

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF  
GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the relationship between leadership development and organizational performance operationalized through organizational effectiveness and employee retention rate in government ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Dynamic Capabilities Theory and the Human Capital Theory. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted with a target population of 2,764 senior civil servants (Grade Level 08 and above) distributed across 26 government ministries in Rivers State. Using Taro Yamane's sampling formula, 316 usable questionnaire responses were analyzed. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed for hypothesis testing at a 0.05 significance level. Results revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and organizational effectiveness ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and a moderate-to-strong positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and employee retention rate ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Both null hypotheses were rejected. The study concluded that leadership development is a significant predictor of organizational performance in public sector ministries and recommended the institutionalization of structured leadership development pathways, cross-departmental assignment programs, and competency-based leadership training within Rivers State government ministries.

***Keywords: Leadership Development, Organizational Performance, Effectiveness, Employee Retention Rate, Government Ministries***

**Introduction**

The capacity of government organizations to perform at high levels is fundamentally determined by the quality of leadership operating within them. In contemporary public administration, leadership is no longer conceived merely as a positional attribute but as a developable organizational competency that requires deliberate cultivation, structured training, and continuous capacity building (Van Wart, 2013). Leadership development, broadly defined as the totality of formal and informal developmental activities that help managers enhance their skills, competencies, and knowledge for organizational benefit, has gained recognition as one of the most strategically consequential human resource investments available to organizations (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). The performance of government ministries — measured in terms of their effectiveness in achieving policy targets and their capacity to retain experienced employees — is increasingly linked to the quality and depth of leadership development programs embedded within their organizational systems. In Rivers State, Nigeria, where government ministries are responsible for implementing the development agenda of the state government across 26 sectoral departments, the caliber of leadership within these institutions directly determines how effectively state resources are deployed and how successfully government programs reach citizens.

In spite the theoretical and practical significance of leadership development for public sector performance, Nigerian government ministries have historically underinvested in systematic leadership training and development programs (Ohaka, 2011; Rothwell, 2016). Civil servant promotions in many Nigerian states have been criticized for prioritizing seniority over competence, and structured leadership development programs — including leadership academies, cross-departmental rotation schemes, and competency-based training programs — remain underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented (Dessler, 2019). The consequences of this deficit are evident in the persistent performance gaps characterizing many Nigerian government ministries:

delayed policy implementation, poor service quality, inadequate accountability mechanisms, and high attrition of experienced mid-career civil servants who leave for more developmental environments (Van Wart, 2013; Lussier & Hendon, 2019). There is therefore a compelling policy and scholarly case for investigating how leadership development relates to organizational effectiveness and employee retention in Rivers State's government ministries.

A substantial international literature has established positive relationships between leadership development and various dimensions of organizational performance. Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) demonstrated that transformational leadership development programs are associated with higher employee performance, organizational commitment, and innovation. Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2011) showed that organizations with structured leadership pipelines achieve better strategic alignment, improved role transitions, and stronger institutional performance. Day et al. (2014) confirmed that leadership development improves collective organizational outcomes by strengthening human capital and enhancing leadership processes. However, a critical examination of this body of literature reveals a significant gap: the majority of studies are conducted in private sector organizations in developed economies, with very limited empirical evidence from subnational public sector institutions in sub-Saharan Africa (Snell & Bohlander, 2013). Furthermore, while much of the existing research examines leadership development's effects on financial performance or productivity metrics, fewer studies have specifically investigated its relationship with organizational effectiveness — the degree of goal achievement — and employee retention rate as distinct but related performance dimensions in government contexts.

