

Mentoring and Employee Innovativeness in Water Producing Firms in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between onboarding practice and employee innovativeness in water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted quasi-experimental design. The sample consists of 235 water producing companies in Rivers State randomly determined from the population of 615 employees from nine (9) table water producing companies in Rivers State. Data was collected through validated structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale, was used to measure responses from the respondents. The validated instruments were subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.70 and 0.77 respectively. To analyze the data, both the research questions and hypotheses were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The results of the study showed that there was a strong positive and significant relationship between on-boarding and employee innovativeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State. The study recommended that Water-producing firms in Rivers State should establish structured mentoring programs that pair experienced staff with new hires to accelerate innovation and reduce onboarding time and train managers in evidence-based mentoring techniques, including goal setting, feedback, and innovation support.

Keywords: Boarding Practice, Employee Innovativeness, Mentoring, Creative Thinking, Pro-Activeness.

Introduction

Changes in basic regulations, technological advancements and globalisation have made it extremely difficult for organisations to compete in the business environment, and the water-producing firms are not exempt in the Nigerian business landscape. Therefore, continuous generation of novel ideas is a crucial source for organisational growth in a market-orientated economy like Nigeria. As a result, organisations are more interested in examining factors that increase innovative work behaviour of its employees (Agarwal, 2014). Furthermore, the long-term competitive advantage grows out of the value a firm is able to create for its customers and the innovative capability of workers in the workplace (Barney, 2002). Businesses must be able to evolve in synchronicity with their environment, and one important way for a firm to continuously evolve is through applying its innovative capabilities (Nkesi, Amah & Olori, 2018).

Innovativeness is the ability to create something new or bring about sound renewals and changes, acting in a way that utilises this ability (Nguyen, 2021). Innovativeness is the organisation's overall creative capability of introducing a new product or service to meet the market demand or opening up new markets through combining strategic orientation with innovative behaviour and process (Wang & Ahmed, 2004). Employee innovativeness can be defined as an engagement in innovative behaviours, which has to do with behaviours related to idea generation, idea promotion and idea realisation with the aim of producing disruptive changes (Nguyen, 2021). Thus, employee innovativeness requires that the individual be able and willing to be innovative with respect to abilities; such an employee should possess above-average general intellect, certain cognitive capabilities, general skills and task-specific knowledge. These are facilitators of innovativeness; apparently, beyond knowledge and skills, innovativeness requires intrinsic motivation and a certain level of internal force that pushes the individual to persevere in the face of challenges inherent in the dynamic workplace. Moreover, the internal force keeps the employee going even when the challenges are successfully overcome. Newly employed personnel need onboarding practice as a form of orientation to facilitate these cognitive capabilities, general skills and task-specific knowledge to create a competitive advantage in the business environment (Mbiet-Edisua & Amah, 2024).

An onboarding practice that is known as an organisational socialisation is a process for a new employee to acquire knowledge and skills to become a successful employee in the organisation. Onboarding practice is the process of acquiring, accommodating, assimilating and accelerating new team members, whether they come from outside or inside the organisation, in terms of providing socialisation and creating an atmosphere for interaction with other members in the organisation (Nyaribo, 2023). In other words, it refers to the administrative work that is involved with setting an employee up in a new job or role. Onboarding practice is the process of recruiting, hiring, and helping the new employee reach full productivity as quickly as possible in the workplace. In general, onboarding practice is the assimilation of a new employee into an organisation so that the new employee reaches full productivity as early as possible. According to Nalband and Jadhav (2024), onboarding practice has an aim to introduce the new employee to the culture of the company (corporate culture). Thus, onboarding practice processes can have a negative effect on a firm's bottom line (Van-Vark, 2006), but employees who have had a negative experience going through the onboarding practice process are very likely to leave the firm's employment after a very short period of time. Onboarding practice supports employee socialisation, which is the transition of the employee from organisational stranger to integrated member. Through onboarding practice, employees gain an understanding of the goals, responsibilities and legal implications of their roles within the greater structure of the organisation. Because organisations frequently invest significant time in recruiting and acquiring talent, onboarding practice is a crucial piece in ensuring retention and preparedness of their employees (Graybill, 2013). Effective onboarding practice is positively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, engagement, and performance and

inversely related to turnover (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013). Onboarding practice is relatively a new concept and has been defined as the process of helping new hires adjust to social and performance aspects of their new jobs.

