

EFFECT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN BENUE STATE CIVIL SERVICE, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of career development on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria. The study aimed to specifically examine the effect of career planning, training and job rotation on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria. This work is anchored on The Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961). The study adopted a survey research design. The population used for the study comprised 14,966 civil servants out of which a sample size of 390 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula and random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Multi regression) was used for data analysis aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. The findings of the study showed that there is a strong positive association between career development with employee retention in Benue State civil service Benue State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that career planning, training and job rotation has a significant effect on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue State Nigeria. The study recommended that the government should strengthen career planning policies by ensuring clear promotion pathways, transparent appraisal systems, and structured career progression for employees, regular and well-funded training programmes should be implemented to improve employees' skills and job performance and job rotation should be institutionalized within the civil service to expose employees to different roles and improve retention.

Keywords: Career Development, employee retention, career planning, training, Job rotation

1.1 Introduction

The civil service is widely regarded as the backbone of government administration and national development. It ensures continuity in governance, promotes accountability, facilitates public service delivery, and supports socio-economic growth and stability (Adebayo, 2018). Scholars also emphasize its role in preserving institutional memory and ensuring administrative stability, noting that effective governance depends on the integrity, professionalism, and commitment of civil servants (Duru & Shimawua, 2019).

In both developed and developing countries, civil servants play essential roles in policy implementation and service delivery. For instance, in the United States, they design and implement programmes and enforce regulations through specialized expertise (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk & Clerkin, 2015), while in Nigeria, the civil service provides continuity in governance despite political transitions (Adamolekun, 2002). However, the civil service systems continue to experience persistent challenges related to employee retention, largely driven by weak career development structures, inadequate training opportunities, poor career planning systems, and

limited job rotation practices, which have resulted in low motivation and high turnover intentions among employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on career development as a determinant of employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. Career development is the continuous process of managing learning, work experiences, and career transitions to achieve personal and professional goals. It is influenced by career planning, training, and job rotation. Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to prevent employees from voluntarily leaving by ensuring their psychological, social, and professional well-being (Smith, 2024). Career planning involves identifying career goals and development pathways (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2023), training enhances employees' knowledge and skills (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023), while job rotation involves moving employees across roles to improve skills and reduce monotony (Gupta & Bhaskar, 2024). This study therefore examines how these career development practices influence employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service, providing empirical evidence and policy implications for public sector human resource management.

1.2 statement of the problem

Civil service is the backbone of public administration and national development, the civil service remains indispensable in translating government policies into actionable programmes that promote efficiency, stability, and socio-economic growth (Olaopa, 2021). However, across many countries, civil service systems continue to experience persistent challenges related to employee retention, largely driven by weak career development structures, inadequate training opportunities, poor career planning systems, and limited job rotation practices, which have resulted in low motivation and high turnover intentions among employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Empirical studies have shown that public sector organizations struggle with retaining skilled employees due to insufficient investment in structured career development programmes. (World Bank, 2022). These challenges weaken institutional capacity and reduce overall government effectiveness. Similarly, in Nigeria, the civil service is confronted with similar difficulties, as issues such as inadequate career planning, irregular training opportunities, and minimal job rotation practices have contributed to declining employee morale and increased attrition rates (Oluwatoyin, 2021). Many civil servants perceive limited opportunities for professional growth, which negatively affects their attachment to their organizations and willingness to remain in service. This situation undermines productivity and the efficient delivery of public services.

