scores for all five items range from 3.40 to 3.70, suggesting that employees generally moderately agree to agree with statements reflecting affective commitment. The highest mean (3.70) was observed for the item "I would feel happy if I spent the rest of my career with this organization," indicating that employees show a relatively strong willingness to remain with their organizations long-term. The lowest mean (3.40) was recorded for "I genuinely care about the success and reputation of my organization," suggesting slightly lower, though still positive, levels of emotional investment in organizational outcomes. The standard deviations, ranging from 1.485 to 1.713, indicate moderate variability in responses. This shows that while most employees generally feel emotionally attached to their organizations, there is some variation in the intensity of this attachment across respondents.

The skewness values are negative, ranging from -0.627 to -0.472, indicating a slight left-skewed distribution. This suggests that a greater number of respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with the statements about affective commitment. The kurtosis values, ranging from -0.927 to -1.566, indicate a relatively flat distribution compared to the normal curve, meaning responses are moderately spread out rather than heavily concentrated around the mean. In summary, the descriptive statistics show that employees of service organizations in Rivers State exhibit moderate to high affective commitment, particularly in terms of willingness to remain with the organization and a sense of pride in membership. The findings suggest that employees are emotionally connected and generally loyal to their organizations, which is important for enhancing retention, motivation, and overall organizational performance.

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

Table 3: Correlations on Sense of community has a significant relationship with affective commitment

		Sense of community	affective commitment
Sense of community	Pearson Correlation	1	.870**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
affective commitment	N	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	.870**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypothesis that "sense of community has no significant relationship with affective commitment." The results show a strong positive correlation between sense of community and affective commitment ($r = 0.870$, $p < 0.01$). The significance value ($p = 0.000$) is less than the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. This implies that as employees' sense of community increases, their affective commitment to the organization also increases. Given these results, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. In practical terms, the finding suggests that employees who feel a strong sense of belonging, mutual support, and connectedness within their organization are more likely to be emotionally attached, loyal, and committed to the organization's goals. This underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment to enhance employees' affective commitment.

Discussion of Finding

The findings of this study reveal a strong positive relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State, with a Pearson correlation of $r = 0.870$ ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that employees who perceive a high level of belonging, mutual support, and interpersonal connectedness are more likely to develop emotional attachment and loyalty to their organizations. The descriptive analysis also indicated moderate to high mean scores for both sense of community and affective commitment, reflecting that employees generally perceive their work environment as supportive and relationally cohesive.

These results are consistent with prior studies in both international and local organizational contexts. For instance, Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) found that sense of community, as a dimension of workplace spirituality, significantly predicts affective commitment among employees in the United States. Their study demonstrated that employees who experience belonging and social support at work develop stronger emotional attachment to the organization. Similarly, the current study confirms that fostering communal relationships within organizations in Rivers State enhances employees' affective commitment, highlighting the universality of this relationship across different cultural and organizational settings.

Rego and Cunha (2008) also reported that sense of community significantly predicted affective commitment among employees in Portuguese organizations. They emphasized the role of interpersonal relationships and shared values in strengthening employees' emotional bonds with their organization. The findings of this study corroborate this view, indicating that employees in service organizations in Rivers State similarly value interpersonal connectedness and perceive it as a key contributor to their emotional attachment. The study by Gellatly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006) demonstrated that affective commitment has the strongest positive influence on desirable workplace behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior. In alignment with this, the current study suggests that employees who perceive a strong sense of community are likely to be more emotionally invested and motivated, potentially translating into improved workplace behaviors and organizational outcomes.

Fry (2010) highlighted the importance of leadership in cultivating workplace spirituality and sense of community. The study showed that leadership practices promoting relational connectedness and a sense of purpose significantly enhance affective commitment. This resonates with the present findings, suggesting that organizational practices in Rivers State that emphasize teamwork, inclusion, and mutual support may similarly foster emotional attachment among employees. Finally, Milliman, Gatling, and Kim (2018) found that sense of community positively influences employee engagement, intention to stay, and service delivery in the hospitality sector. The findings of this study are consistent with this conclusion, as employees who feel connected and supported are more likely to remain committed to their organization and perform their roles effectively. This underscores the practical implication that managers in Rivers State service organizations should cultivate supportive, inclusive, and relationally cohesive workplaces to enhance affective commitment. In summary, the findings of this study are largely in agreement with previous empirical research, reinforcing the notion that sense of community is a critical antecedent of affective commitment. The study extends these insights to the Nigerian context, particularly within service organizations in Rivers State, and highlights the importance of fostering interpersonal relationships, social support, and teamwork to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to their organizations.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment among employees of service organizations in Rivers State. The findings indicate that employees generally perceive a moderate to high level of sense of community in their workplaces, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships and mutual support. Similarly, employees exhibited moderate to high levels of affective commitment, reflecting emotional attachment, pride, and loyalty toward their organizations. The inferential analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between sense of community and affective commitment ($r = 0.870$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that employees who feel connected, supported, and included within their organizations are more likely to develop emotional attachment and demonstrate loyalty.

