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## CULTURAL PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN DELTA STATE COMMUNITIES, NIGERIA.

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined cultural practices and employee commitment in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State Communities, Nigeria, with specific objectives to determine the effect of organisational values and norms on employee commitment and evaluate the influence of communication practices on employee commitment. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, and data were collected from a sample size of 372 employees, out of which 351 valid responses were used for analysis, representing a 94.4% response rate. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that organisational values and norms have a significant positive effect on employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that fairness, integrity, respect, and shared beliefs enhance employees' emotional attachment to SMEs. The study also found that communication practices significantly influence employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), showing that openness, feedback systems, and clear communication channels improve employee engagement and loyalty. The regression model further indicated that cultural practices jointly explained 58% of the variation in employee commitment ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ). The study concluded that cultural practices are critical determinants of employee commitment in SMEs in Delta State, as both organisational values and communication practices significantly shape employees' attitudes and behaviour in the workplace. It was recommended that SME owners and managers should strengthen organisational values by promoting fairness and ethical standards, and improve communication systems by ensuring transparency, feedback, and employee participation in decision-making processes. These actions will enhance employee commitment and organisational stability.

**Keywords:** Cultural practices, employee commitment, organisational values, communication practices, SMEs, Delta State.

## Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are widely recognized as critical drivers of economic growth, employment generation, and poverty reduction in developing economies such as Nigeria. In recent years, SMEs have become central to local economic development within subnational regions, including Delta State, where they contribute significantly to job creation and grassroots industrialization. Despite their importance, many SMEs face persistent challenges relating to employee retention, low productivity, and weak organizational structures, which often undermine their long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

One of the key organizational factors increasingly linked to these challenges is cultural practices within the workplace. Cultural practices refer to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns that shape how employees interact, perform tasks, and relate to organizational goals. These practices influence decision-making processes, communication patterns, leadership styles, and employee attitudes within organizations. Contemporary studies emphasize that organizational culture is not merely symbolic but a strategic resource that can enhance or constrain employee outcomes and overall firm performance (Olayiwola & Akeke, 2022).

In the context of SMEs, where structures are often informal and leadership is centralized, cultural practices tend to be deeply embedded in the personal values of business owners and local community norms. Empirical evidence from Nigerian SMEs indicates that cultural dimensions such as innovation, accountability, and alignment significantly influence employee engagement, creativity, and goal achievement (Mba et al., 2026). Furthermore, recent research in Delta State highlights that aspects of workplace culture including communication, trust, and collaboration have strong positive effects on employee engagement in SMEs, suggesting that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping workforce attitudes and behaviors (Ojogbo et al., 2026).

Closely related to cultural practices is the concept of employee commitment, which reflects the psychological attachment and loyalty of employees to their organization. Employee commitment is commonly conceptualized in three dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation) (Ikyanyon & Agber, 2020). High levels of commitment are associated with increased productivity, reduced turnover, improved organizational citizenship behavior, and enhanced organizational performance. However, studies in Nigeria suggest that employee commitment remains relatively

low in many organizations, partly due to poor management practices and unfavorable work environments (Inegbedion, 2022).

In SMEs specifically, employee commitment is particularly crucial due to limited human resources and high dependency on employee versatility and loyalty. Evidence shows that organizational practices such as fair compensation, participative decision-making, and supportive work conditions significantly enhance employee commitment in Nigerian SMEs (Oginni, 2023). Similarly, organizational climate factors such as job satisfaction and workplace environment have been found to strongly influence SME performance through their impact on employee commitment in Delta State (IRJMS, 2024).

Despite growing recognition of the importance of both cultural practices and employee commitment, there remains a limited body of context-specific empirical research examining how these variables interact within SME environments, particularly in Delta State communities. Many existing studies focus on large organizations or urban corporate settings, thereby overlooking the unique socio-cultural dynamics that shape SMEs operating within local communities. These dynamics include indigenous value systems, informal management styles, kinship ties, and community-based norms, all of which may significantly influence workplace culture and employee behavior.