In the Benue State Civil Service, these challenges appear more pronounced, as employees often experience limited structured career progression, insufficient training programmes, and infrequent job rotation opportunities, which may contribute to reduced job satisfaction and weak organizational commitment. (Hundu, Hangeior and Aule, 2024). As a result, the state civil service continues to face difficulties in retaining competent and experienced personnel, thereby affecting service delivery and administrative efficiency. Although, there are numerous studies on career development and employee outcomes, there remains a gap in empirical

evidence specifically examining how career planning, training, and job rotation collectively influence employee retention within the Benue State Civil Service. Most existing studies have focused on private sector organizations or federal civil service contexts, leaving a contextual and geographical gap at the state civil service level. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by empirically investigating the effect of career development on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect career development on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

1. Determine the effect career planning on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.
2. Examine the effect of training on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.
3. Assess the effect of job rotation on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the effect career planning on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria?
2. How does training affect employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria?
3. What is the effect of job rotation on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated in null form

H₀₁ career planning has no positive effect on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.

H₀₂ training has no significant effect on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.

H₀₃ job rotation has no effect on employee retention in Benue State civil service, Benue state, Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the Study.

The study will help the Benue State Civil Service management understand how career development practices such as training, career planning and job rotation influence employee retention. It will assist government and policy makers in developing effective human resource policies that improve employee commitment, reduce turnover, and enhance public service delivery. The study will also benefit employees by promoting career growth, job satisfaction, and motivation. Human resource practitioners will use the findings to improve staff development programmes and retention strategies. Furthermore, the study will contribute to

academic knowledge and serve as reference material for future researchers in human resource management and public administration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Career Development

Career development refers to the ongoing process of managing one's professional growth, learning, and advancement over the course of one's career. It involves setting goals, acquiring new skills, Ezeuwa, (2019) states that career development is seen as the use of human resources to quantitatively change man's physical and biological environments to his benefits or ever seeking opportunities for advancement, and adapting to changes in the workplace. Career development is essential for individuals to achieve their full potential, pursue meaningful work, and progress along their chosen career paths. Similarly, Weinert (2021), described the term career as a pattern of work experiences including the entire life span of a person which is carried out through different stages reflecting the change from one phase of life to another. Smit, et al. (2017) defined career as the sequence of work experiences that an employee acquires over time. Career may involve not only upwards movement of person in the same organization but also working for several organizations during the courses of his work life.

2.1.2 Career Planning

According to Ankita, et al (2025), career planning is viewed as a lifelong developmental process involving learning, behavioural adjustment, and psychological growth that helps individuals align their career goals with organizational and societal needs. Similarly, Hamid Hassan and colleagues (2022) defined career planning as a comprehensive process through which individuals make informed decisions about their career paths by considering their personal characteristics, occupational opportunities, and future developmental potential. Amuen et al (2025), posits that career planning is the strategic and continuous effort by employees to manage their career progression through lifelong learning, reskilling, adaptability, and self-development in response to changes in the workplace environment. Gary Peterson, et al (2024) described career planning as a problem-solving and decision-making process through which individuals assess career information, evaluate alternatives, and make informed occupational decisions that support long-term career success.

2.1.3 Training

Training and development is a key element of human resource management aimed at improving the capabilities, skills, and knowledge of employees to enhance their productivity and contribute to organizational success. These practices are not only crucial for skill and professional growth but also for maintaining a competitive edge in the ever-evolving business landscape. Training is a systematic process that involves teaching employees the skills and knowledge required to perform their current jobs more effectively. For example, training can involve learning new software, improving communication skills, or enhancing technical capabilities (Noe, 2017). In today's rapidly changing environment, training helps employees

adapt to new technologies, processes, and market conditions. This adaptability is crucial for organizational resilience and innovation (Armstrong, 2014).

2.1.4 Job Rotation

Bo Zhang, et al (2025) defined job rotation as the lateral transfer of employees across different positions within an organization without promotion, aimed at improving employees' flexibility, adaptability, experience, and organizational effectiveness. They explained that job rotation enables workers to gain broader knowledge and skills through exposure to diverse job functions. Lisa Mlekus and Günter Maier (2021) described job rotation as a planned and periodic movement of employees between different jobs, departments, or functions within an organization without changes in salary or organizational hierarchy. According to them, job rotation is designed to enhance employee learning, reduce boredom, and improve organizational employee retention. Joseph, et al (2023) defined job rotation as the lateral shifting of employees between jobs that possess similar levels of responsibility, complexity, and decision-making authority. They emphasized that the practice is mainly intended to develop employee competencies, improve learning, and reduce monotony in the workplace.