This study addresses this knowledge gap by empirically examining the relationship between leadership development and two specific measures of organizational performance — effectiveness and employee retention rate — in government ministries in Rivers State. The study responds to the need for contextually specific evidence on public sector performance drivers in developing-country subnational governments. By drawing on survey data from 316 senior civil servants across 26 Rivers State government ministries, the study provides original empirical contributions that can inform both human resource policy and succession planning strategy in the Nigerian public sector. The rest of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant conceptual and empirical literature; Section 3 describes the research methodology; Section 4 presents and discusses results; and Section 5 provides conclusions and recommendations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Rivers State government ministries are mandated to deliver development outcomes across sectors including education, health, infrastructure, agriculture, and social welfare. Effective delivery of these mandates requires that ministry leadership at all levels — from directors to permanent secretaries — possess the strategic, technical, and relational competencies needed to manage people, resources, and complex policy processes. Yet systematic leadership development programs are largely absent or inadequately implemented across most Rivers State ministries, resulting in a leadership capacity deficit that manifests in poor policy implementation records, high employee turnover particularly among mid-career professionals, and suboptimal resource utilization (Ohaka, 2011). When civil servants perceive limited opportunities for leadership growth within the public service, they often migrate to the private sector, NGOs, or federal government agencies, depleting the state ministries of experienced talent and disrupting institutional continuity.

Although several studies have examined leadership development in Nigerian organizations, most have focused on private sector firms, particularly banking and manufacturing (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Snell & Bohlander, 2013). Studies specifically addressing leadership development and organizational performance in Rivers State government ministries are virtually absent from the empirical literature, creating a knowledge vacuum that impedes evidence-based policy formulation. Furthermore, the existing literature has not sufficiently disaggregated organizational performance into specific public-sector-relevant dimensions such as policy implementation effectiveness and employee retention rate, which have distinct strategic significance for government ministries. This

study was therefore conducted to address this dual gap — both in contextual specificity and in the dimensionality of organizational performance — by empirically examining how leadership development relates to organizational effectiveness and employee retention rate in Rivers State government ministries.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Leadership Development**

Leadership development refers to the deliberate and structured expansion of an individual's capacity to perform in leadership roles and processes, encompassing the cultivation of knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that enable effective leadership at various organizational levels (Day et al., 2014). It is distinguished from management training in its emphasis on developing not only technical competencies but also the interpersonal, strategic, and adaptive capacities required to navigate complex organizational environments. Contemporary leadership development frameworks recognize both formal modalities — including training programs, leadership academies, executive education, and structured learning curricula — and informal modalities such as mentoring, coaching, job rotation, stretch assignments, and action learning (Marquardt, 2011; Raelin, 2016). In government ministries, leadership development is particularly critical because public sector leadership must navigate political environments, manage diverse stakeholder expectations, implement government policies, and maintain institutional accountability — competencies that require deliberate and sustained cultivation (Van Wart, 2013).

The theoretical foundations of leadership development draw from multiple traditions. Leadership Pipeline Theory (Charan et al., 2011) argues that effective organizations systematically develop leaders at each level of the organizational hierarchy, creating a continuous talent flow from operational roles through middle management to strategic leadership positions. This framework emphasizes the importance of structured transitions between leadership levels, each requiring distinct competencies, time applications, and work values. Transformational Leadership Theory (Avolio et al., 2009) provides an additional theoretical anchor, demonstrating that leaders who are developed to exhibit transformational behaviors — inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence — achieve higher performance outcomes in their organizations than transactional leaders focused purely on task management. Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997) further supports leadership development as a strategic investment by positing that organizations create sustainable competitive advantage through building and deploying capabilities that competitors cannot easily replicate, with leadership competency representing precisely such a rare and inimitable resource.

### **Organizational Effectiveness**

Organizational effectiveness refers to the degree to which an organization successfully achieves its predetermined objectives and fulfills its mandate to key stakeholders (Yang, 2007; Richard et al., 2009). In government ministries, effectiveness is most directly measured through the achievement of policy implementation targets, the quality of public services delivered, and the capacity to translate government programs into citizen-level outcomes. Fallon and Brinkerhoff (2006) conceptualized organizational effectiveness within the framework of organizational performance improvement, emphasizing that effective organizations systematically align resources, processes, people, and strategies toward intended outcomes. Mott (2002) proposed that organizational effectiveness encompasses adaptability and the capacity to mobilize organizational power for productive action — both attributes that are directly shaped by the quality of leadership development within the organization. For government ministries operating under public accountability frameworks, effectiveness is not merely an internal management concern but a constitutional obligation with direct implications for governance quality and citizen welfare.

