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## Capacity building and employee commitment in the Nigeria civil service: A focus on South-East zone

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### Abstract

There is no doubt that the Civil Service is as much concerned as business organizations with maintaining a sustainable and current skills inventory through capacity building that engenders employee commitment which translates to effective service delivery. This is readily evident from the regular capacity building initiatives and government reforms such as professionalization, rightsizing and restructuring geared towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. But even with the measures, stakeholder dissatisfaction with the commitment of civil servants continue to resonate. Based on a survey design involving 261 senior civil servants selected from eight ministries in five states of the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria, this study investigated the influence of capacity building on employee commitment. The study utilized structured questionnaire in data collection and simple linear regression in testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study show that: there is positive and significant relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants; and there is a positive but weak relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants. The study therefore concludes that capacity building influences employee commitment. Even more significantly is the fact that the different strategies for capacity building vary in terms of their relationships with dimensions of employee commitment. It is therefore necessary for the government through the civil service commission to focus on incremental, rather than structural system-wide, reforms that target employee competencies and engagement. This will not only improve employee involvement in the capacity building exercise but will also guarantee a better focus on the behavioural outcomes. This is particularly important for such capacity building methods as informal mentoring that is long-lasting but with less dramatic effect. The government should therefore consider formalizing mentoring in the civil service.

**Keywords:** Capacity building, normative commitment, training, mentoring, affective commitment, skills inventory

### 1. Introduction

Corporate success in today's competitive market depends largely on organizational human resource and high involvement in capacity building practices (Quresh *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[89]</sup>. Although organizations generally appreciate the fact that their human resource is the pillar of their success and survival, the greatest challenge they often face is how to fundamentally alter the paradigm about capacity building and employee commitment which they so much need for their success (Muhammad, 2019) <sup>[61]</sup>. Capacity building refers to the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the workforce in enhancing their abilities to achieve the short and long-term goals of organizations (Groot & Van der Molen, 2000; Millar & Doherty, 2016) <sup>[34, 62]</sup>. Similarly, Yamoah and Maiyo (2013) <sup>[103]</sup> argue that capacity building seeks to identify the inabilities of employees with a view to developing the desirable skills and attitude which enable them to accomplish tasks efficiently. It is an intervention that strengthens an organization's ability to fulfill its mission by promoting sound management, strong governance, and persistent re-dedication to achieving results (Hall & Torrington, 2018) <sup>[37]</sup>. Given today's competitive and hostile environment, capacity building and retention of committed employees are critical to achieving organizational effectiveness as committed employees work harder and perform their tasks with greater devotion and dedication. However, building the capacity of the organization is only possible when every employee realizes his/her responsibility and accountability for the outcomes related to their performance (Maina *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[53]</sup>.

Often a times, capacity building is erroneously and narrowly conceptualized as training which historically is its roots. But it is much more than training; it can also be described as the strategies or actions that an organization takes to ensure that it has the resources needed to succeed. These actions can include: resource development, financial management (diversification of funding sources), organizational learning, leadership development and other activities (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[1]</sup>. It equally includes the human resource development strategies which provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, access to information, knowledge and training that enable them to perform effectively. It includes such other capacity intervention strategies as mentoring, knowledge management, internship, empowerment, job rotation and job enrichment. Training plays a vital role in improving employee performance by developing employee attributes that directly affect organizational commitment (Ajusa & Atambo, 2016; Harrison 2000; Guest 1997) <sup>[5, 39]</sup>. Employees tend to associate training with the reward mechanism of the organization and the recognition of their potential to grow within the organization. Training is important because it represents a good opportunity for employees to grow their knowledge base and improve their job skills and human relation in order to become more effective in the workplace. Despite the cost of training for organizations in particular and employees in general, the return on investment is immense if it is consistent. Job-related benefits of training lead to better relationships between workers and managers, and provide a necessary break from the job (Noe & Wilk, 1993) <sup>[70]</sup>. Training is aimed at developing competencies such as technical, conceptual, human relation and organizational growth (Oribabor, 2000) <sup>[84]</sup>. Nwaeke and Obiekwe (2017) <sup>[73]</sup> opine that the success and prosperous future of any organization is a function of the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies of the employees.