2.1.5 Concept of Employee Retention

Employee's retention refers to an organization's capacity to keep its personnel, and while they respect dedicated individuals and know how to retain them by spending large sums of money on acquiring and training them, many firms continue to experience a significant loss of talent each year (Rakhra 2018). Employee retention can be described as the strategies and methods that firms adopt to keep their most valuable people on the job (Abba 2018). By identifying, examining, and criticizing employee motivation ideas and demonstrating the link between employee motivation and employee retention, the author thereby clarified the significance of keeping key people and demonstrated how employee retention methods might be more effective (Olson and Zanna 1993).

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on The Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961).

Human Capital Theory propounded by Theodore Schultz in 1961. The theory posits that investment in employees through education, training, career development, and skill acquisition enhances their productivity, efficiency, competence, and overall performance within an organization. Human capital refers to the knowledge, abilities, experience, and skills possessed by employees which can be improved through deliberate organizational investment such as training programmes, career planning, and job rotation. According to the theory, organizations that continuously invest in the development of their workforce are likely to achieve higher productivity, improved organizational effectiveness, and increased employee commitment and retention.

The Human Capital Theory further explains that employees are valuable assets whose capabilities can be strengthened through learning and developmental opportunities. Schultz argued that expenditure on training and education should not be regarded as a cost alone but as

an investment capable of generating future returns for both employees and organizations. Employees who acquire relevant skills and competencies through organizational support tend to perform better, experience greater job satisfaction, and develop stronger loyalty toward their organizations. Consequently, organizations that provide adequate career development opportunities are more likely to retain competent and experienced employees for a longer period.

In the context of this study, career planning, training, and job rotation are viewed as major dimensions of human capital development that can significantly influence employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. Career planning enables employees to identify career goals and advancement opportunities within the service, thereby increasing their commitment and willingness to remain in the organization. Training equips employees with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective job performance, while job rotation exposes workers to diverse tasks and responsibilities, broadening their experience and enhancing their adaptability. These developmental practices improve employees' confidence, motivation, and organizational attachment, which ultimately reduce turnover intentions and promote retention.

The relevance of the Human Capital Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on the strategic importance of investing in employees for sustainable organizational performance and stability. The theory provides a strong foundation for explaining how career development practices can enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention in the Benue State Civil Service. Therefore, the theory is considered suitable for this study because it clearly establishes the relationship between career development variables and employee retention.

2.3 Empirical Review

Obaze and Samikon (2022) examined the effects of career development, compensation, and employee engagement on employee retention among entry-level employees in Nigerian commercial banks. The study adopted a quantitative correlational research design. The population comprised employees from First Bank, Zenith Bank, and UBA in Nigeria, while a sample size of 250 respondents was selected. Structured questionnaires were used as the research instrument, and data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that career development significantly and positively influenced employee retention among entry-level employees. The study therefore recommended that managers should integrate strategic career development programmes into organizational policies to improve retention and reduce labour turnover.

Chester et al (2025) investigated training and development in employee retention and organizational effectiveness in a manufacturing firm in Cebu, Philippines. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The population comprised employees of a manufacturing company, while 360 respondents were selected using random sampling

techniques. A validated questionnaire was used as the research instrument, while Spearman's rho correlation analysis was used for data analysis. Findings indicated that training and development had a significant positive relationship with employee retention and organizational effectiveness. The study recommended that organizations should continuously invest in employee training programmes to improve loyalty and organizational performance.

