

Staff Development And Employee Commitment Of Food Companies In Rivers State, Nigeria

Igbafe Oluseye Omolade¹ and B. Chima Onuoha²

1. Doctoral Student, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt.
2. Professor of Management, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the influence of staff development on employee commitment in selected food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Grounded in human capital theory, the research explores how strategic human resource development practices affect employees' decision to remain with their organizations and their sense of moral obligation to do so. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 278 employees across multiple food firms and analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation. Findings reveal a significant positive relationship between training and both continuance ($\rho = 0.621, p < 0.05$) and normative commitment ($\rho = 0.584, p < 0.05$), indicating that structured training programs enhance employees' perceived cost of leaving and foster loyalty through value alignment. Similarly, coaching showed strong correlations with continuance ($\rho = 0.648, p < 0.05$) and normative commitment ($\rho = 0.603, p < 0.05$), suggesting that personalized guidance and mentoring deepen employees' emotional and ethical ties to the organization. The study concludes that targeted training and coaching interventions are essential for building a committed workforce in the food sector. It recommends that food companies should invest in specialized and role-specific training programs that enhance employees' technical competencies and certifications.

Keywords: Staff Development, Employee Commitment, Training, Coaching, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment

1.0 Introduction

In today's competitive and dynamic business environment, the success of organizations largely depends on the quality and commitment of their workforce. Staff development, encompassing activities such as training and coaching, has emerged as a critical tool for enhancing employee capabilities, fostering loyalty, and driving organizational performance (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). For food companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria, where market competition, technological changes, and operational challenges are intense, staff development is not merely a human resource function but a strategic imperative (Omeje et al., 2022).

Training, which focuses on equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their roles effectively, plays a crucial role in boosting employee competence and commitment (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013; Khan et al., 2016). Similarly, coaching, a personalized and interactive development approach, supports employees in achieving their professional goals, improving performance, and building stronger organizational bonds (Chou & Cheng, 2021).

Employee commitment is multidimensional, encompassing affective, continuance, and normative aspects (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This study focuses on continuance commitment, which reflects an employee's desire to remain with an organization due to perceived costs of leaving, and normative commitment, which represents a sense of obligation to stay with the organization (Meyer et al., 2012). Previous studies suggest that well-structured training and coaching programs positively influence both forms of commitment by enhancing employees' perceived value and sense of belonging (Shahid & Azhar, 2013; Adekoya et al., 2020).

Despite extensive global research on staff development and employee commitment, limited empirical evidence exists within the Nigerian food industry, particularly in Rivers State. This gap creates a need to explore how staff development initiatives influence commitment levels in this context, thereby informing strategies for employee retention and organizational stability.

Statement of the Problem

Food companies face significant workforce challenges, including high employee turnover, low job satisfaction, and declining productivity. These challenges are exacerbated by a competitive labor market and the need to consistently meet stringent food quality and safety standards. One critical factor contributing to these issues is the inadequate investment in staff development programs such as training and coaching (Akinwale, 2020).

Many organizations in the sector rely on ad hoc or outdated training approaches, which fail to equip employees with relevant skills for modern production, distribution, and compliance requirements. Coaching — which could bridge the gap between training and practical workplace performance — is often overlooked or inconsistently implemented (Omeje et al., 2022). As a result, employees may lack the necessary competencies and motivation to remain committed to their organizations.

Continuance commitment suffers when employees perceive better opportunities elsewhere or when the costs of leaving are outweighed by potential benefits from other employers (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment is weakened when workers do not feel a strong sense of obligation or reciprocity toward their organizations, often due to insufficient developmental support (Meyer et al., 2012; Adekoya et al., 2020). Without targeted staff development initiatives, food companies in Rivers State risk losing experienced staff, increasing recruitment costs, and weakening their competitive advantage.

