



Successful Onboarding and Employee Performance in Port Harcourt Startup Businesses

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of Successful Onboarding and Employee Performance in Port Harcourt Startup Businesses. Three dimensions of employee performance were analysed: Task Performance, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), and Adaptive Performance. Anchored on Organisational Socialisation Theory, the study also tested the moderating roles of Organisational Culture and Leadership Support. Adopting a positivist philosophical stance and quantitative explanatory design, data were collected from 340 employees across selected startups, with 315 valid responses analysed (93% response rate). Using SPSS v.27, reliability, validity, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to ensure robustness and empirical depth. Findings confirmed that successful onboarding significantly enhanced all three measures of employee performance. Role Clarity exerted strong positive effects on Task Performance ($\beta = .321, p = .000$), OCB ($\beta = .276, p = .000$), and Adaptive Performance ($\beta = .255, p = .000$), supported by high correlations ($r = .742, .716, .701$ respectively). Social Integration showed comparable impact—Task Performance ($\beta = .289, p = .000$), OCB ($\beta = .302, p = .000$), and Adaptive Performance ($\beta = .284, p = .000$)—with strong associations ($r = .731-.759$). Continuous Feedback similarly predicted all dimensions of performance—Task ($\beta = .267, p = .000$), OCB ($\beta = .265, p = .000$), and Adaptive ($\beta = .299, p = .000$)—demonstrating consistent influence across models. Moderating effects revealed that Organisational Culture and Leadership Support significantly strengthened these relationships, particularly for Role Clarity (Culture $\beta = .138, p = .018$; Leadership $\beta = .164, p = .004$) and Social Integration (Culture $\beta = .121, p = .035$; Leadership $\beta = .149, p = .008$). These findings underscore that structured onboarding, when reinforced by supportive culture and leadership, fosters employee adaptability, commitment, and proactive performance behaviours. The study concludes that Role Clarity and Social Integration are the most powerful drivers of onboarding effectiveness, while Continuous Feedback sustains engagement and adaptive capacity. Organisational Culture and Leadership Support serve as enabling contexts that amplify onboarding success. Theoretically, this study refines Organisational Socialisation and Human Capital perspectives within Nigerian startups. Methodologically, it integrates correlation and regression analysis to distinguish relational strength from causal influence. Practically, it offers evidence-based guidance for startup leaders to institutionalise onboarding frameworks, strengthen leadership involvement, and build supportive cultures for sustainable employee performance.

Keywords: Successful Onboarding, Organisational Culture, Leadership Support, Employee Performance, Port Harcourt startups.

Introduction

Employee onboarding has evolved from a routine induction exercise to a strategic human resource management practice that shapes long-term employee performance, satisfaction, and retention. In today's competitive and dynamic business environment, particularly within startups, the ability to integrate new employees efficiently determines how swiftly they can contribute to organisational growth. As Don-Baridam (2023) notes, onboarding practices in Nigerian organisations significantly influence employee experience outcomes. Startups, by their very nature, operate under conditions of uncertainty and limited structure, making effective onboarding a critical determinant of organisational success.

Recent studies highlight that onboarding extends beyond mere orientation to include continuous support, socialisation, and alignment with organisational culture (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Didion *et al.*, 2024). Bauer *et al.* (2007) emphasise that onboarding supports newcomer adjustment by fostering role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance. Furthermore, as businesses embrace digitalisation, virtual onboarding has emerged as a key tool to enhance inclusivity and accessibility (Abu Ziden & Chin Joo, 2020; Burhanuddin, 2025). The incorporation of digital tools and human resource information systems (HRIS) enhances data-driven decision-making and employee engagement (Kehoe & Boughton, 2018; Nthiga & Samson, 2024). Within the Nigerian context, however, startups often struggle to balance innovation with structured human resource practices, which can limit the full benefits of onboarding processes. The human capital and socialisation theories provide a theoretical basis for understanding how onboarding influences employee performance. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964) posits that investing in employee development yields higher productivity, while socialisation theory (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) underscores the importance of cultural adaptation. When applied to startup environments, these theories suggest that successful onboarding equips employees with both the technical and social competencies required to thrive.