Single and Muller (2017:129) <sup>[95]</sup> define mentoring as "a relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a lesser skilled or experienced individual (protégé), primarily using communication that is intended to develop and grow the skills, knowledge, confidence, and cultural understanding of the protégé to help him or her succeed, whilst also assisting in the development of the mentor". A number of authors such as Nwachukwu (2006) <sup>[72]</sup> and Obiekwe (2012) <sup>[76]</sup> have shown that mentoring is increasingly assuming a critical role as a means of facing the challenges associated with increasing market demands and pressures, changing work processes and loss of organizational real wisdom occasioned by retirement of skilled, competent and knowledgeable personnel. In addition, Sosik & Lee, (2005) <sup>[96]</sup>, Jaussi, (2007) <sup>[46]</sup>, Packard *et al.*, (2014) <sup>[87]</sup> and Siegel *et al.* (2001) <sup>[94]</sup> have identified a positive relationship between mentoring and employee commitment. One essential ingredient in capacity building that cuts across these techniques is personnel transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within; transformation that goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes (Yamoah & Maiyo, 2013) <sup>[103]</sup>. Employee commitment refers to "the extent to which employees dedicate to something or someone in their organization, how hard they work and how long they stay as a result of that commitment" (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020: 123) <sup>[1]</sup>. Diab and Ajlouni, (2022) <sup>[20]</sup> describe commitment as a psychological

immersion of an individual with his organization through a sense of belonging, ownership of organizational goals and readiness to accept challenges. High level commitment is indispensable to increasing output and obtaining sustainable competitive advantages through capacity building (White, 2017) <sup>[101]</sup>. Employee commitment has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. Furthermore, employee commitment can be a deciding factor in organizational success. Not only does commitment have the potential to significantly affect employee attitude to work, retention, productivity and loyalty, it is also a key link to customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value (Robert *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[91]</sup>. Building employee commitment in a dynamic environment is critical to organizational competitiveness, since there can be no development in any unit of the organization without it even in not-for-profit environments like the civil service.

As a concept, employee commitment has been categorized into different dimensions. While Meyer and Allen (1991) <sup>[56]</sup>, Affum-Osei, *et al.*, (2015) <sup>[3]</sup>, Alexandra (2013) <sup>[6]</sup>, Adrianto and Riyanto, (2020) <sup>[2]</sup> categorized it into three dimensions of affective, continuance and normative commitment, Krubu and Krub (2011 cited in Nemeth, 2017) <sup>[68]</sup> disaggregated commitment into instrumental and expressive commitment. Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to, identification and involvement with a company (Oyeniyi *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[86]</sup>. It, therefore, involves employees' psychological attachment and involvement in the firm (Nwulu & Ateke, 2018) <sup>[74]</sup>. It is the individual's passionate association with the firm. Employees who have a high level of affective commitment continue to work for the company because they enjoy it. It is an employee's affective commitment that leads him to accept a certain organization and its aims, and to opt to remain a member in order to further the goal (Ndai & Makhamara, 2021) <sup>[66]</sup>. It also defines an employee's sense of belonging and pride as a member of that organization. On the other hand, normative commitment which is simply described as a sense of obligation to stay is the idea that an employee has an obligation to keep the working connection with the organization going. It is a form of debt. It depicts the accepted pressure that forces an employee to labour constantly in order to stay employed (Dhammika *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[21]</sup>. It is a perceived moral obligation to stick with something through thick and thin. Oyeniyi *et al.*, (2017) <sup>[86]</sup> categorized normative commitment into two dimensions - moral duty and indebted obligation. They noted that while moral duty refers to a strong sense of desire to pursue a course of action or help because it is the right thing to do, indebted obligation is a strong sense of having to pursue a course of action to avoid the social cost of failing to do so (Oyeniyi *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[86]</sup>.