Several studies have been conducted on onboarding practice specifically as it is called now; research has examined onboarding practice and its positive relationship to employee orientation and socialisation in the workplace (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013; Nalband & Jadhav, 2024). Nalband and Jadhav (2024) describe how the onboarding practice process is done by the startups, especially those that specialise in software engineering, and it was found that all startups have done the five aspects of onboarding practice on their new employees. Abubakar, Chauhan and Kura (2014) examined the relationship between perceived organisational socialisation, organisational trust, perceived human resource management practices and employee turnover among registered nurses in Nigerian public hospitals and indicated that perceived organisational politics was significantly and positively related to turnover intentions. Agwu, Okechukwu and Godday Raymond (2015) conducted research on the impact of coaching and mentoring in the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited, Bonny. The result of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between mentoring and job performance and reduced employee turnover. Mbiyet-Edisua and Amah (2024) examined the nexus between onboarding practices and employee commitment of aviation agencies in Nigeria and revealed the following: a strong positive and significant relationship between communication and affective commitment, also on communication and continuance commitment. Therese and Siby (2016) conducted research to examine the relationship between mentoring and affective organisational commitment in selected new-generation private sector banks in Kerala. The result of the study shows that there is no correlation between psychosocial mentoring and affective commitment. Also, several studies have been conducted on employee innovativeness and its relationship with other variables in the workplace. Nkesi, Amah, and Olori (2018) conducted a study on quality of work life and employee innovativeness of Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt. The result revealed that there is a significant relationship between job security and creative thinking, job security and proactiveness, safety and well-being and creative thinking, safety and well-being and proactiveness, employee empowerment and creative thinking, and employee empowerment and proactiveness. Lukes and Stephan (2017) conducted a study on measuring employee innovation:

A review of existing scales and the development of the innovative behaviour and innovation support inventories across cultures. Findings: both inventories were reliable and showed factorial, criterion, convergent and discriminant validity as well as cross-cultural equivalence. Also revealed that managerial support was the most proximal contextual influence on innovative behaviour and mediated the effect of organisational support and national culture. Chao, Lin, Cheng, and Tseng (2011) investigated the influence of the supervisor' leadership on employee innovative behaviour in the manufacturing industry and

found a positive relationship between supervisor leadership and employee innovative work behaviour. Despite the enormous literature review, an empirical assessment of the relationship between onboarding practices and employee innovativeness with regards to organisations operating within the developing countries is neglected in the existing literature. Therefore, this study as a point of departure from previous research intends to fill this gap in the literature to examine the relationship between onboarding practice and employee innovativeness in water-producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between on mentoring and employee innovativeness in water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are stated as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between mentoring and creative thinking in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the relationship between mentoring and pro-activeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are to guide the procedure of data gathering, analysis and conclusions reached in this study:

1. How does mentoring affect creative thinking in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. How does mentoring affect pro-activeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between mentoring and creative thinking in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between mentoring and pro-activeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The below framework shows the schematic representation of the relationship between mentoring (predictor variable) and employee innovativeness (criterion variable). The predictor variable has the following dimensions: mentoring, coaching and training. The dependent variable is measured with creative thinking and proactiveness and organizational culture as a moderating variable.