Despite widespread recognition of onboarding as a vital organisational process, many startups continue to treat it as a peripheral administrative activity rather than a strategic performance enhancer. Evidence from Nigerian firms shows inconsistent onboarding practices that fail to provide employees with adequate support, mentorship, and cultural integration (Don-Baridam, 2023; Edum, 2025). This inconsistency often leads to confusion about job roles, poor motivation, and early turnover, undermining productivity and innovation. Furthermore, limited leadership support and weak organisational culture exacerbate the problem, leaving new hires disconnected and underperforming. Although global studies (Jeske & Olson, 2022; Chenji & Raghavendra, 2021) demonstrate that structured onboarding enhances creativity, engagement, and retention, empirical evidence within the startup ecosystem in Nigeria remains scarce. Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine how successful onboarding influences employee performance in startup businesses, and under what conditions this relationship is most effective. Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State in Nigeria's South-South region, serves as a major commercial and industrial hub, renowned for its oil and gas operations, technology startups, and growing service sector. The city hosts numerous emerging enterprises and entrepreneurial ventures that contribute significantly to regional employment and innovation. Its dynamic business environment, diverse workforce, and increasing adoption of digital technologies make it an ideal setting for studying onboarding and employee performance. However, many startups in Port Harcourt face challenges related to human resource structure, employee retention, and cultural alignment, making the study particularly relevant to local organisational development.

Hence, the aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance in Port Harcourt startup businesses.

Conceptual Framework

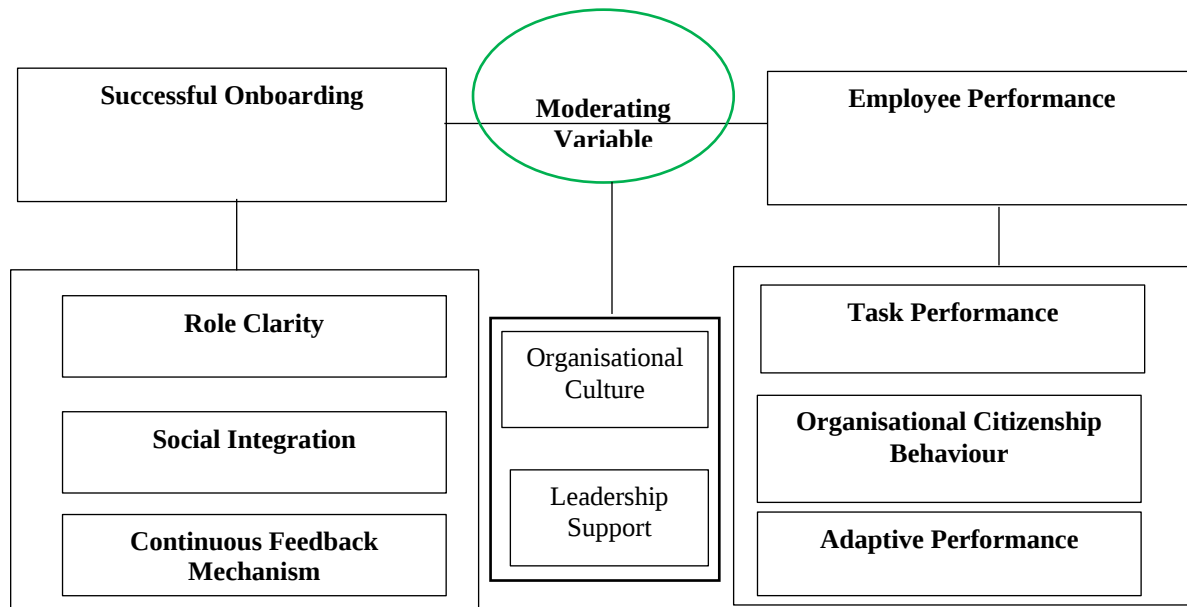


Figure 1: Showing the Relationship between Successful Onboarding and Employee Performance

Source: Predictor Variable adapted from Bauer *et al.* (2007); Van Maanen and Schein (1979); and Klein *et al.* (2015); Criterion Variable adapted from Borman and Motowidlo (1993), Organ (1988), and Pulakos *et al.* (2000); Moderating Variables adapted from Schein (2010); and Avolio (1994).

The Figure 1 above shows the relationship between the Predictor Variable - Successful Onboarding with its dimension (Role Clarity, Social Integration and Continuous Support) adapted from Bauer *et al.* (2007); Van Maanen and Schein (1979); and Klein *et al.* (2015); and Criterion Variable - Employee Performance with its measures (task Performance, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour and Adaptive Performance) adapted from Borman and Motowidlo (1993), Organ (1988), and Pulakos *et al.* (2000);. This relationship moderated by organisational culture and leadership support adapted from Schein (2010); and Avolio (1994).

Thus the hypothesis tested in this study includes:

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between role clarity and task performance.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between role clarity and organisational citizenship behaviour.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between role clarity and adaptive performance.
- H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between social integration and task performance.
- H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between social integration and organisational citizenship behaviour.
- H₀₆: There is no significant relationship between social integration and adaptive performance.
- H₀₇: There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback mechanism and task performance.
- H₀₈: There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback mechanism and organisational citizenship behaviour.
- H₀₉: There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback mechanism and adaptive performance.