Moreover, while prior studies have established links between organizational culture and employee outcomes such as performance and engagement, fewer studies have explicitly examined their impact on employee commitment within SMEs at the community level. This creates a gap in the literature, especially in understanding how localized cultural practices influence employees' psychological attachment and willingness to remain within SMEs.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between cultural practices and employee commitment in SMEs in Delta State communities, Nigeria. By providing empirical evidence within this specific context, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and offer practical insights for SME owners, managers, and policymakers on how to foster cultural environments that enhance employee commitment and organizational sustainability.

### **The problem**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State communities play a vital role in employment generation and local economic development. However, despite their contributions, many SMEs continue to experience persistent organizational challenges, particularly in the area of employee commitment. Reports of high labour turnover, low morale, inconsistent performance, and

weak organizational loyalty are common among SMEs, largely due to the informal nature of their structures and management practices. These challenges threaten not only the survival of individual enterprises but also the broader economic stability of the communities in which they operate. One critical factor that has been identified as influencing employee attitudes and workplace behavior is cultural practices within organizations. Cultural practices encompass the shared values, norms, beliefs, and behavioral expectations that guide how work is performed and how employees relate with management and one another. In many SMEs in Delta State, these practices are often shaped by the personal values of business owners, indigenous community norms, and informal management styles. While such practices may foster familiarity and flexibility, they may also create inconsistencies, perceived unfairness, and lack of professionalism, which can negatively affect employee commitment.

Employee commitment, which reflects the psychological attachment of employees to their organization, remains a crucial determinant of organizational effectiveness. Committed employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, increased productivity, and a willingness to contribute to organizational goals. However, in many SMEs, employee commitment appears to be low, as evidenced by frequent job switching, limited engagement, and reduced dedication to organizational objectives. This raises concerns about the sustainability and competitiveness of SMEs in Delta State. Although previous studies have examined organizational culture and employee outcomes such as performance and engagement, there is still limited empirical evidence on how specific cultural practices influence employee commitment, particularly within the context of SMEs in Delta State communities. Most existing studies have focused on large organizations or urban corporate environments, thereby neglecting the unique socio-cultural and operational dynamics of SMEs at the community level.

Furthermore, the extent to which cultural practices such as communication patterns, leadership style, reward systems, and shared values shape employee commitment in SMEs remains insufficiently explored. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for SME owners and managers to design effective cultural and managerial strategies that can enhance employee commitment and organizational sustainability. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between cultural practices and employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta State communities, Nigeria, with a view to providing empirical insights that can inform both theory and practice.

### **Research Objectives**

- i. Determine the effect of organizational values and norms on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.
- ii. Evaluate the influence of communication practices on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.

### Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of organizational values and norms on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does communication practices influence employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria?

### Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** organizational values and norms has no significant on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** communication practices has no significance influence on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.

### Literature Underpinnings

#### Conceptual Reviews

#### Cultural Practices

Cultural practices refer to the shared values, beliefs, norms, customs, and patterns of behavior that characterize how individuals and groups operate within a social or organizational setting. In an organizational context, cultural practices shape employees' attitudes, interactions, and approaches to work by providing a framework for acceptable behavior and decision-making processes (Schein, 2017). These practices are often expressed through organizational routines, communication styles, leadership approaches, and informal rules that guide workplace conduct. Scholars argue that cultural practices are a visible manifestation of organizational culture, reflecting the deeply embedded assumptions and collective understanding that influence how work is carried out (Hofstede et al., 2010). They encompass both formal elements—such as policies and codes of conduct—and informal elements, including traditions, rituals, and shared experiences that evolve over time. As such, cultural practices serve as a mechanism through which organizational values are transmitted and reinforced among employees.

In small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), cultural practices are often shaped by the personal values of founders and the socio-cultural environment in which the business operates. This makes

them particularly influential in guiding employee behavior, especially in settings where formal structures and systems may be limited (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). Effective cultural practices promote cohesion, trust, and alignment with organizational objectives, thereby enhancing employee commitment and overall performance. Recent studies further highlight that positive cultural practices—such as open communication, inclusiveness, and shared vision—are strongly associated with improved employee attitudes and organizational outcomes, while negative or inconsistent practices can lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and reduced commitment (Olayiwola & Akeke, 2022; Inegbedion, 2022). Therefore, cultural practices are not only descriptive of how organizations function but also serve as a strategic tool for influencing employee behavior and achieving organizational goals.