### **Employee Retention Rate**

Employee retention rate refers to the proportion of employees who remain in an organization over a specified period, reflecting the organization's capacity to maintain a stable and experienced workforce (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011). High retention rates are strategically important for organizational performance because they preserve institutional knowledge, reduce turnover costs, maintain team cohesion, and sustain productivity levels (Phillips & Connell, 2003). In government ministries, employee retention is particularly significant because civil servants accumulate substantial ministry-specific knowledge — about policies, processes, stakeholder relationships, and operational systems — that is difficult to replace through new recruitment. When experienced civil servants leave, they take this institutional memory with them, creating performance gaps that may take years to fill. Meyer and Allen (1997) identified organizational commitment as the primary psychological driver of retention, and leadership development contributes to retention by creating developmental opportunities that enhance employees' affective commitment to the organization and their perception of career growth prospects within the public service.

### **Relationship Between Leadership Development and Organizational Performance**

The relationship between leadership development and organizational performance operates through multiple mechanisms. First, leadership development improves decision-making quality: leaders who undergo structured development programs gain analytical skills, strategic thinking abilities, and problem-solving competencies that enable them to make informed decisions improving administrative efficiency and policy effectiveness (Van Wart, 2013). Second, leadership development enhances employee motivation and engagement: well-developed leaders adopt supportive and transformational behaviors that inspire employees, promote teamwork, and encourage productivity, generating positive climate effects that improve organizational performance (Avolio et al., 2009). Third, leadership development facilitates strategic alignment: development programs help leaders understand and communicate organizational vision, ensuring coordinated efforts toward institutional objectives (Yukl, 2013, as cited in Charan et al., 2011). Fourth, leadership development supports talent retention: ministries that invest in development programs create internal growth pathways that increase employee loyalty and retention by signaling organizational commitment to career development (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Fifth, leadership development strengthens succession capacity: by building a pipeline of leadership-ready employees, organizations ensure continuity, reduce the disruptive effects of leadership transitions, and maintain stable performance trajectories (Rothwell, 2016).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Human Capital Theory.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997) posits that organizations create sustainable performance advantages by sensing, seizing, and transforming their capabilities in response to environmental changes. In the context of government ministries, leadership development constitutes a dynamic capability — it enables ministries to continuously build and renew the leadership competencies required to implement evolving government policies and respond to changing citizen needs. The theory predicts that ministries investing in leadership development will demonstrate superior effectiveness and workforce stability relative to those with underdeveloped leadership pipelines, a prediction this study empirically tests.

Human Capital Theory (Becker & Huselid, 2006) complements this perspective by framing leadership development as a productive investment in employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies that generates organizational returns in the form of improved performance outcomes. Together, these theories provide the conceptual foundation for expecting that leadership development will have significant positive relationships with organizational effectiveness and employee retention rate in Rivers State government ministries.

## **Empirical Review**

Day et al. (2014) conducted a landmark review of 25 years of leadership development research, synthesizing evidence from across disciplines on how leadership development initiatives influence individual and collective performance outcomes. The study found robust evidence that structured leadership development programs improve team coordination, decision-making quality, organizational effectiveness, and leadership continuity when strategically aligned with institutional goals. The review emphasized that leadership development must be conceptualized as an organizational, not merely individual, investment — with returns accruing at both the leader and organizational performance levels.

Avolio et al. (2009) examined leadership development theories, with particular emphasis on transformational leadership, and their organizational performance implications. Their systematic review and empirical analysis demonstrated that organizations investing in transformational leadership development programs experience higher employee performance, organizational commitment, and innovation. The study's findings are directly relevant to the current context, as transformational leadership behaviors — developed through deliberate training — are particularly suited to the motivational challenges of public sector environments.

Charan et al. (2011) examined leadership pipeline development as a strategic organizational performance lever. Their qualitative study found that organizations with structured leadership pipelines demonstrate better strategic alignment, more effective role transitions, and stronger institutional performance outcomes. The authors argued that leadership development must be systematically sequenced to prepare leaders for increasing levels of organizational complexity, a recommendation with particular relevance for government ministry leadership structures.

Van Wart (2013) examined lessons from leadership theory for contemporary public administration challenges. His empirical analysis of public sector organizations found that leadership development investments are positively associated with administrative efficiency, improved policy implementation, and better employee performance outcomes. The study specifically highlighted that leadership development in government organizations must address the unique competencies required for navigating political environments and managing public accountability obligations.