This study therefore investigates the extent to which training and coaching — as dimensions of staff development — influence continuance and normative commitment among employees of food companies in Rivers State, with the aim of providing evidence-based recommendations for workforce stability and enhanced organizational performance.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives are to examine the relationship between;

1. training and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. training and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. coaching and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.
4. coaching and normative commitment food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study;

1. What is the relationship between training and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between training and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between coaching and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship between coaching and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses served as a tentative answer to the research questions.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between training and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between training and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between coaching and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between coaching and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, which asserts that investments in employee education, training, and development lead to enhanced workforce capabilities, eventually boosting organizational performance (Becker, 1964). In this context, staff development through training and coaching builds human capital that strengthens employee commitment, particularly continuance and normative commitment, by increasing perceived benefits and reinforcing moral obligations to the firm (Noe, 2021; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Conceptual Framework

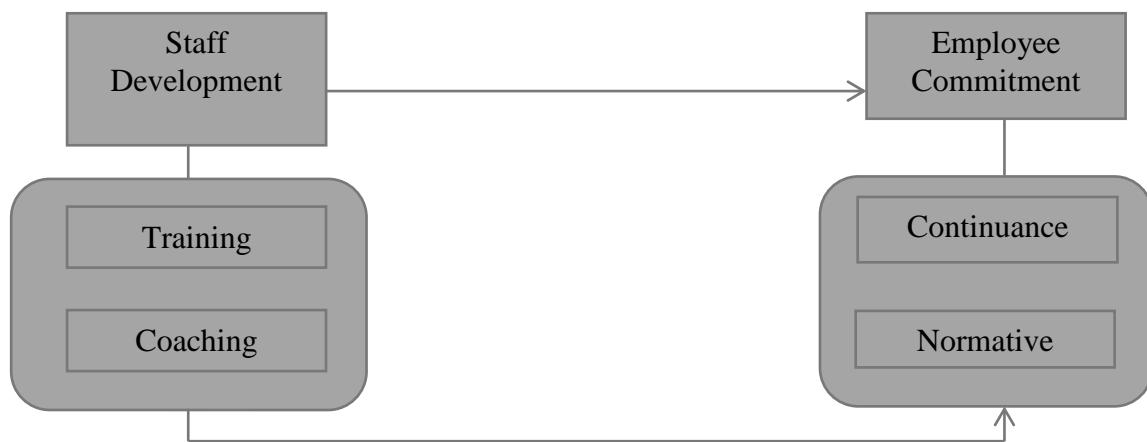


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: The dimensions of Staff Development were adapted from Noe (2017), while the measures of Employee Commitment were adapted from Meyer and Allen. (1991)

Staff Development

Staff development refers to structured efforts by organizations to improve employee competencies, performance, and engagement. It encompasses formal training, coaching, mentoring, and career planning. In food companies, staff development is essential for maintaining quality standards, ensuring compliance, and fostering employee retention (Bolanle & Akinade, 2023). Staff development refers to deliberate organizational efforts—such as structured training, personalized coaching, mentoring, and continuous learning initiatives—designed to enhance employees' capabilities, performance, and engagement (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). It can improve adaptability, innovation, job satisfaction, and retention by aligning employees' skills with organizational objectives (Noe, 2021). Effective staff development enhances employees' sense of value and belonging, which in turn strengthens their commitment to the organization. It also equips employees with the tools needed to adapt to changing industry demands, particularly in highly regulated sectors like food production (Eboigbe, 2024).

Training

Training is a formal process of imparting job-related knowledge and skills. It includes technical instruction, safety protocols, and soft skills development. In food companies, training often involves HACCP compliance, ISO standards, and customer service excellence. Training involves organized programs aimed at equipping employees with knowledge and skills necessary to perform current or future roles effectively (Dessler, 2020). Well-designed training enhances employees' self-efficacy and job competence, leading to improved performance and heightened loyalty (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). For example, in Ghanaian public sector organizations, training and career development were positively and significantly linked to employee engagement—showcasing social exchange theory in action (Aduko & Ahmad, 2011). Training contributes to continuance commitment by increasing employees' perceived investment in their roles. When employees receive specialized training, they recognize the cost of leaving—both in terms of lost skills and career disruption (Gul, 2015). Eboigbe (2024) found that structured training programs in Rivers State food firms significantly reduced turnover intentions and enhanced retention.