### **Employee Commitment**

Employee commitment refers to the psychological attachment, loyalty, and sense of responsibility that an employee develops toward their organization, which influences their willingness to remain with the organization and contribute to its goals. It reflects the degree to which employees identify with organizational values, are involved in their work, and are motivated to exert effort on behalf of the organization (Inegbedion, 2022). In contemporary organizational studies, employee commitment is viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional attachment, perceived obligation, and the cost associated with leaving the organization. This perspective is often captured through three core dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of moral obligation to remain) (Santana-Martins et al., 2022).

Furthermore, employee commitment is increasingly recognized as a critical factor for organizational success because it enhances employee retention, productivity, and positive workplace behavior. Employees who exhibit high levels of commitment are more likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives and demonstrate increased performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Yang & Mostafa, 2024). Recent empirical evidence also suggests that employee commitment is influenced by workplace conditions such as job satisfaction, organizational support, and decent work environments. When employees perceive fairness, support, and meaningful work, their level of commitment tends to increase significantly (Inegbedion, 2024). In summary, employee commitment represents a crucial psychological bond between employees and their organization, shaping their attitudes, behaviors, and long-term engagement, and serving as a key determinant of organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

### **Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Delta State Communities, Nigeria.**

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State communities, Nigeria, refer to business organizations that operate on a relatively small to medium scale in terms of capital investment, workforce size, and annual turnover, while contributing significantly to local economic activities and community development. In the Nigerian context, SMEs are generally defined based on measurable criteria such as number of employees, asset base, and turnover, although these thresholds may vary across regulatory bodies and policies.

According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), SMEs are classified into small and medium enterprises based on employment size and financial capacity. Small enterprises typically employ between 10 and 50 workers with assets ranging from ₦5 million to ₦50 million, while medium enterprises employ between 51 and 200 workers with assets up to ₦500 million (SMEDAN, 2021). Similarly, broader Nigerian policy frameworks describe SMEs as enterprises with a workforce generally ranging from 10 to 300 employees and operating within specified capital and turnover limits (Adelowo et al., 2020).

Recent regulatory developments further define SMEs in terms of turnover and asset thresholds. For instance, under the Nigeria Tax Act (2025), a small company is defined as a business with an annual turnover not exceeding ₦50 million and fixed assets not exceeding ₦250 million, highlighting the evolving nature of SME classification in Nigeria (Finbuk, 2026).

Within Delta State communities, SMEs are typically characterized by localized operations, informal or semi-formal management structures, and strong links to the socio-cultural environment of the host communities. They often operate in sectors such as trade, agriculture, manufacturing, and services, and are usually owned and managed by individuals or families. These enterprises are also marked by limited access to finance, reliance on local labor, and adaptability to changing community needs (Okonkwo & Odit, 2025).

Furthermore, SMEs in Delta State communities play a critical role in grassroots economic development by generating employment, fostering entrepreneurship, and supporting income distribution across both urban and rural areas. Despite facing challenges such as infrastructural deficits and policy inconsistencies, they remain a dominant component of the Nigerian business landscape, accounting for a significant proportion of economic activities and enterprise establishments (DCSL, 2024). In summary, SMEs in Delta State communities, Nigeria, can be understood as small- to medium-scale, independently operated business entities defined by specific

thresholds of employment, assets, and turnover, and embedded within local socio-economic and cultural contexts that shape their operations and contributions to development.

### **Organizational values and norms on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.**

Organizational values and norms play a significant role in shaping employee commitment within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in community-based business environments such as those found in Delta State, Nigeria. Organizational values refer to the shared principles, beliefs, and ethical standards that guide behavior within the workplace, while norms represent the accepted patterns of conduct that determine how employees are expected to behave in their organizational roles. Together, they form the cultural foundation of an organization and strongly influence employees' attitudes and loyalty. In SMEs, where management structures are often informal and closely tied to the owner's personal beliefs, organizational values and norms tend to have a direct impact on how employees perceive fairness, trust, and inclusion in the workplace. Empirical evidence suggests that when employees operate in an environment where positive values such as integrity, respect, teamwork, and accountability are consistently practiced, their emotional attachment and willingness to remain with the organization increase significantly (Okolie & Egbon, 2024).