Collings and Mellahi (2009) examined strategic talent management and its performance implications, finding that organizations implementing systematic leadership development and talent management programs achieve superior performance outcomes. Their research demonstrated that leadership development contributes to employee retention by creating developmental pathways that enhance organizational commitment. Organizations with structured leadership development systems were found to have significantly lower voluntary turnover rates than those without such systems.

Snell and Bohlander (2013) reviewed strategic human resource management practices and found that integrated HR systems incorporating leadership development achieve higher productivity, commitment, and institutional effectiveness. Their analysis documented a consistent positive relationship between formal leadership training investments and organizational performance outcomes across multiple industries and organizational contexts.

Goleman et al. (2013) demonstrated that emotionally intelligent leadership — cultivated through deliberate development programs — creates organizational climates characterized by higher engagement, effective teamwork, and improved performance. Their empirical analysis showed that leaders trained in emotional intelligence and interpersonal leadership skills generate significant positive performance effects in their teams and organizations, including improved operational efficiency and reduced turnover.

Huselid (1995) conducted a large-scale quantitative study demonstrating that high-performance work systems — including leadership development — are positively associated with organizational productivity, lower employee turnover, and improved financial performance. The study provided foundational empirical evidence that systematic investment in leadership training and development produces measurable organizational returns, including improved retention of talented employees.

Rothwell (2016) examined succession planning and leadership development in both public and private sector contexts. His research demonstrated that organizations with formal leadership development programs as components of succession planning systems achieve higher organizational performance, reduced leadership gaps, and stronger workforce stability. The study specifically found that public sector organizations with structured leadership development programs demonstrate better policy implementation records and higher employee retention.

Meyer and Smith (2000) investigated HR practices, employee commitment, and organizational performance. Their study found that development-oriented HR practices, including leadership training programs, positively influence employee organizational commitment, which in turn mediates improvements in performance. Specifically, employees who perceive organizational investment in their leadership growth demonstrate higher affective commitment and lower voluntary turnover intentions — directly linking leadership development to retention outcomes.

Noe (2020) documented empirical evidence that organizations implementing systematic leadership development programs achieve measurably higher employee performance and retention rates. His analysis of training and development ROI demonstrated that leadership development programs reduce turnover costs, preserve institutional knowledge, and generate sustained performance improvements — findings with direct applicability to the government ministry context examined in this study.

Day and Dragonì (2015, as cited in Day et al., 2014) examined leadership development processes and their influence on team and organizational performance. Their empirical analysis found that leadership development improves team coordination, decision-making, and performance when programs are aligned with organizational strategy. The study emphasized that developmental experiences — including challenging assignments, mentoring, and formal training — must be deliberately integrated to produce maximum performance returns.

Harter et al. (2002) demonstrated through meta-analysis that employee engagement — partially driven by developmental opportunities including leadership training — is positively associated with multiple organizational performance outcomes including productivity, efficiency, and employee retention. The study's findings across 7,939 business units confirmed that organizations creating developmental opportunities for employees achieve systematically higher performance outcomes.

Garavan et al. (2012) examined talent development systems and their organizational performance outcomes, finding that structured leadership development is a central pillar of effective talent development architectures. Their research demonstrated that organizations integrating leadership development into comprehensive talent management frameworks achieve higher institutional effectiveness and stronger employee retention than those using fragmented developmental approaches.

Salas et al. (2012) reviewed the science of training and development, documenting that well-designed developmental interventions including leadership training significantly improve knowledge application, performance quality, and organizational learning outcomes. The review highlighted that leadership development produces the most significant performance gains when it is systematic, contextually relevant, and aligned with organizational objectives.

Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) examined collective turnover and its organizational performance implications, finding that developmental practices that create career growth opportunities — including leadership training — significantly reduce voluntary turnover and improve institutional performance stability. The study demonstrated that leadership development investments are among the most effective organizational tools for managing turnover and preserving productive institutional capacity.

Kuvaas et al. (2017) examined the relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee performance, finding that leadership development programs emphasizing learning, growth, and competency building produce more sustainable performance improvements and stronger retention

effects than extrinsic incentive systems alone. The study's findings support the use of leadership development as a long-term performance and retention investment in the public sector.