Coaching

Coaching is a personalized development approach focused on performance improvement, goal setting, and behavioral change. It fosters trust, improves communication, and strengthens normative commitment by cultivating a sense of moral obligation and loyalty. Coaching is a one-on-one, practitioner-led form of development fostering individual growth, performance improvement, and professional goal attainment (Grant, 2014). It serves to strengthen employee confidence, skill acquisition, and alignment with organizational values, thereby contributing to commitment and retention (Liu & Batt, 2010). Abaslim et al. (2019) demonstrated that transformational coaching styles positively influenced normative commitment among Nigerian employees. Coaching helps employees align personal goals with organizational values, making them more likely to stay out of loyalty and shared purpose.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is the psychological attachment an employee has to their organization. It influences motivation, retention, and performance (Aiyub et al., 2021). Committed employees are more likely to go above and beyond in their roles and contribute to organizational success (Aiyub et al., 2021). Employee commitment reflects an individual's emotional and psychological attachment to their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is a key driver of performance, organizational citizenship, and lower turnover.

Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment arises when employees perceive high costs associated with leaving their organization—such as lost benefits or lack of alternative opportunities (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Continuance commitment reflects the perceived cost of leaving an organization. Employees stay because they feel they have invested too much or fear losing benefits. An individual who needs a job tends to be affectively committed rather than continually committed (Osita-Ejikeme & Worlu, 2017). An employee who works out of need may become a problem in the work group. Training and coaching can increase employees' investment in the organization, thereby reinforcing continuance commitment through perceived "side bets" (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Training increases this perception by enhancing job-specific skills and career prospects (Gul, 2015). In food companies, where compliance and technical expertise are critical, trained employees are less likely to leave due to the specialized nature of their roles.

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is based on moral obligation and loyalty. Employees feel they "ought" to stay due to loyalty, gratitude, or ethical values. Normative commitment stems from a sense of obligation or moral duty to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Social Exchange Theory posits that employees reciprocate organizational investments—such as training and development—with loyalty and normative commitment (Blau, 1964). Coaching and mentorship programs enhance this by creating a supportive environment where employees feel valued and responsible for contributing to organizational success (Abaslim et al., 2019). Employees who receive consistent guidance and recognition often feel indebted to their organizations.

Empirical Review

In Nigerian civil service, Nwokejiwu, Fields, and Nwali (2019) found that structured training correlates with employees' intent to stay due to enhanced skills and job security. Eboigbe (2024) found that structured training programs in food companies in Rivers State improved employee retention by increasing perceived job value and reducing turnover intentions. Employees who received HACCP and ISO-based training were less likely to leave due to the specialized nature of their skills. Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020) found that perceived availability and supervisor support for training positively influenced organizational commitment among nurses in Jordanian hospitals, reducing turnover intention significantly.

Bolanle and Akinade (2023) reported that training programs that emphasize organizational values and ethics contribute to normative commitment. Employees who understand the mission and values of the organization through training are more likely to feel a moral obligation to stay. Similarly, Smeenk et al. (2006) reported that when employees' development needs are met, they feel a heightened duty to remain. Bartlett (2001) showed that access to training and training benefits were strongly related to normative commitment, as employees felt obliged to stay in return.

Afoabi and Akinbo (2025) found that coaching enhances employees' perception of career growth and internal mobility, which increases the perceived cost of leaving. Coaching builds long-term relationships that reinforce continuance commitment. Abaslim et al. (2019) demonstrated that transformational coaching styles positively influenced normative commitment among Nigerian civil servants. The study found that employees who received regular coaching felt a stronger moral obligation to remain with their organizations.

Abaslim et al. (2019) demonstrated that coaching fosters loyalty and ethical alignment, leading to stronger normative commitment. Employees who receive consistent guidance and recognition often feel indebted to their organizations. Herlina et al. (2022) concluded that strategic HR practices, including staff development, directly enhance employee commitment across affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. The study emphasized the role of development programs in building a committed and resilient workforce. While less documented, coaching contributes to continuance commitment by strengthening employee skills and engagement.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a correlational research design, which is appropriate for examining the relationships between variables without manipulating them. The population of the study comprises employees of registered food companies in Rivers State. Using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination, a sample of 300 respondents was selected from a population of approximately 1,200 employees across multiple firms. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across departments (e.g., production, quality control, HR, and logistics). This method enhances the generalizability of findings across the food sector. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed with validated Likert-scale items. Data were analyzed using Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.0, and results were interpreted at a 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Results and Discussion

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed across selected food companies in Rivers State. These firms were chosen based on their registration with the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria and their operational scale. 284 of the distributed questionnaires were retrieved, out of which 278 were usable. This high response rate reflects strong engagement from employees and supports the reliability of the data.