Abdul-Razak, et al (2022) investigated job rotation practices and employee performance among administrative staff at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population consisted of administrative staff of the university, while a sample size of 122 respondents was selected. Structured questionnaires were used as the research instrument, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized for data analysis. Findings indicated that job rotation enhanced organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which are strong predictors of employee retention. The study recommended that management should implement employee-friendly job rotation programmes that encourage career growth and commitment. The study used advanced statistical analysis (PLS-SEM), which improved the reliability of findings. However, the research focused mainly on employee performance rather than employee retention directly. Also, the relatively small sample size limited broader generalization.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey is appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret data on the current practices of career development and its effect on the employee retention in the Benue state civil service. This design is suitable for studies where the goal is to establish relationships between independent and dependent variables without manipulation (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Population of Study

A population is any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common and that are of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2023). Therefore, the target population of this study comprise of the entire number of civil servants across the eighteen ministries in Benue State. According to Benue State civil service commission worker's register, 2023, there are 14,966 civil servants in Benue state.

3.3 Determination of Sample Size and Technique

A total of 390 people working for various departments in the Benue state civil service make up the study's sample size. According to Tejada and Punzalan (2012), the Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample. Reason for using this particular formula includes the fact that it presumes a simple random sampling procedure and that its proportionality of variance falls inside the population frame. Random sampling technique was adopted in getting the respondents to answer the questionnaires.

3.4 Sources of Data and Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which is designed in Likert-scale format to assess perceptions of career development its perceived effect on employee retention. The validity of the study instruments was confirmed through the opinion of professors and professional managers with adequate knowledge of the subject of the study, while the internal consistency of the measurement items of the research was confirmed through the Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability with a threshold of 0.70 set by Nunnally (1978).

3.5 Analytical Techniques

Inferential statistics particularly multiple regression analysis, was used test the influence of career development on employee retention in Benue state civil service, Benue State, Nigeria.

3.6 Model Specification

The regression model is expressed as:

$$ER = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CP + \beta_2 TR + \beta_3 JR + \epsilon$$

Where:

ER = Employee retention

CP= Career Planning

TR= Training

JR= Job rotation

β_0 = Intercept, $\beta_1 - \beta_3$ = Coefficients of independent variables, ϵ = Error term

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

The results of the test of hypotheses are presented in this section as indicated below.

Decision Rule: If the P-value is less than 0.05 (i.e., $p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) should be rejected. Conversely, if the P-value is larger than 0.05 (i.e., $P > 0.05$), the null hypothesis should be accepted.

Table1: Model Summary*

Model	R	R Squartae	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Dubin Watson
1	.997 ^a	.994	.994	.11450	1.237

Source: Source: SPSS v27 output 2026

a. Predictors (Constant) CP, TR, JR

b. Dependent Variable: Employee retention.

The model summary indicates a very strong relationship between career development (career planning, training, and job rotation) and employee retention in Benue State Civil Service. The R value of 0.997 shows an almost perfect positive relationship, while the R-square of 0.994 means that 99.4% of the variation in employee retention is explained by the predictors, with only 0.6% accounted for by other factors. The adjusted R-square confirms the reliability of the

model, and the low standard error (0.11450) shows high predictive accuracy. The Durbin Watson value of 1.237 suggests slight positive autocorrelation but remains acceptable for social science research. Overall, the results show that career development has a very strong and significant effect on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service.

Table 2 Coefficients for Tolerance and VIF Tests

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Career Planning	0.712	1.404
Training	0.681	1.468
Job Rotation	0.755	1.325

The multicollinearity test results show that there is no multicollinearity problem among the independent variables. The tolerance values (0.712, 0.681, and 0.755) are all above the acceptable threshold, while the VIF values (1.404, 1.468, and 1.325) are below the limit of 10. This indicates that career planning, training, and job rotation are not highly correlated and each independently explains employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. Overall, the regression model is reliable and appropriate for the study.