Phillips and Connell (2003) examined retention strategies and their organizational performance implications, finding that organizations combining developmental programs with explicit retention initiatives achieve the most significant improvements in workforce stability. Their research demonstrated that employees who perceive clear development pathways — including leadership opportunities — are significantly more likely to remain in the organization, directly linking leadership development to improved employee retention rates.

Lussier and Hendon (2019) documented that organizations implementing structured leadership development programs experience measurable improvements in employee productivity, skill application, and retention. Their analysis highlighted that leadership development is particularly cost-effective in complex, knowledge-intensive organizations — such as government ministries — where the opportunity cost of losing trained leaders is especially high.

Pedler, Burgoyne, and Brook (2017) examined action learning approaches to leadership development and their organizational outcomes, finding that leadership programs incorporating real-world problem solving and reflection produce superior retention and performance outcomes compared to purely classroom-based approaches. Their research supports the cross-departmental assignment component of leadership development as particularly effective in building the contextual competencies that drive institutional effectiveness.

Robbins and Judge (2017) examined organizational behavior dimensions of leadership development, documenting evidence that transformational leadership development programs produce measurably higher employee commitment, job satisfaction, and retention. The study's evidence supports the pathway from leadership development to retention through enhanced organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Dessler (2019) documented comprehensive empirical evidence that systematic leadership development programs are among the most effective HR investments for improving both organizational performance and employee retention. His analysis of multiple organizational contexts demonstrated that the performance and retention returns from leadership development are particularly significant in public sector organizations where competitive compensation packages are often unavailable, making developmental opportunities a primary retention lever.

Schein (2010) examined organizational culture and leadership, finding that leaders trained in organizational culture management are better equipped to create environments that retain talented employees. His research established that leadership development programs incorporating culture awareness and organizational development competencies produce the most significant improvements in organizational effectiveness and workforce stability in institutional settings.

Marquardt (2011) examined action learning and its organizational performance contributions, finding that leadership development programs employing action learning methodologies produce stronger performance improvements and higher retention outcomes than traditional training approaches. The study demonstrated that leadership development which challenges leaders with real organizational problems while providing structured reflection builds the adaptive competencies most critical for organizational effectiveness in dynamic environments such as government ministries.

Northouse (2019) provided comprehensive empirical documentation that leadership development, across diverse leadership theories and modalities, consistently produces positive organizational performance outcomes. His systematic review of leadership development effectiveness confirmed that organizations investing in structured leadership programs — particularly those integrating multiple developmental modalities — achieve sustained improvements in both institutional effectiveness and employee commitment.

**Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between leadership development and effectiveness of government ministries in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between leadership development and employee retention rate of government ministries in Rivers State.

**Methodology**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, appropriate for investigating relationships between variables at a single point in time across a defined organizational population (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009). A positivist philosophical paradigm underpinned the research, consistent with its quantitative orientation and reliance on deductive hypothesis testing as the primary analytical strategy (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The target population for the study comprised 2,764 senior civil servants on Grade Level 08 and above employed across the 26 government ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria, as documented in the official records of the Rivers State Civil Service Commission (2021). Using Taro Yamane's (1967) sampling formula at a 95% confidence interval with a tolerable error margin of 5%, a minimum sample size of 349 was determined. Following data collection and thorough data cleansing — which involved removing questionnaires with missing responses, contradictory data patterns, or incomplete demographic information — a total of 316 questionnaires were validated and used for all analyses, representing a usable response rate of approximately 90.5%. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of respondents across all 26 ministries, thereby preventing concentration bias and improving the representativeness of the sample. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed and validated through expert review — encompassing content validity assessment by senior scholars in human resource management and organizational behavior — and pilot testing with 30 civil servants not included in the main sample. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the key measurement scales — leadership development ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), effectiveness ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ), and employee retention rate ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ) — all exceeded the 0.70 threshold prescribed by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), confirming adequate internal consistency reliability. Leadership development was measured through three validated items addressing organizational training and equipping for higher positions, preparation for expected job changes, and provision of cross-departmental assignments. Organizational effectiveness was operationalized through three items covering achievement of key policy objectives and service delivery targets, improvement of service quality to the public, and success in implementing government policies and programmes. Employee retention rate was measured through three items assessing the frequency of voluntary departure among experienced staff, comparative turnover levels relative to other ministries, and the effectiveness of retention strategies including career progression and welfare provisions. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient ( $\rho$ ) was employed for hypothesis testing, given the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the non-parametric distribution characteristics observed in preliminary normality testing (Trochim, 2006; Mason, Lind, & Marchal, 1999). The 0.05 significance level was adopted as the criterion for either accepting ( $p > 0.05$ ) or rejecting ( $p < 0.05$ ) the stated null hypotheses. All ethical requirements were rigorously observed throughout the study, including informed voluntary consent from all respondents, complete anonymity of responses, assurance of data confidentiality, and transparent communication of research objectives.