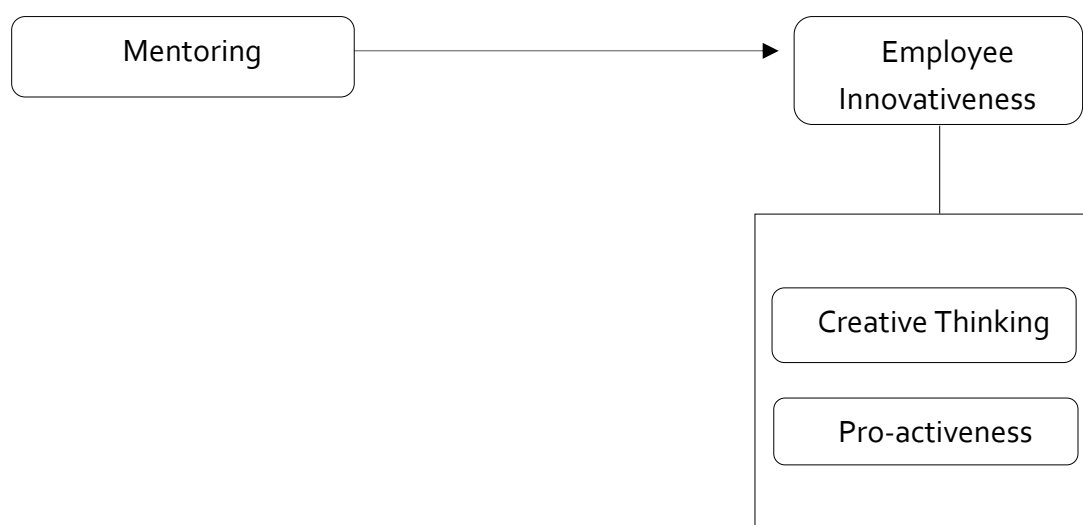


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing the relationship between on mentoring and employee innovativeness in water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Source: Researchers' Desk, 2025

Literature Review

Mentoring

Mentoring usually is regarded as the task of an experienced teacher to introduce a young teacher or student teacher in his/her teaching practice. There are different models of how to perform this task effectively (Van Viaanen, Kleche, Koen, Dries, 2012). Mentoring relationships can be viewed from different perspectives: not only the potential benefit to the young teacher but also the professional development of the experienced teacher has to be taken into account. Mentoring could empower the continuous and lifelong development of teachers. The learning partnership of the two persons embodies a considerable advantage to promote a single school's culture as well as the personal and professional growth (Dietlind & Lydia Van Andel, 2002). Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989) developed six teaching methods and claim these methods help students attain cognitive and metacognitive strategies for "using, managing, and discovering knowledge. They are modelling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation and reflection which are designed to help novices with awareness of problem-solving strategies and execution similar to that of an expert. The final step (exploration) intends to guide the novice towards independence and the ability to solve and identify problems within the domain on their own. The authors note, however, that this is not an exhaustive list of methods and that the successful execution of these methods is highly dependent on the domain.

Employee Innovativeness

Employee innovativeness refers to employee's propensity to innovate can be conceived as complex behaviour consisting of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with

the aim of meeting organizational goals in novel ways. Individuals, alone or in groups, undertake innovative activities from the intention to derive anticipated benefits from innovative change. Creativity is central to innovativeness, but the concepts are not synonymous. Innovation can be seen as a successful and intentional implementation of creativity, which is more subjective and context specific by its nature (Miron, Erez & Naveh, 2004). Creativity as such may be limited to idea generation alone but by definition innovation produces benefits for the people involved in the innovative process (Anderson, Qin, Sohn, Stenger, & Carter, 2003). Therefore, employee innovativeness requires creativity, but creativity does not always lead to an innovation.

Innovativeness has been described as the extent to which firm markets new products or improved products and invests in research and development, as well as openness to new ideas, creativity, flexibility, willingness to change, experimentation, and propensity to take risks in the firm's culture (Sommer, Heidenreich, & Handrich, 2017). Wang and Ahmed (2004) consider innovativeness to be an organization's overall capability of introducing new products to the market or opening new markets by combining strategic orientation with innovative behavior and process. Innovativeness has also been described as an organization's capacity to introduce new processes, products, and ideas. McFadzean, and Shaw (2005) defined innovativeness as a process that provides added value and novelty to the business, its suppliers and customers through the development of new procedures, solutions, products and services as well as new method of commercialization. The concept of innovation was first introduced. Innovativeness has been emphasized on entrepreneurial process by describing the growth of economies as driven by changes made to the existing market structure through the introduction of new goods and services. This dynamic interplay between innovation and market evolution highlights the importance of fostering a culture that encourages creativity and risk-taking among entrepreneurs.