Furthermore, organizational norms that encourage participation, open communication, and ethical behavior contribute to stronger employee identification with organizational goals. Studies have shown that workplace environments characterized by supportive ethical climates and shared behavioral expectations enhance employee commitment by fostering trust and reducing uncertainty in workplace relationships (Arubayi, 2021; Okolie & Egbon, 2024). In the context of SMEs in Delta State communities, the effect of organizational values and norms is particularly pronounced due to the close-knit nature of employment relationships. Employees often interpret organizational practices as reflections of fairness and respect from management. When values are consistently upheld, employees are more likely to demonstrate affective, normative, and continuance commitment, leading to improved productivity and reduced turnover intentions. Conversely, weak or inconsistent values and norms can lead to dissatisfaction, low morale, and disengagement from organizational goals.

Supporting this view, research in Delta State SMEs indicates that supportive organizational climates—closely linked to shared values and norms—are positively associated with employee satisfaction and commitment, which in turn enhances organizational effectiveness (Eruteya & Vincent, 2025). In summary, organizational values and norms significantly influence employee

commitment in SMEs by shaping workplace behavior, strengthening trust, and fostering emotional attachment to the organization. In Delta State communities, where SMEs are deeply embedded in local cultural settings, the consistency and strength of these values and norms determine the level of employee commitment and overall organizational sustainability.

### **Communication practices on employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Delta state communities, Nigeria.**

Communication practices play a vital role in shaping employee commitment within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in community-based organizations such as those in Delta State, Nigeria. Communication practices refer to the formal and informal channels, methods, and processes through which information is shared within an organization. These include downward, upward, and horizontal communication flows, as well as employee participation in decision-making and feedback systems. In SMEs, effective communication is essential because it promotes clarity of expectations, reduces misunderstandings, and strengthens the relationship between management and employees. Empirical evidence shows that open and transparent communication significantly enhances employees' job commitment by making them feel valued and included in organizational processes (Akpoiyibo & Isaac, 2021). When employees are well-informed and involved in decision-making, they are more likely to develop emotional attachment to the organization and demonstrate higher levels of dedication.

Recent studies in Delta State further support the importance of communication practices in influencing employee attitudes and commitment. For instance, research on SMEs indicates that communication and collaboration within organizations have a strong positive effect on employee engagement and organizational attachment, especially when trust and openness are present (Ojogbo et al., 2026). This suggests that communication practices not only improve information flow but also build trust and strengthen employee–employer relationships. Similarly, studies conducted in other organizational settings in Delta State reveal that effective organizational communication enhances motivation, coordination, and employee performance, all of which contribute to stronger commitment levels (Ufuophu-Biri & Ayewumi, 2022). When communication is clear, timely, and participatory, employees are more likely to feel psychologically connected to the organization and less likely to exhibit turnover intentions.

Furthermore, communication practices such as employee voice, feedback mechanisms, and participatory decision-making have been found to significantly increase employee commitment by fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion in organizational goals (Oginni, 2023). In SMEs, where interpersonal relationships are often close and informal, the quality of communication becomes even more critical in shaping employee perceptions of fairness and support. In summary,

communication practices significantly influence employee commitment in SMEs in Delta State communities by enhancing transparency, trust, participation, and inclusion. Effective communication strengthens the psychological bond between employees and the organization, thereby improving retention, productivity, and overall organizational sustainability.