Table 1: Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypotheses	Spearman Correlation (<i>rho</i>)	P Values (<i>p</i>)	Decision
H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between training and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.	0.621	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between training and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.	0.584	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H₀₃ There is no significant relationship between coaching and continuance commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.	0.648	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H₀₄ There is no significant relationship between coaching and normative commitment of food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.	0.603	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
<i>Significance level: $\alpha = 0.05$</i>			

The findings in Table 1 reveal statistically significant relationships between both training and coaching and the commitment dimensions of employees in food companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The relationship between training and continuance commitment ($\rho = 0.621, p = 0.000$) is positive and significant, indicating that employees who receive relevant training are more likely to remain with their organizations due to perceived investment and skill development. This supports the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}), confirming that training contributes meaningfully to employee retention.

The link between training and normative commitment ($\rho = 0.584, p = 0.001$) is also significant. This suggests that training fosters a sense of obligation and loyalty among employees, encouraging them to stay with the organization out of moral responsibility or shared values. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected.

The results also show a strong and significant relationship between coaching and continuance commitment ($\rho = 0.648, p = 0.000$), implying that personalized guidance and support increase employees' willingness to remain with the organization. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{03}).

The relationship between coaching and normative commitment ($\rho = 0.603$, $p = 0.000$) is statistically significant, indicating that coaching enhances employees' emotional and ethical attachment to the organization. This supports the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0).

Discussion of Findings

Training and Continuance Commitment

The Spearman correlation result indicates a strong positive relationship between training and continuance commitment. This suggests that employees who receive structured and relevant training perceive higher costs associated with leaving the organization. This finding aligns with Eboigbe (2024), who reported that training enhances corporate resilience and employee retention in food and beverage firms. Employees who undergo rigorous training are less likely to leave because they recognize the investment made in their development and the limited transferability of their specialized skills.

Training and Normative Commitment

The correlation result shows a moderately strong and statistically significant relationship between training and normative commitment. This implies that training not only equips employees with skills but also instills a sense of moral obligation and loyalty toward the organization. In food companies, training often includes modules on organizational values, customer service ethics, and teamwork, which contribute to employees' internalization of company culture. This finding is supported by Bolanle and Akinade (2023), who found that training programs aligned with organizational values foster normative commitment. Employees feel a duty to reciprocate the organization's investment in their development.

Coaching and Continuance Commitment

The strongest correlation in the study was observed between coaching and continuance commitment. This indicates that coaching significantly influences employees' decision to remain with the organization due to perceived career growth and relational investment. Coaching provides personalized guidance, performance feedback, and career planning—elements that deepen employees' attachment to their roles. Afoabi and Akinbo (2025) found that coaching enhances employees' perception of internal mobility and long-term career prospects, which increases the perceived cost of leaving.

Coaching and Normative Commitment

The correlation result confirms a strong positive relationship between coaching and normative commitment. Coaching fosters emotional bonds, ethical alignment, and a sense of duty toward the organization. In food companies, coaching often includes value-based mentoring, conflict resolution, and team-building exercises, which enhance employees' moral connection to the firm. This finding is consistent with Abaslim et al. (2019), who demonstrated that transformational coaching styles significantly influence normative commitment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of training and coaching on employees' continuance and normative commitment in selected food companies in Rivers State. The findings revealed that both training and coaching significantly and positively impact employees' commitment levels. Specifically training enhances employees' continuance commitment by increasing the perceived cost of leaving due to specialized skills and certifications. It also fosters normative commitment by instilling organizational values and a sense of moral obligation. Coaching strengthens continuance commitment by offering personalized career development and relational support. It also boosts normative commitment by cultivating ethical alignment and emotional bonds with the organization. These results affirm the importance of strategic human resource development practices in retaining talent and building a committed workforce. The alignment with empirical literature underscores the relevance of these interventions in the Nigerian food sector, where employee turnover and skill gaps remain pressing challenges. Therefore, it is recommended that food companies should:

1. Invest in specialized and role-specific training programs that enhance employees' technical competencies and certifications. This increases the perceived value of staying and the cost of leaving.
2. Design training programs that embed organizational values and ethics, fostering a sense of loyalty and moral obligation among employees.

3. Implement structured coaching and mentoring systems that support career development and deepen employees' attachment to their roles.
4. Leverage coaching as a tool for value transmission and emotional engagement, reinforcing employees' ethical alignment with the organization.

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