As such, businesses that prioritise innovativeness are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly complex and fast-paced economic landscape. To cultivate this culture, it is essential for organisations to invest in research and development, as well as provide support systems that enable experimentation and collaboration. By doing so, they not only enhance their own growth prospects but also contribute to the broader economic development and resilience of their communities. Similarly, the entrepreneurial orientation literature describes innovativeness as efforts focused on the discovery of new opportunities and solutions.

Creative Thinking

Creativity is the process through which new ideas that make innovation possible are developed. Current views on organisational creativity appear to focus largely on outcomes or creative products. A creative product has been defined as one that is both novel and original and potentially useful or appropriate to the organisation (Amabile, 1996). Additionally, at least for companies, creative ideas must have utility. They must constitute an appropriate response to fill a gap in the production, marketing, or administrative

processes of the organisation. Organisational creativity is the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system. Therefore, creativity could be seen as an important organisational capability, a possible source of organisational effectiveness and a source of competitive advantage. Creative thinking in the context of experiential marketing, its influence is apparent. Schmitt (1999) distinguishes various experiential models, whereby one model is described as a creative cognitive experience.

According to Adeosun and Ganiyu (2012), a creative cognitive experience can be described as an experience that is processed in a creative way by the act of thinking about this particular experience. The area of creative cognitive experience connects creative thinking with experiential marketing by designing experiences that address the customers in an intellectual way (Kazançoglu, 2014). A considerable amount of research has studied the antecedents of creativity of the individual members (Grewal, 2009). Hence, individual creativity refers to the implementation of creative ideas in an organisational context (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Creativity is basically described as the development of ideas about practices, procedures, products, and/or services that are (a) novel and (b) potentially useful to an organisation (Shalley, 2004). Most definitions of creativity concur that something new is at the core of creativity. May (1959) defined creativity as the process of bringing something new into birth. Recent definitions state that creativity is purposeful or useful. DeGraff and Lawrence (2002) defined creativity as a purposeful activity (or set of activities) that produces valuable products, services, processes, or ideas that are better or new.

Creative thinking is a meta-cognitive process of generating novel and useful associations, attributes, elements, images, abstract relations or sets of operations that better solve a problem, produce a plan or result in an outcome, pattern, structure or product not clearly present before (Pesut, 2013). Siddiqi and Qureshi (2016) defined creativity as the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or a small group of individuals working together. Individual creativity is useful for generating new ideas or analysing problems. It is a function of the employee's personal characteristics, the characteristics of the context in which he or she works, and also the interactions among these characteristics (Zhou, Hirst & Shipton 2012).

Pro-activeness

Proactiveness refers to the firm's efforts to seize new opportunities, anticipating the future market demands and at the same time shaping the external environment (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). A proactive firm takes the initiative to venture into new markets, exploiting them and becoming the market leader in that marketplace. A proactive firm takes the initiative to shape the environment to its advantage in terms of technology and innovation, competition, customers, and processes. Mwaka and Karugu (2023) refer to proactive entrepreneurial activity as the firms' timely response to market needs or demands, as well as generating market opportunities. A formidable proactive strategic posture provides

enterprises with the capability to anticipate changes that may occur in the business environment or even exert influence on the business environment to their advantage. Similarly, Blesa and Ripolles (2003) opined that strong proactive thinking is most likely to provide business enterprises with diverse capabilities to predict the needs of customers as well as reactions of competitors in the marketplace. Proactiveness shows a firm's aggressive pursuit of market opportunities and a strong emphasis on wanting to be among the very first to implement innovation in its industry (Rauch, 2009). Proactiveness is an opportunity-seeking, forward-looking perspective characterised by the introduction of new products and services ahead of the competitors and acting in anticipation of future demand (Tang et al., 2014).

Proactiveness can be defined as an indication of a company's determination to pursue promising opportunities, rather than merely responding to competitors' moves. Proactiveness refers to how a firm relates to market opportunities in the process of new entry and how they aggressively pursue opportunities and aggressively respond to competitors (Kuratko, 2014). Pro-activeness involves taking initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities and participating in emerging markets (Bayo & Kayii, 2020; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). It entails the attitude and capabilities that facilitate the implementation and control of the new products, services, or processes ahead of competitors. This dimension emphasises first-mover advantage and a posture of anticipating and acting on future wants and needs in the marketplace (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Proactiveness consists of an aggressive stance towards competition, focusing on the aggressive implementation and tenacity of tactics to achieve the company's objectives. Proactiveness implies a forward-looking, opportunity-seeking perspective and a propensity for action characteristic of a market leader that acts in anticipation of future demand or other trends that indicate emerging opportunities. Proactiveness is described as an opportunity-seeking, forward-looking perspective characterised by the launching of new products and services in advance of the competition and acting in expectation of future demand (Hao & Song, 2016). Additionally, research suggests that entrepreneurial opportunities are recognised by those who have discretion and who are encouraged to be experimental in their work (Kuratko, 2014).