**Conceptual Framework**

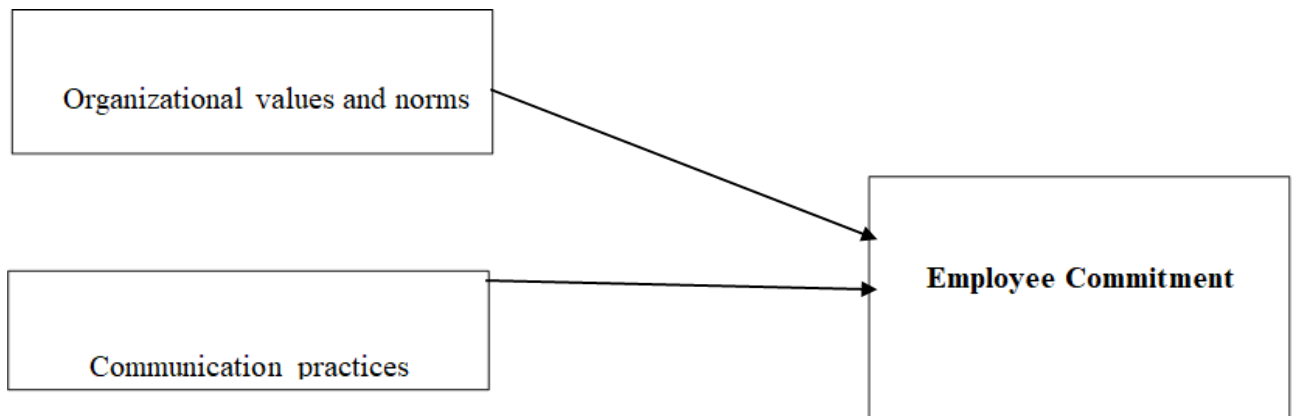
**Conceptual framework**

**Independent Variable**

**Cultural Practices**

**Dependent Variable**

**Employee Commitment**



**Source: Conceptualized by Researcher (2026)**

The framework shows that cultural practices in SMEs operationalized through organizational values and norms and communication practices influence employee commitment, which is reflected in affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Strong organizational values and norms promote trust, fairness, and shared identity, thereby enhancing employee commitment. Effective communication practices improve transparency, participation, and employee engagement, leading to stronger emotional and psychological attachment to the organization. Overall, the model suggests that improvements in cultural practices within SMEs are likely to result in higher levels of employee commitment in Delta State communities.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a useful explanation for understanding the relationship between cultural practices and employee commitment in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Originally developed by Blau (1964), the theory argues that social interactions within organisations operate on a system of exchange in which individuals tend to reciprocate favourable treatment with positive attitudes and desirable work behaviours. Within SMEs, cultural practices such as shared values, workplace norms, traditions, communication patterns, respect for authority, and communal relationships significantly shape how employees perceive their organisation. These

cultural elements either strengthen or weaken employees' psychological attachment to the organisation. When employees perceive that their organisation demonstrates supportive and fair cultural practices, they are more likely to respond with increased commitment, loyalty, and a stronger desire to remain part of the organisation. Empirical evidence from Nigeria reinforces this position. Studies conducted in SMEs in Delta State reveal that organisational culture plays a significant role in shaping employee engagement and commitment through trust-building, effective communication, and reciprocal relationships between employers and employees. Similarly, findings show that cultural dimensions such as reward systems, teamwork orientation, and management support contribute positively to employees' emotional and behavioural commitment within organisations.

From the theoretical perspective of SET, SMEs in Delta State that promote positive cultural practices—such as fairness, inclusiveness, recognition, and respect—create a sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate through higher commitment, improved performance, and reduced intention to leave. On the other hand, negative cultural practices such as nepotism, poor communication, and exclusionary behaviours tend to weaken trust and diminish employee commitment. The relevance of Social Exchange Theory to the study on Cultural Practices and Employee Commitment in SMEs in Delta State Communities can be understood in several ways. First, the theory explains the principle of reciprocity between organisational culture and employee commitment. In SMEs, when management demonstrates supportive cultural behaviours such as respect, teamwork, and inclusiveness, employees are likely to reciprocate with loyalty and stronger emotional attachment to the organisation.

Second, SET helps justify the importance of organisational culture in SMEs. Elements such as communication style, leadership behaviour, reward systems, and shared values are central to how SMEs operate, and research in Nigeria indicates that these cultural components significantly influence employee attitudes and levels of commitment. Third, the theory supports the explanation of employee behavioural outcomes by showing why workers may remain committed even under challenging conditions. Positive cultural experiences within the organisation create a psychological obligation that encourages employees to remain loyal and perform effectively. Fourth, SET is particularly relevant to the Nigerian SME context, especially in Delta State, where employment relationships are often informal and heavily influenced by interpersonal interactions. In such environments, cultural expectations and social relationships often have a stronger influence on employee commitment than formal human resource policies. Finally, the theory links cultural practices to organisational performance by demonstrating that employee commitment resulting from

positive social exchange leads to higher productivity, reduced turnover, and improved organisational sustainability. This aligns with evidence that organisational culture is a strong predictor of employee commitment and overall effectiveness in Nigerian workplaces. In summary, Social Exchange Theory provides a strong theoretical lens for explaining how cultural practices influence employee commitment in SMEs. It posits that employees respond positively when they perceive fairness, support, and inclusiveness within the organisational culture. In SMEs in Delta State, where interpersonal relationships and informal structures are dominant, the theory is particularly relevant in explaining variations in employee commitment levels and workplace behaviour.