Overall, the study confirms that sense of community is a critical determinant of affective commitment in service organizations. These findings align with previous studies (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008; Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018), highlighting that fostering interpersonal relationships, social support, and collaborative work environments can enhance employees' emotional attachment and organizational loyalty. In the context of Rivers State, the study emphasizes the importance of nurturing workplace cohesion and supportive practices to strengthen employees' commitment, which is essential for organizational stability, employee retention, and service quality.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations for service organizations in Rivers State:

1. Organizations should promote a culture of teamwork and cooperation by encouraging social interactions, collaboration, and peer support among employees. Team-building activities and mentorship programs can strengthen the sense of community. Organizations should acknowledge employee achievements and contributions regularly. Recognition reinforces feelings of belonging and can enhance affective commitment.

By implementing this recommendation, service organizations in Rivers State can create a more cohesive and supportive work environment, thereby enhancing employees' affective commitment, reducing turnover, and improving overall organizational performance.

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Appendix I Questionnaire

Section A: Sense of Community

No	Statement	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"/>
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 and feel connected to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I feel included in important decisions that affect my work.	<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: Affective Commitment

No	Statement	SA	A	MA	D	SD
1	I feel emotionally attached to my organization and identify with its goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I am proud to be part of this organization and enjoy being a member of the team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I would feel happy if I spent the rest of my career with this organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I feel a strong sense of loyalty towards my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I genuinely care about the success and reputation of my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix II SPSS Output

Descriptives

		Notes
Output Created		19-MAR-2018 02:36:08
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 VAR00003 VAR00004 VAR00005 /STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX KURTOSIS SKEWNESS.	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.01

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	700	3.50	1.504	-.537	.172	-1.048	.342
Employees in my organization support and help one another when needed.	200	1	5	700	3.50	1.504	-.537	.172	-1.048	.342
I have good relationships with my colleagues and feel connected to them.	200	1	5	720	3.60	1.566	-.425	.172	-1.589	.342
I feel included in important decisions that affect my work.	200	1	5	680	3.40	1.629	-.383	.172	-1.567	.342
My organization promotes teamwork and cooperation among employees.	200	1	5	660	3.30	1.739	-.354	.172	-1.680	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200									

Descriptives

Notes

Output Created	19-MAR-2018 02:39:33	
Comments		
Input	Active Dataset	DataSet0
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	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 VAR00003 VAR00004 VAR00005 /STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX KURTOSIS SKEWNESS.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.02

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 emotionally attached to my organization and identify with its goals.	200	1	5	716	3.58	1.485	-.627	.172	-.927	.342
I am proud to be part of this organization and enjoy being a member of the team.	200	1	5	716	3.58	1.485	-.627	.172	-.927	.342
I would feel happy if I spent the rest of my career with this organization.	200	1	5	740	3.70	1.543	-.547	.172	-1.469	.342
I feel a strong sense of loyalty towards my organization.	200	1	5	702	3.51	1.607	-.502	.172	-1.452	.342
I genuinely care about the success and reputation of my organization.	200	1	5	681	3.40	1.713	-.472	.172	-1.566	.342

Valid N (listwise)	200								
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CORRELATIONS
/VARIABLES=VAR00001 VAR00002
/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG

Correlations

		Notes
Output Created		19-MAR-2018 02:42:47
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	Statistics for each pair of variables are based on all the cases with valid data for that pair.
Syntax		CORRELATIONS /VARIABLES=VAR00001 VAR00002 /PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG /MISSING=PAIRWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.05

Correlations

		Sense of community	affective commitment
Sense of community	Pearson Correlation	1	.870**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
affective commitment	Pearson Correlation	.870**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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