Mentoring and Employee Innovativeness

Nkomo, Wellington and Clinton (2018) carried out a study on the influences of mentoring functions on job satisfaction and organisational commitment of graduate employees in South Africa. The study examined the effects of mentoring functions on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The data used in the study was mainly qualitative, based on the content analysis and historical data. The study indicated that career development and role modelling functions have a positive effect on the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of new entry employees. Mittal and Upamannyu (2017) conducted a study examining the influence of mentoring on organisational commitment and performance in India to evaluate mentoring, organisational commitment, and performance of faculty

members working in various educational institutions in the Gwalior region. The survey method was adopted for the study, and linear regression was used in the analysis. The result of the study showed that mentoring is negatively related to organisational commitment while mentoring is positively related to organisational performance. The study suggested that organisational commitment may not be achieved through mentoring, but organisational performance can be attained through mentoring. Izlem (2017) conducted a study on mentoring and career satisfaction: the roles of distributive justice and organisational commitment in Turkey to establish the relationship among mentoring, distributive justice, organisational commitment, and career satisfaction to reveal the mentoring effects at individual and organisational levels. A survey method was used, and primary data was gathered using a questionnaire distributed to 300 participants. The study established that mentoring has a positive relationship with distributive justice and positively influences employees' organisational commitment. The research concluded that organisational commitment is positively affected by distributive justice, and an organisation is likely to have committed employees when it executes mentoring programmes and supports an equal and just working environment, which then results in employees being satisfied with their careers. Mba and Godday (2015) researched to study the impact of coaching and mentoring in the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited, Bonny. The research question addressed whether mentoring improves employees' job skills, develops their potential for better performance and reduces employee turnover. A stratified sampling technique was employed in collecting data through the survey method from 370 employees using stratified random sampling. The result of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between mentoring and job performance and reduced employee turnover. Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2015) examine the effect of mentoring on employees' performance in Nigeria. Packaged and bottled water businesses in Nigeria suffer from various social and economic challenges and some form of unpleasant regulatory practices, such as the high cost of production, unreliable grid supply, distribution problems, multiple taxation, littering or environmental pollution, integrity, quality, inspection or business feasibility concerns, inefficacy of government regulatory bodies, absenteeism, and employee turnover. According to Nweze and Edame (2016), people still worry about the purity of the sachet water. The integrity of the hygienic environment and conditions where the majority of the packaged water in the markets is produced has been questioned. Dada (2009) further stated that there are claims of past outbreaks of waterborne illnesses that resulted from the consumption of polluted sachet waters, most of which are of unknown origin. Dada (2009) also observed that most of the bottled waters were produced by naïve workers with little or no formal training and have not been mentored on the practice of bottled water production. Employees in bottled water companies are noted for a high rate of employee turnover, the reason being that the employees are not placed under a mentor for proper guidance on the intricacies of bottled water production, which also leads to a lack of creative and proactive workers in the