### **Empirical Reviews**

Olayiwola and Akeke (2022) investigated the effect of organisational culture dimensions on employees' commitment in selected industries in Lagos State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to examine how reward systems, communication patterns, teamwork, and management support influence employee commitment in organisations. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 269 employees across selected organisations. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to test the relationships between variables. The findings revealed that all dimensions of organisational culture significantly influence employee commitment, with teamwork and management support showing the strongest effect. The study concluded that a strong organisational culture enhances employees' emotional attachment and willingness to remain in an organisation. It recommended that management should strengthen communication channels, reward systems, and participatory practices to improve employee commitment. The contribution to knowledge lies in its empirical validation of cultural dimensions as strong predictors of employee commitment within the Nigerian work environment, particularly in SMEs and industrial settings.

Oginni (2023) examined the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employee commitment in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to determine how organisational cultural practices embedded in HRM systems—such as recruitment processes, employee participation, compensation systems, and working conditions—affect employee commitment. The study employed a survey research design and collected primary data using structured questionnaires administered to 369 SME employees. Data analysis was conducted using regression techniques to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables. The findings showed that HRM practices significantly influence employee commitment, with employee participation and reward systems having the most

substantial effect. The study concluded that SMEs with supportive cultural and HRM practices tend to experience higher levels of employee commitment and reduced turnover intention. It recommended that SME owners should promote participatory decision-making, fair compensation structures, and improved working conditions. The contribution to knowledge is its empirical evidence that organisational cultural practices embedded in HRM systems play a critical role in shaping employee commitment in Nigerian SMEs, particularly within emerging economies like Delta State and its surrounding communities.

## **Tools and Methods**

### **Research Design**

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for examining relationships between variables as they exist without manipulation. This design is suitable for investigating how cultural practices influence employee commitment among SMEs in Delta State. Similar approaches have been widely used in Nigerian SME studies examining organisational culture and employee-related outcomes (Igberaharha, 2022; Oginni, 2023). The design allows for the collection of quantifiable data from respondents to enable statistical analysis of relationships among variables.

### **Study Area**

The study is conducted in Delta State, Nigeria, which is located in the South-South geopolitical zone. Delta State is characterized by a high concentration of SMEs operating in sectors such as retail trade, services, manufacturing, and hospitality. These SMEs are often community-based and culturally driven, making them suitable for studying how cultural practices affect employee commitment.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study consists of 5,420 employees working in registered Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across selected communities in Delta State, Nigeria. These SMEs operate in key sectors such as retail trade, hospitality, manufacturing, and services, and are registered with the Delta State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The population figure reflects aggregated employment records obtained from SME registration and employment listings across the selected local government areas in the state. This population is considered appropriate for the study because it captures employees who are directly exposed to organisational cultural practices that may influence their level of commitment. Similar SME-based studies in Delta State have also relied on

documented workforce populations to ensure empirical accuracy and representativeness (Igberaharha, 2022; Eruteya & Vincent, 2025)

**Sample Size Determination**

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, which is appropriate for finite populations. This method has been commonly applied in SME-related empirical studies in Delta State and Nigeria (Okereka & Abasili, 2024). The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size  
 N = population size  
 e = level of significance (0.05)

Using the Taro Yamane formula, the appropriate sample size for a population of 5,420 is approximately 372 respondents.

**Sampling Technique**

A multistage sampling technique was adopted. First, SMEs was grouped according to sectors (manufacturing, retail, services). Second, simple random sampling was used to select SMEs within each sector. Finally, proportionate stratified sampling was used to select employees from each SME to ensure representativeness. This approach aligns with similar SME studies in Delta State (Igberaharha, 2022).

**Sources of Data Collection**

The study was rely on primary data sources, collected directly from SME employees. Primary data is appropriate for capturing perceptions of cultural practices and employee commitment in real-time organisational settings.