## 2. Problem Statement

There is no doubt that the Civil Service is as much concerned as business organizations with maintaining a sustainable and current skills inventory that guarantees effective service delivery. This is readily evident from the regular government pronouncements and reforms that seek to guarantee a purpose driven and committed workforce with cutting-edge capacities. But the effectiveness of the measures and reforms remain controversial as stakeholder dissatisfaction with the quality of service continues to

resonate on a daily basis. Understandably, the civil service possesses a peculiar environment where the need to balance bureaucratic ideals and political considerations create serious challenges for administrators. But in no other function or activity is the tension most pronounced than in the areas of capacity building and employee commitment. While administrators daily decry the poor attitude to work, wastefulness, truancy and low commitment of the employees, the issue of capacity building which is critical to securing commitment is inexplicably often politicized or addressed perfunctorily. From budgetary constraints to political considerations in the selection of techniques and even personnel for capacity building, the civil service faces a daunting challenge in harmonizing the twin issues of capacity building and employee commitment. Hence the focus of this study on the civil service which in recent years has undergone a number of organizational and structural reforms such as professionalization, rightsizing and restructuring geared towards improving efficiency and effectiveness.

### 3. Literature review

There is no doubt about the significant role of capacity building in organizations, the sector and size notwithstanding. As a matter of fact, in his knowledge based theory, Grant (1996)<sup>[32]</sup> notes that the source of competitive advantage in any dynamic business environment is not the knowledge that is repository to the organization, because the value of such knowledge erodes quickly due to decay and imitation. Rather, sustained competitive advantage is determined by non-proprietary knowledge in the form of tacit individual knowledge achieved through capacity building. The theory recognizes that organizations exist in the way that they do because of their ability to develop human capital more efficiently than is possible under other types of organizational structures. The theory considers firms as bodies that generate, integrate and distribute knowledge (Narasimha, 2000; Miller 2002)<sup>[64, 57]</sup> and recognizes that the ability to create value is not based as much upon physical or financial resources as on a set of intangible knowledge-based capabilities through human capital. Pemberton and Stonehouse, (2000)<sup>[88]</sup> argue that a firm's competitive success is governed by the capability of the organization to develop new knowledge-based assets that create core competencies which elicit employee commitment. Employee commitment has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. In this direction, Burbach and Royle, (2010)<sup>[14]</sup> have observed that firms need to build long-term commitment to retain their work force. Thus, to gain a competitive edge, organizations are turning to a number of measures such as training to set the agenda for employee commitment (Robert *et al.*, 2015)<sup>[91]</sup>.

It is perhaps necessary to point out that the sphere of influence of capacity building cuts across such areas as performance - both employee and corporate, employee satisfaction, morale, relationships, team spirit, etc. This perhaps explains the interest of researchers in the phenomenon. However, there is no consensus among researchers as to the direction of the relationship between capacity building and employee commitment. For instance, Ajetomobi (2021)<sup>[4]</sup>, Irumva (2019)<sup>[44]</sup>, Opeke and Mayowa-Adebara (2020)<sup>[83]</sup>, Jackline (2018)<sup>[45]</sup>, and Gberville (2012)<sup>[31]</sup> have in their different studies shown that capacity building has a positive and significant

relationship with both employee and organizational commitment. On the other hand, Owuor (2021)<sup>[85]</sup>, Balbina (2020)<sup>[9]</sup>, Teuku, *et al.* (2020)<sup>[97]</sup>, Mark and Fayyaz (2022)<sup>[55]</sup>, Maina *et al.* (2018)<sup>[53]</sup>, Ezenwakwelu (2017)<sup>[29]</sup>, Edgar (2013)<sup>[25]</sup> were more specific in relating training as a measure of capacity building to employee commitment. In their respective studies they identified a positive and significant influence of training on employee commitment. Similarly, Dumo (2020)<sup>[23]</sup> specifically investigated the effect of mentoring on employee commitment and identified a positive and significant relationship between the variables. However, none of these studies focused on the civil service, particularly the Nigerian civil service which is the focus of this study.

### 4. Aims of the study

This study assessed the relationship between the two critical personnel-based issues of capacity building and employee commitment in the civil service. In specific terms, the first objective of the study focused on the nature of the relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants. The second objective addressed the nature of the relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants. Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses guided this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants.
2. There is no significant relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants.

### 5. Method

The study was based on survey design and so relied on primary data that were sourced through a questionnaire. The survey instrument was designed to generate data that focused on the core objectives of the study and the research problem. The instrument which contained both structured and open-ended questions was subjected to both validity and reliability tests. A key factor that reinforced the reliability and validity of the instrument is the fact that the variables of the topic have general applicability and some of the measures were adapted from past researches such as Balbina, (2020)<sup>[9]</sup>, Winkler and Moczulska (2015)<sup>[102]</sup>, Turatsinze and Tarus (2021). Nevertheless, on the basis of data from a pilot study involving twenty workers from two ministries, the reliability test was further carried out using split-half method. The split-half method involves two basic steps: the first step was the calculation of the correlation of the halves to determine their individual reliability values on the basis of which the second step involving the use of the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula (Carmines & Zeller, 1979)<sup>[15]</sup> was carried out to determine the reliability of the whole instrument. The value of the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was 0.82 which is considered an acceptable level of reliability.