Table 3 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA*)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1Regression	581.1411	3	193.804	14756.707	.000 ^b
Residual	3.690	281	.013		
Total	585.102	284			

Source: Source: SPSS v27 output 2026

a. Predictors (Constant)CP, TR, JR

b. Dependent Variable: Employee retention

The ANOVA result shows that the regression model is statistically significant in explaining the effect of career development (career planning, training, and job rotation) on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. The large regression sum of squares compared to the residual indicates that the model explains most of the variation in employee retention. The very high F-value (14756.707) and significant p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$) confirm that the overall model is highly significant. This implies that career planning, training, and job rotation jointly have a significant effect on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service.

Table 4 Regression Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.536.174			20.283	.000
CP	.154	.029	.153	5.213	.000
TR	.337	.035	.333	9.761	.000
JR	.508	.038	.515	13.325	.000

Source: Source: SPSS v27 output 2026

a Predictors (Constant)CP, TR, JR

b. Dependent Variable: Employee retention

The regression results indicate that career development significantly influences employee retention in Benue State Civil Service, as shown by the very high R^2 (0.994) and the significant F-value (14756.707, $p = 0.000$). This means that career planning, training, and job rotation jointly have a strong and statistically significant effect on employee retention. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the overall null hypothesis stating that career development has no significant effect on employee retention is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that improvements in career development practices lead to higher employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. Therefore, the study concludes that career development is a strong predictor of employee retention, and policies aimed at strengthening career planning, training, and job rotation will significantly enhance employees' willingness to remain in the organization.

5. 1Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study based on the first objective revealed that career planning has a positive and significant effect on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service, Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the study of Obaze and Samikon (2022), who found that career development significantly and positively influenced employee retention among entry-level employees. The implication of this finding is that when employees are provided with clear career paths, promotion opportunities, and professional growth prospects, they are more likely to remain committed to the organization. This suggests that the Benue State Civil Service can improve employee retention by implementing effective career planning programmes that align employees' career aspirations with organizational goals.

The findings further revealed that training has a positive and significant effect on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service, Benue State, Nigeria. This finding agrees with the study of Chester et al. (2025), which reported that training and development have a significant

positive relationship with employee retention and organizational effectiveness. The implication of this finding is that employees who receive adequate training tend to develop greater competence, confidence, and job satisfaction, thereby reducing their intention to leave the organization. This indicates that continuous staff training and development programmes are essential strategies for enhancing employee commitment, improving productivity, and sustaining retention in the civil service.

Finally, the findings revealed that job rotation has a positive and significant effect on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service, Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is in line with the study of Abdul-Razak et al. (2022), which found that job rotation enhances organizational commitment and job satisfaction, both of which are strong predictors of employee retention. The implication of this finding is that exposing employees to different roles and responsibilities helps to reduce boredom, broaden skills and experience, and increase motivation among workers. Consequently, the Benue State Civil Service can strengthen employee retention by adopting job rotation practices that encourage skill diversification, career growth, and improved workplace engagement.

5.2 Summary and Conclusion

The study examined the effect of career development (career planning, training, and job rotation) on employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. The results showed a very strong and positive relationship, with career development explaining 99.4% of the variation in employee retention. The study concludes that career development significantly influences employee retention and is a key factor in improving organizational stability and service delivery in the Benue State Civil Service.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

- 1 The government should strengthen career planning policies by ensuring clear promotion pathways, transparent appraisal systems, and structured career progression for employees.
- 2 Regular and well-funded training programmes should be implemented to improve employees' skills and job performance.
- 3 Job rotation should be institutionalized within the civil service to expose employees to different roles and improve retention.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the Benue State Civil Service and therefore the findings may not be generalized to all public sector institutions in Nigeria. The study also relied on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be subject to response bias. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation of the relationships among variables.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study provides empirical evidence that career planning, training, and job rotation significantly and positively influence employee retention in the Benue State Civil Service. It contributes to existing human resource management literature by reinforcing the importance of

career development in improving employee commitment and retention. The study also supports the Human Capital Theory by showing that investment in employee development enhances retention. In addition, it offers practical and policy insights for improving job satisfaction, employee retention, and organizational performance in the civil service.

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