**Results**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Development, Effectiveness, and Employee Retention Rate (N = 316)**

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Leadership Development	1.00	5.00	4.04	1.06
Effectiveness	1.00	5.00	4.02	1.04

Employee Retention Rate	1.00	5.00	3.94	1.11
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Source: Survey Data, 2025

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the three study variables. Leadership development recorded a mean score of 4.04 (SD = 1.06), indicating that respondents generally perceived leadership development practices in their ministries as high. Organizational effectiveness recorded a mean of 4.02 (SD = 1.04), while employee retention rate recorded a mean of 3.94 (SD = 1.11), both indicating high perceived levels. The slightly lower mean for employee retention rate (3.94) relative to leadership development (4.04) and effectiveness (4.02) may suggest modest room for improvement in retention strategies, notwithstanding the overall positive perception. These descriptive results establish a baseline for understanding the bivariate relationships examined in the hypothesis tests.

### Test of Hypothesis One: Leadership Development and Effectiveness

**Table 2: Spearman's Rho Correlation — Leadership Development and Effectiveness (N = 316)**

		Leadership Dev.	Effectiveness
Spearman's rho	Leadership Development	1.000	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	316	316
	Effectiveness	.466**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	316	316

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Source: SPSS 21.0 Data Output, 2025

Table 2 presents the Spearman's rho correlation analysis for H<sub>01</sub>. The result shows a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and organizational effectiveness ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Since  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> is rejected. The correlation coefficient of 0.466 indicates that higher levels of perceived leadership development practices — including training for higher positions, preparation for job changes, and cross-departmental assignments — are moderately associated with higher organizational effectiveness in terms of policy objective achievement, quality of public services, and successful programme implementation. The moderate nature of the r-value (0.466), while statistically significant, suggests that leadership development contributes meaningfully but not exclusively to organizational effectiveness, which may also be influenced by other factors such as organizational culture, resource availability, and policy environment.

### Test of Hypothesis Two: Leadership Development and Employee Retention Rate

**Table 3: Spearman's Rho Correlation — Leadership Development and Employee Retention Rate (N = 316)**

		Leadership Dev.	Employee Retention Rate
Spearman's rho	Leadership Development	1.000	.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	316	316
	Employee Retention Rate	.594**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	316	316

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Source: SPSS 21.0 Data Output, 2025

Table 3 presents the Spearman's rho correlation analysis for Ho2. The result reveals a moderate-to-strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and employee retention rate ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Since  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis Ho2 is rejected. The correlation coefficient of 0.594 indicates that higher levels of perceived leadership development practices are moderately-to-strongly associated with higher employee retention rates — including lower voluntary departure among experienced staff, lower comparative turnover relative to other ministries, and more effective retention strategies. Notably, the leadership development-retention relationship ( $r = 0.594$ ) is stronger than the leadership development-effectiveness relationship ( $r = 0.466$ ), suggesting that leadership development's most pronounced organizational performance contribution in Rivers State government ministries may be through workforce stabilization rather than direct operational effectiveness.