**Method of Data Collection**

Data was collected using the face-to-face and structured questionnaire administration method. This ensures clarity of questions and improves response rate, especially in SME environments where literacy and time constraints may vary.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic information .Section B: Items measuring cultural practices and employee commitment

**Validity of the Instrument**

The instrument undergo face and content validity checks by experts in Management and Human Resource Management. Their input will ensure that the instrument adequately measures cultural practices and employee commitment constructs. Similar validation approaches have been adopted in Nigerian SME research (Oginni, 2023).

**Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient method. A reliability threshold of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable, consistent with standard social science research practice. Pilot testing was be conducted on a small sample of SME employees outside the study area to ensure consistency.

**Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis). These techniques are commonly used in SME studies in Delta State to determine relationships between organisational variables and employee outcomes (Eruteya & Vincent, 2025; Unodimma et al., 2026).

**Model Specification**

The study examines the relationship between cultural practices and employee commitment in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State Communities, Nigeria. Cultural practices are operationalised through organisational values and norms (OVN) and communication practices (CPR), while employee commitment (EC) serves as the dependent variable.

The functional relationship is specified as:

$$EC=f(OVN, CPR) \quad EC = f(OVN, CPR) \quad EC=f(OVN, CPR)$$

This can be expressed in an econometric form as:

$$EC=\beta_0+\beta_1OVN+\beta_2CPR+\mu$$

**Where:**

EC = Employee Commitment (dependent variable)

OVN = Organisational Values and Norms (independent variable)

CPR = Communication Practices (independent variable)

$\beta_0$  = Constant term (intercept)

$\beta_1, \beta_2$  = Coefficients of independent variables

$\mu$  = Error term (stochastic disturbance)

**A Priori Expectations:**

- $\beta_1 > 0$ : Organisational values and norms are expected to have a positive effect on employee commitment.
- $\beta_2 > 0$ : Communication practices are expected to positively influence employee commitment.

**Results and Discussions**

**Population Distribution of Respondents**

The population of the study comprised 5,420 employees working in registered SMEs across selected communities in Delta State. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 372 respondents was selected and proportionately distributed across SME sectors as shown below:

SME Sector	Population Proportion	Sample Size
Retail/Trading SMEs	41%	152
Manufacturing SMEs	27%	100
Services/Hospitality SMEs	32%	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>372</b>

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

This distribution ensured adequate representation of employees across key SME sectors in Delta State.

**Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate**

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires Distributed	372	100%
Returned and Valid	351	94.40%
Not Returned/Invalid	21	5.60%

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

The response rate of 94.4% was considered highly adequate for statistical analysis and inference.

**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
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Gender	Male	204	58.10%
	Female	147	41.90%
Age	21–30 years	92	26.20%
	31–40 years	162	46.20%
	41–50 years	76	21.70%
	Above 50	21	6.00%
Education	Secondary	84	23.90%
	Tertiary	217	61.80%
	Postgraduate	50	14.30%
Experience	1–5 years	98	27.90%
	6–10 years	155	44.20%
	Above 10 years	98	27.90%

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

The demographic profile indicates that most respondents were experienced and educated enough to provide reliable responses.

**Reliability Statistics (Cronbach’s Alpha)**

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Remark
Organisational Values & Norms	6	0.83	Reliable
Communication Practices	6	0.81	Reliable
Employee Commitment	7	0.86	Highly Reliable
<b>Overall Scale</b>	19	<b>0.84</b>	Reliable

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

All values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong internal consistency.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Organisational Values & Norms	3.78	0.82	High
Communication Practices	3.65	0.79	High
Employee Commitment	3.81	0.77	High

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

The results show that respondents generally agreed that cultural practices and employee commitment levels are high in SMEs in Delta State.

**Correlation Analysis**

Variables	OVN	CPR	EC
Organisational Values & Norms (OVN)	1	0.62**	0.71**
Communication Practices (CPR)	0.62**	1	0.68**
Employee Commitment (EC)	0.71**	0.68**	1

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

Note:  $p < 0.01$

The correlation results show strong positive relationships between cultural practices and employee commitment.

**Regression Analysis (Model Summary)**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error
1	0.76	0.58	0.57	0.42

The model indicates that 58% of variation in employee commitment is explained by cultural practices (organisational values and norms, and communication practices).