- H₁₀: There is no significant moderating effect of organisational culture on the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance.
- H₁₁: There is no significant moderating effect of leadership support on the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study integrates three major theories Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Organisational Socialisation Theory (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) to explain how successful onboarding influences employee performance in startup businesses in Port Harcourt as illustrated below:

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, originally developed by Becker (1964), provides a foundational framework for understanding the link between onboarding and employee performance. The theory asserts that investments made in employees through education, training, and skill development enhance their productivity and contribute to organisational growth. Within the context of onboarding, this theory implies that the resources devoted to orienting and equipping new employees are not mere administrative costs but strategic investments in organisational capability. When new hires receive structured induction, role clarification, and continuous feedback, they accumulate both tacit and explicit knowledge that improve their job efficiency.

In startup organisations, where structures are less formal and innovation is critical, human capital development through effective onboarding becomes even more important. As Don-Baridam (2023) emphasises, onboarding in Nigerian organisations significantly influences employee experience outcomes by building confidence and competence. Similarly, Wondim (2024) underscores that integrating new employees effectively at entry-level positions enables them to adapt quickly and contribute meaningfully to business goals. For instance, startups in Port Harcourt that prioritise comprehensive onboarding covering technical training, mentorship, and cultural integration are more likely to experience reduced turnover and higher productivity.

The theory also highlights the reciprocity between organisational investment and employee loyalty. When employees perceive that their organisation values their growth, they reciprocate with greater commitment and discretionary effort. This dynamic fosters not only improved task performance but also organisational citizenship behaviours that sustain competitive advantage. Thus, applying Human Capital Theory to onboarding underscores the importance of viewing orientation and early employee support as strategic human resource interventions rather than peripheral administrative functions.

Organisational Socialisation Theory

Organisational Socialisation Theory, articulated by Van Maanen and Schein (1979), provides a psychological and sociological perspective on how newcomers assimilate into workplace culture and internalise organisational values. It posits that onboarding is a social learning process through which employees acquire the necessary knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes to perform

effectively and align with organisational expectations. In essence, socialisation bridges the gap between individual identity and organisational culture.

Within the context of startups in Port Harcourt, this theory explains why structured onboarding processes are essential for fostering belonging and engagement among employees. As Cornelia, Nicolaie-Catalin, and Elena-Claudia (2025) assert, modern human resource management practices increasingly emphasise the integration of social and cultural adaptation to sustain workforce engagement in dynamic business environments. When new employees participate in mentorship programmes, collaborative projects, and informal social interactions, they internalise the norms that govern workplace behaviour. This process enhances role clarity, communication efficiency, and teamwork all of which are critical for startups that rely heavily on collective innovation and agility.

Empirical studies support this view. Don-Baridam (2023) found that onboarding practices in Nigerian firms significantly enhance employee experience outcomes by improving social integration and reducing role ambiguity. For instance, a startup that pairs new hires with experienced mentors helps them adapt more quickly to the firm's expectations and values. Over time, this alignment fosters organisational citizenship behaviours, commitment, and retention. Ultimately, Organisational Socialisation Theory explains how effective onboarding goes beyond technical training to create social and cultural cohesion, which, in turn, translates into improved performance and organisational stability.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), provides an insightful lens for understanding the moderating role of leadership support in the relationship between onboarding and employee performance. The theory posits that transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate their followers, fostering trust, commitment, and enhanced performance. In onboarding, leadership support manifests through mentorship, feedback, and emotional guidance that help new employees navigate uncertainty and adapt to organisational life.

In startup environments, where volatility and limited formal structures prevail, the leader's role in onboarding becomes even more significant. As Odom (2025) notes, human resource practices that integrate leadership involvement are more likely to solve workplace challenges and improve performance outcomes. Similarly, Don-Baridam (2023) found that leadership accessibility and communication are critical determinants of successful onboarding experiences in Port Harcourt's oil and gas firms. A transformational leader who models organisational values, offers recognition, and provides continuous guidance enables employees to develop confidence and creativity key attributes for thriving in uncertain business contexts.

Transformational leadership also complements the objectives of Human Capital and Socialisation theories by reinforcing learning and cultural alignment. For example, a startup founder who provides personalised coaching not only transmits knowledge (human capital) but also shapes shared meaning (socialisation). As a result, employees develop adaptive performance and commitment, both essential for sustaining competitive advantage in dynamic industries. Therefore, Transformational Leadership Theory enriches the theoretical framework by highlighting that effective onboarding is not solely a procedural HR function but a leadership-driven process that cultivates engagement, innovation, and long-term organisational success.