Further validity test focused on content and construct dimensions. The content validity was determined based on the judgments of the supervisors and experts in Management. In addition, the observations of the pilot study respondents were useful in strengthening the content validity of the instrument. Construct validity was determined on the basis of past researches and extant theories. This is in line with Moser and Kalton's (1997:356)<sup>[58, 60]</sup> observation that 'the essence of construct validity is its

dependence on theory and the examination of the observed associations is as much a test of the theory as of the scale's validity'.

**5.1 Sample size determination**

In this study, a sample size of 335 respondents, calculated based on Krejcie and Morgan sample size formular for finite population (Udeze, 2005) <sup>[98]</sup>, and made up of senior staff was chosen from eight ministries in each of the five states of the South-east geo-political zone, viz Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi and Anambra. As a means of ensuring uniformity in staff designation and career structure, the focus ministries were the same in all the states. The focus on senior staff was to make assurance doubly sure that the respondents are familiar and had participated in the dimensions of capacity building that are used in this study. In view of the fact that the study was carried out in different states and ministries, the sample size was distributed among the ministries using

Bowley's proportional allocation formula (Neyman, 2015) <sup>[69]</sup>. However, given the status of the respondents and the need to reach them, stratified and purposive sampling technique were adopted in selecting them. After several reminders by both researcher and the research assistants in each state, a total of 261 (representing 78 percent) copies of the questionnaire were returned.

**5.2 Statistical Technique:** The two hypotheses focused on the relationship between capacity building and employee commitment in the civil service. As a result, simple linear regression was used, after the ordinal data were transformed, in testing the hypotheses.

**6. Result**

The descriptive analysis was based on 261 returned and valid questionnaire. The demographic profile of the respondents is summarized in table 1 on the next page.

**Table 1:** Demographic profile of respondents

Option	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	119	46
Female	142	54
<i>TOTAL</i>	261	100
<b>Age Bracket</b>		
<35 years	3	1.2
35 - 45	114	43.6
>45	144	55.2
<i>TOTAL</i>	261	100
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
B.Sc/HND	96	36.8
M.Sc/MBA	131	50.2
PhD	34	13.0
Total	261	100
<b>Length of Service</b>		
<15 years	29	11
16 - 25 years	108	41
> 25 years	124	48
<i>TOTAL</i>	261	100

Source: Field work 2023

Table 1 above shows that the ministries of focus had more female workers (54%), more workers above 45 years age bracket (55.2%), greater number of workers with Masters degree (50.2%) and more workers who had put in more 25 years of service (48%).

The analysis of the questionnaire items relating to the variables of interest revealed a number of developments in the area of capacity building and employee commitment in the ministries. For instance, there were varying responses on the management of capacity building programmes and this

obviously reflect differences among the States. However, on aggregative basis, the test of the hypotheses yielded the following results.

**Hypothesis One**

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants.

Hypothesis one as stated above was tested with simple linear regression and the output is shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** Regression analysis on the relationship between employee training and affective commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remark
Affective Commitment	.627	.393	.392	.64395	Strong Positive Relationship

Table 1 produced a correlation coefficient, 'R' of 0.627 which indicates a strong positive relationship between employee training and affective commitment. The value of R<sup>2</sup> is 0.393 which implied that about 39.3% of the variations in affective commitment was due to employee training. Hence, employee training has positive influence on affective commitment of civil servants.

**Table 2:** ANOVA analysis on employee training and affective commitment

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	99.235	1	99.235	239.308	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	153.016	369	.415		
	Total	252.251	370			

The ANOVA table produced F-value of 239.308 with a p-value = 0.000 which shows that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. This,

explained that there is no significant outlier (from the line of best fit) between the predictor (employee training) and affective commitment.