### Summary of Hypotheses Testing

**Table 4: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypothesis	rho	p-value	Decision	Relationship
Ho1: Leadership Development → Effectiveness	0.466	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Ho2: Leadership Development → Employee Retention Rate	0.594	0.000	Rejected	Significant

*Source: Research Data, 2025*

### Discussion of Findings

The finding that leadership development has a moderate positive and significant relationship with organizational effectiveness ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) is consistent with a substantial body of empirical literature. Day et al. (2014) found that leadership development improves team coordination, decision-making, and effectiveness when programs are aligned with organizational strategy — an alignment this study suggests is partially present in Rivers State government ministries. Avolio et al. (2009) similarly linked transformational leadership training to better performance and effectiveness, supporting this study's finding of a meaningful, if moderate, development-effectiveness relationship. The moderate r-value (0.466), while statistically significant, is somewhat lower than r-values reported in private sector studies (e.g., Charan et al., 2011), and this difference may be attributable to the structural and bureaucratic constraints characteristic of public sector environments — including rigid civil service procedures, limited managerial discretion, and political appointment practices — that constrain leadership effectiveness irrespective of training quality (Van Wart, 2013). This interpretation aligns with Teece et al.'s (1997) Dynamic Capabilities framework, which recognizes that organizational context mediates the conversion of developmental inputs into performance outputs. Nevertheless, the statistical significance of the relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ) affirms that leadership development remains a relevant and significant predictor of effectiveness in Rivers State government ministries, reinforcing the argument for sustained investment in leadership capacity building within the public service.

The finding of a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between leadership development and employee retention rate ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) constitutes the study's most policy-significant contribution. This result is consistent with Collings and Mellahi's (2009) finding that organizations with systematic leadership development programs demonstrate significantly lower voluntary turnover, primarily because development opportunities enhance employees' affective commitment and organizational identification. Meyer and Smith (2000) similarly demonstrated that developmental HR practices increase organizational commitment, which in turn reduces turnover intentions — a pathway directly operative in the current study's context where civil servants perceive leadership development as signaling organizational investment in their careers. The stronger magnitude of the development-retention relationship ( $r = 0.594$ ) relative to the development-

effectiveness relationship ( $r = 0.466$ ) may reflect the particular importance of career development opportunities as a retention lever in the Nigerian public service, where competitive salary and fringe benefits are often limited relative to private sector alternatives (Dessler, 2019). When civil servants perceive clear leadership development pathways — including training for higher positions, preparation for job changes, and cross-departmental experience — they are more likely to maintain long-term organizational commitment rather than seeking career advancement externally. Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) confirmed this logic in their collective turnover analysis, finding that developmental practices are among the most effective tools for managing voluntary turnover and preserving institutional performance capacity. The overall pattern of results affirms the theoretical predictions of both Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Human Capital Theory, establishing leadership development as a significant strategic investment for improving organizational performance in Rivers State government ministries.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study examined the relationship between leadership development and two dimensions of organizational performance — effectiveness and employee retention rate — in government ministries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Using Spearman's rho correlation analysis on data from 316 senior civil servants, the study found a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and organizational effectiveness ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and a moderate-to-strong positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and employee retention rate ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Both null hypotheses were rejected, providing robust empirical support for the conclusion that leadership development is a significant driver of organizational performance in Rivers State government ministries. The stronger leadership development-retention relationship relative to the development-effectiveness relationship highlights workforce stabilization as a particularly important channel through which leadership development improves public sector performance. These findings extend Human Capital Theory and Dynamic Capabilities Theory to the Nigerian subnational public sector, demonstrating the strategic performance returns of leadership development investments in government administration contexts.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following specific recommendations are offered:

1. The Rivers State government should institutionalize mandatory Leadership Development Pathways for officers at Grade Level 10 and above, incorporating competency-based training programs, mandatory cross-departmental postings of a minimum of six to twelve months, and structured mentoring and coaching before promotion.
2. Annual leadership development bootcamps should be designed and delivered in partnership with administrative staff colleges, universities, and international development bodies — covering change management, emotional intelligence, strategic alignment, and public sector governance — as platforms for systematic competency building across ministry leadership cadres.
3. Given the particularly strong leadership development-retention relationship, ministry heads and human resource units should explicitly leverage leadership development opportunities as retention tools, ensuring that talented civil servants are aware of and actively supported in accessing developmental programs within the public service.
4. The Rivers State Ministry of Establishments should develop a standardized cross-departmental assignment framework, creating structured protocols for exposing future leaders to diverse ministry functions, thereby building the breadth of institutional knowledge that drives both effectiveness and retention.
5. A Succession and Performance Dashboard should be established within each ministry to track leadership training completion rates, cross-departmental posting records, retention statistics, and key performance indicators, enabling data-driven management of leadership development investments and their performance outcomes.

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