industry. The new entrants, when faced with the problem, walk out of the organisation as a result of lacking basic skills. Adetunji and Ilias (2010) also stated that an increasing number of private companies, registered and unregistered, are getting involved in the packaged water business in virtually every district in the country. Edoga (2018) noted that about 70 per cent of Nigerian adults drink at least a bottle or sachet of water per day, resulting in about 50 to 60 million used water bottles and water sachets disposed of daily across the country. This has led to a lot of littering of the disposables (empty bottle and the sachet) and, by extension, environmental pollution. Packaged and bottled water businesses in Nigeria engage people of different statuses in the society. These range from the packaged and bottled water producers/manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, consumers, government regulatory bodies, consumer protection organisations and pressure groups. Each views the impact differently. Thus, innovation studies of this critical sector are of the utmost importance. The innovation process itself is generally accepted to be a locally embedded process (Erbas, Ali, Fikirkoca, & Tuzcu, 2008) and is a highly context-dependent concept. Hence, employee innovativeness culture needs to be institutionalised within the management systems in the industry. As a strategy to curtail innovative culture in the sector, human resources professionals have advocated onboarding practice as an approach to formally usher in the employee to the industry to exhibit more innovative behaviour. The process enables the employee to acclimatise him- or herself with the job title, nature, stress or pros and cons of the job. This helps the employee feel more engaged with the company strategy and objectives. This feeling of increased engagement by the employee leads to better employee innovativeness in the company (Day & Fedele, 2012).

However, most of the empirical studies related to onboarding practice and employee innovativeness outcomes in the literature concentrate on developed economies, and there is little, or next to nothing, published on innovativeness and onboarding practice in the bottled water sector of African economies, especially in the Nigerian context. The knowledge gap identified above has implications for innovation studies and policy, because a failure to address it risks neglecting the democratisation of innovation studies, which are supposed to be inclusive of diverse regions and economies and embrace all industrial sectors (Bubou & Amadi-Echedu, 2016). Therefore, the study seeks to examine the relationship between onboarding practice and employee innovativeness in water-producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. According to Nwamkwo (2016), correlational research involves collecting data to establish whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables and expresses this relationship using a correlation coefficient. This design was considered suitable because the study aims to determine the relationship between mentoring and employee innovativeness. The population for the study comprised 615 employees from nine (9) registered water-producing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. A sampling frame was

developed based on employee registers obtained from each firm. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that firms of varying sizes and geographical distribution were proportionally represented. The strata were based on company size (small, medium, large) and operational location (urban, semi-urban). A sample of 238 employees was randomly selected from this frame using proportional allocation to maintain representativeness across strata. The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale format, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD).

The questionnaire was developed based on existing validated instruments from related studies on onboarding, mentoring, and innovativeness (e.g., Cable et al., 2013; Wang & Ahmed, 2004). Initial item pools were reviewed by three experts in human resource management and psychometrics for content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 30 employees from two water-producing firms not included in the final study sample. Feedback was used to refine ambiguous items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.70 and 0.77 for mentoring and innovativeness scales respectively, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Although the data collected were based on a five-point Likert scale—often considered ordinal—the use of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was adopted to ensure statistical robustness and avoid violations of assumptions associated with Pearson's correlation (e.g., normal distribution and interval-level measurement). Given the ranked nature of Likert-type responses and the aim to assess monotonic relationships between variables (mentoring and innovativeness dimensions), Spearman's rho was deemed more appropriate for this analysis with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Results

The results of the research questions and corresponding hypotheses are presented in the same table for clarity and ease of comparison.

Research Question 1: How does mentoring affect creative thinking in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between mentoring and creative thinking in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Mentoring and Creative Thinking

Table 1: Showed Correlations Analysis on Mentoring and Creative Thinking

			Mentoring	Creative Thinking
Spearman's rho	Mentoring	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.649**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	238	238
	Creative Thinking	Correlation Coefficient	.649**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	238	238
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Source: SPSS Output, version, 25 (2025)

The findings presented in Table 1 address both Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1, examining the relationship between mentoring and creative thinking in water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Spearman's Rank Order Correlation analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between mentoring and creative thinking, with a correlation coefficient of 0.649 and a significance level of $p = 0.000$, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This statistically significant result indicates that as mentoring improves, there is a corresponding enhancement in creative thinking among employees. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that there is no significant relationship between mentoring and creative thinking, is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that mentoring has a strong and significant positive effect on creative thinking within the context of water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: How does mentoring affect pro-activeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between mentoring and pro-activeness in the water producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Showed Correlations Analysis on Mentoring and Proactiveness

			Mentoring	Proactiveness
Spearman's rho	Mentoring	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.775**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	238	238
	Proactiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.775**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	238	238
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
Source: SPSS Output, version, 25 (2025)				

The findings presented in Table 2 address Research Question 2, which examines how mentoring affects proactiveness in water-producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between mentoring and proactiveness, with a correlation coefficient of $\rho = 0.775$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000$. This result indicates that as mentoring practices improve within the firms, employees' proactiveness also tends to increase significantly. Given that the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis (H_{02}), which states that there is no significant relationship between mentoring and proactiveness, is rejected. Consequently, it is concluded that mentoring has a statistically significant and positive influence on proactiveness among workers in the water-producing firms in Rivers State. This suggests that effective mentoring initiatives can serve as a strategic tool to foster proactive behaviors and innovative actions within the organizational setting.