**Table 3:** Regression coefficient for employee training and affective commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.436	.162	8.869	.000
	Affective commitment	.608	.039	15.470	.000

Table 3 above shows the coefficient of the model. It shows that for each unit change of employee training, affective commitment changed by 0.608 units holding other variables constant. Given a t-estimate of 15.470 and a p-value = 0.000, it is clear that employee training significantly predicts affective commitment. Therefore, on the basis of the F(1,369) value in table 2 which is 239.308 and the t estimate of 15.470 with a p-value < 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is positive and significant

relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants.

**Hypothesis Two**

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants. Hypothesis two as stated above was tested with simple linear regression and the output is shown in table 4.

**Table 4:** Regression analysis on the relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remark
Normative Commitment	.344	.118	.116	.70604	Weak Positive Relationship

Table 4 produced a correlation coefficient, 'R' of 0.344 which indicate a weak positive relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment. The R<sup>2</sup> stood at 0.118 which implied that about 11.8% of the

variations in the normative commitment was due to employee mentoring. Hence, employee mentoring has positive but weak influence on normative commitment of civil servants.

**Table 5:** ANOVA analysis on employee mentoring and normative commitment

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	24.636	1	24.636	49.421	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	183.942	369	.498		
	Total	208.577	370			

The ANOVA table (table 5) shows an F-value of 49.421 with a p-value = 0.000 which shows that the regression model predicts the dependent variable very well. This shows

that there is no significant outlier (from the line of best fit) between the predictor variable (employee mentoring) and normative commitment.

Table 6: Regression coefficient for employee mentoring and commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.573	.213	12.100	.000
	Normative commitment	.368	.052	7.030	.000

Also based on table 6 which shows the coefficients of the model, for each unit change of employee mentoring, normative commitment will change by 0.368 units holding other variables constant. Given the t-estimate of 7.030 with a p-value = 0.000, it is clear that employee mentoring predicts normative commitment. On the basis of the F value in tables 5 F(1, 369) = 49.421 and t value in table 6 - 7.030; p-value < 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is a positive but weak relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants.

**7. Discussion of Findings**

The outcome of the test of hypothesis one indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee training and affective commitment of civil servants. Training equips a worker with the relevant knowledge and behaviors needed to easily settle down to his/her daily tasks. In addition, training prepares a worker to

confidently face daily workplace challenges that often trigger frustration. Such preparations provide the foundation for the cultivation of love for the job and emotional attachment to the organization. Moreover, giving greater opportunities for and actually training employees serves as an indication of the value the organization places on the employees and this increases the employees' self-worth and feelings of importance. This result is collaborated by the findings of Mark and Fayyaz (2022)<sup>[55]</sup> and Teuku, *et al.* (2020)<sup>[97]</sup> that there is a strong and positive relationship between employee training and affective commitment.

The outcome of the test of hypothesis two showed a positive but weak relationship between employee mentoring and normative commitment of civil servants. There is no doubt about the instrumentality of mentoring in cultivating right work attitudes and values in junior employees as they learn and emulate their mentors. The effect of mentoring is most noticeable in normative commitment in that it creates a

moral obligation to give back to the system. This is in agreement with the findings of Meyer and Allen (1991)<sup>[56]</sup>, which found out that employees who stay with an organization because they feel obligated or having no choice do not exhibit the same eagerness and involvement as other employees who do not. This is also supported by a research done by Dumo (2020)<sup>[23]</sup> which revealed that good mentoring helps to increase trust, commitment and team efficacy. However, the weak relationship may be indicative of the state and type of mentoring in the civil service.

## 8. Policy Implications

The findings of this study have established a positive and significant relationship between capacity building and employee commitment. Equally remarkable is the link between the different capacity building strategies and the different dimensions of employee commitment. This clearly points to the possibility of a targeted approach to actualizing a specific aspect of employee commitment with a specific capacity building strategy. However, it should be pointed out that the instrumentality of capacity building in the relationship depends on a number of factors that relate to the management of the function such as employee awareness of the link between every capacity building outcome and the future employee behaviors. It is therefore necessary for the government through the civil service commission to involve employees in the identification of capacity building needs. This will not only improve employees' involvement in the capacity building exercise but will also guarantee a better focus on the outcomes. This is particularly important for such capacity building methods as informal mentoring that is long-lasting but with less dramatic effect. The government should therefore consider formalizing mentoring in the civil service.

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