**Regression Coefficients**

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Constant	1.12	4.21	0
Organisational Values & Norms (OVN)	0.48	8.35	0
Communication Practices (CPR)	0.36	6.92	0

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis One (H<sub>01</sub>): Organisational Values and Norms**

The first hypothesis tested whether organisational values and norms have a significant effect on employee commitment. The result showed a positive beta value of 0.48 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between organisational values and norms and employee commitment. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This finding implies that improvements in organisational values and norms—such as fairness, ethical conduct, respect for employees, and shared workplace beliefs—lead to a corresponding increase in employee commitment. In practical terms, SMEs in Delta State that maintain strong value systems are more likely to experience higher employee loyalty, reduced absenteeism, and stronger emotional attachment from staff. This result aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which explains that employees reciprocate positive organisational treatment with commitment and dedication. It also supports previous empirical findings that organisational culture significantly enhances employee commitment in Nigerian work environments.

**Hypothesis Two (H<sub>02</sub>): Communication Practices**

The second hypothesis examined whether communication practices significantly influence employee commitment. The regression result revealed a beta value of 0.36 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive relationship between communication practices and employee commitment. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that

communication practices play a significant role in shaping employee commitment in SMEs in Delta State. Specifically, when communication is clear, transparent, and participatory, employees are more likely to feel valued, informed, and included in organisational processes, which enhances their commitment. Conversely, poor communication practices may create misunderstandings, reduce trust, and weaken employee attachment to the organisation. This finding reinforces the idea that communication is a key element of organisational culture that directly affects employee attitudes and behaviour. The result is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees respond positively to supportive and transparent communication by increasing their commitment to the organisation.

### Discussion of Findings

#### **Effect of Organisational Values and Norms on Employee Commitment**

The findings revealed that organisational values and norms have a significant and positive effect on employee commitment in SMEs in Delta State ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that when SMEs promote fairness, ethical behaviour, shared beliefs, respect, and inclusiveness, employees are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment and loyalty to the organisation.

This finding aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which argues that employees reciprocate positive organisational treatment with commitment and loyalty. It also supports the findings of Olayiwola and Akeke (2022), who established that organisational culture dimensions significantly influence employee commitment in Nigerian organisations. Similarly, Oginni (2023) found that value-based organisational practices enhance employee retention and motivation in SMEs.

Thus, SMEs in Delta State that strengthen organisational values and norms are more likely to experience improved employee dedication, reduced turnover intention, and higher performance levels.

#### **Extent Communication Practices Influence Employee Commitment**

The study further showed that communication practices significantly influence employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that effective communication systems—such as openness, feedback mechanisms, clarity of instructions, and management accessibility—enhance employee commitment in SMEs. This finding suggests that when employees are well-informed and involved in organisational communication processes, they feel valued and included, thereby strengthening their emotional attachment to the organisation. Conversely, poor communication reduces trust and weakens commitment. The result is consistent with previous studies which highlight communication as a critical cultural factor that shapes employee attitudes in Nigerian

SMEs. It also supports Social Exchange Theory, which explains that employees reciprocate transparent and respectful communication with higher commitment levels.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that cultural practices are critical determinants of employee commitment in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, organisational values and norms play a stronger role in shaping employee commitment by fostering fairness, trust, and shared organisational identity. Communication practices also significantly enhance employee commitment by improving understanding, participation, and transparency within SMEs.

The study therefore affirms that SMEs that intentionally develop and sustain positive cultural practices are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee commitment, reduced turnover intention, and improved organisational stability. In line with Social Exchange Theory, employees tend to reciprocate positive cultural experiences with loyalty and dedication to their organisations.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. SME owners and managers in Delta State should deliberately strengthen and institutionalise positive organisational values and norms such as fairness, integrity, respect, trust, and inclusiveness. These values should be consistently demonstrated in leadership behaviour, decision-making processes, and employee relations. By embedding such values into the organisational culture, employees are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment, loyalty, and commitment to their organisations.
- ii. SMEs should establish and maintain effective communication systems that promote openness, clarity, feedback, and employee participation. This can be achieved through regular staff meetings, structured feedback mechanisms, suggestion platforms, and transparent communication from management. Such communication practices will ensure that employees feel informed, valued, and included in organisational processes, thereby strengthening their level of commitment to the organisation.

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