Discussion of Findings

The preceding section of this study presented the results of the analysis concerning the variables under investigation and their relevance within the context of water-producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

This study tested two hypotheses to examine how onboarding—specifically mentoring—influences employee innovativeness. Results confirmed a statistically significant relationship between mentoring and employee innovativeness. The findings established a statistically significant relationship between mentoring and employee innovativeness in the studied firms. Using Spearman's rank-order correlation at a 95% confidence interval, the analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that improved onboarding processes are linked to increased innovative behaviours among employees. Scatter plot analysis further indicated that approximately 40.7% of the variations in employee innovativeness could be attributed to effective onboarding activities. These findings align with the conclusions of Abubakar, Chauhan, and Kura (2014), who highlighted the importance of organizational socialization and HRM practices in reducing turnover intentions.

The influence of mentoring on employee innovativeness was examined through two null hypotheses that explored its relationship with two key dimensions of innovativeness: creative thinking and proactiveness. Specifically, the results presented in Table 2 revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between mentoring and proactiveness ($\rho = 0.775$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that mentoring significantly contributes to the willingness and readiness of employees to take initiative and drive innovation in their roles. As the strength of this relationship is both statistically significant and substantial, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between mentoring and proactiveness was rejected. These findings suggest that effective mentoring not only supports knowledge transfer but also enhances the confidence and proactive behaviour of employees, fostering an innovative workplace culture. This outcome is in line with the views

of Rothmann and Barkhuizen (2008), who emphasized that organizations are more likely to retain their most valued and skilled employees when they maintain ongoing communication and meaningful engagement with them. Similarly, Viljoen and Rothmann (2009) argue that mentoring relationships are vital for maintaining positive workplace relationships and employee retention.

Moreover, the current findings corroborate the results of Seema and Sujatha (2015), who found that both formal and informal mentoring were positively associated with career satisfaction and prospects. However, these results contrast with the conclusions of Therese and Siby (2016), who reported no significant relationship between psychosocial or career mentoring and affective commitment. Likewise, Ofovwe and Eghafona (2011) observed that senior faculty members are more attuned to the principles of mentoring, thereby promoting better performance through professional development in academic environments. These collective insights underscore the critical role of mentoring as a catalyst for nurturing proactive and innovative employees within water-producing firms. While the findings affirm that mentoring significantly enhances creative thinking and proactiveness, a critical view suggests that the direction of causality may be complex. For instance, it is plausible that inherently proactive employees seek out or attract more effective mentoring relationships, thereby inflating the correlation. Additionally, mentoring may not operate uniformly across all organizational cultures. In firms with rigid hierarchies or poor communication systems, mentoring efforts may not translate into observable innovativeness, regardless of intent or frequency.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between onboarding practices—specifically mentoring—and employee innovativeness in water-producing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between mentoring and proactiveness, a key component of employee innovativeness. This indicates that effective mentoring enhances employees' willingness to take initiative and contribute creatively to organizational growth. Overall, the study concludes that mentoring is a vital on boarding strategy that significantly fosters innovative behaviour among employees in the water production sector.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the findings and the conclusions made in the study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Water-producing firms in Rivers State should establish structured mentoring programs that pair experienced staff with new hires to accelerate innovation and reduce onboarding time and train managers in evidence-based mentoring techniques, including goal setting, feedback, and innovation support.
2. Organizations should incorporate mentoring outcomes into performance reviews to ensure alignment with organizational innovation goals and also to monitor and

evaluate mentoring effectiveness regularly using metrics such as employee retention, idea generation rates, and proactive behaviour indicators.

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