Together, these theories provide a multidimensional understanding of onboarding as both an investment in human capability and a social process facilitated by leadership. Onboarding is not merely a procedural exercise but a strategic intervention that cultivates technical competence, social cohesion, and motivational alignment. As Don-Baridam (2023) notes, onboarding practices in Nigerian organisations significantly influence employee experience outcomes, while Odom (2025) and Wondim (2024) affirm that leadership involvement and skill development are vital for sustaining performance and retention. By combining human capital, socialisation, and leadership perspectives, this framework captures the cognitive, cultural, and motivational mechanisms through which onboarding enhances employee productivity, engagement, and adaptability in dynamic startup environments.

Conceptual Review

Successful Onboarding

Successful onboarding represents a structured and strategic process that enables new employees to transition effectively into an organisation's culture, systems, and expectations. It goes beyond traditional induction to encompass a long-term developmental approach aimed at improving retention, engagement, and performance. According to Don-Baridam (2023), onboarding practices significantly shape employee experience outcomes, particularly in dynamic business environments such as startups in Port Harcourt. Similarly, Wondim (2024) highlights that forward-looking onboarding practices are essential for integrating younger generations, such as Generation Z, who value collaboration, feedback, and digital interaction. These observations confirm that effective onboarding aligns employee expectations with organisational objectives, thereby facilitating rapid adaptation and productivity. The growing digitisation of human resource functions has redefined onboarding processes. Abu Ziden and Chin Joo (2020) note that digital onboarding enhances accessibility and learning continuity through virtual platforms, while Bauer, Erdogan, and Taylor (2021) affirm that technology-supported onboarding strengthens employee engagement and sustainability. Within the Nigerian context, Odom (2025) observes that integrating human resource analytics improves onboarding efficiency by using data-driven insights to tailor orientation experiences and predict retention outcomes. These innovations are particularly relevant in startups, where limited resources necessitate cost-effective and flexible onboarding strategies. Successful onboarding also plays a pivotal role in shaping long-term employee commitment and creativity. Chenji and Raghavendra (2021) found that structured onboarding fosters psychological empowerment, which in turn enhances employee innovation. Thus, effective onboarding can be understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback mechanisms. Each of these dimensions contributes to the overall objective of aligning employee capabilities, values, and behaviours with organisational goals. Therefore, in startups across Port Harcourt, successful onboarding is a decisive factor in developing a competent, motivated, and adaptable workforce that sustains business growth in an increasingly competitive environment.

Role Clarity

Role clarity refers to the degree to which new employees understand their job responsibilities, performance expectations, and the scope of their authority within the organisation. It is a critical component of successful onboarding because it reduces uncertainty and accelerates performance adjustment. According to Bauer, Erdogan, and Taylor (2021), onboarding processes that prioritise role clarification enable employees to internalise their duties more effectively, thereby enhancing their confidence and productivity. Wondim (2024) similarly asserts that providing clear job-related

information is essential for Generation Z employees, who require well-defined roles and measurable outcomes to remain motivated. In startups, where tasks and responsibilities often overlap, role ambiguity can hinder performance. Don-Baridam (2023) notes that ineffective onboarding in Nigerian firms often results in confusion regarding job expectations, which undermines employee confidence and productivity. By contrast, organisations that adopt structured orientation programmes detailing workflows, reporting structures, and key performance indicators facilitate faster employee adaptation and engagement. Karcher *et al.* (2025) emphasise the importance of practical, experience-based learning during early employment stages, suggesting that clear role definition and contextual training help newcomers acquire the competencies necessary for diverse career environments. Furthermore, role clarity supports goal alignment between employees and management. When workers understand how their individual tasks contribute to organisational objectives, they exhibit higher motivation and ownership. Odom (2025) argues that data-driven onboarding tools can be used to monitor role comprehension and tailor interventions to improve performance outcomes. This evidence implies that role clarity not only enhances individual task performance but also contributes to broader organisational efficiency. Within the context of Port Harcourt startups, ensuring that new employees comprehend their duties from the outset reduces adaptation time, strengthens accountability, and fosters a performance-driven organisational culture that supports innovation and sustainability.

Social Integration

Social integration represents the process through which new employees establish interpersonal relationships, internalise organisational culture, and develop a sense of belonging within the workplace. It is an essential dimension of onboarding, as it connects employees to the social and emotional fabric of the organisation. Cornelia, Nicolaie-Catalin, and Elena-Claudia (2025) emphasise that modern human resource management trends prioritise relational engagement and inclusivity as means to strengthen workplace cohesion. Similarly, Don-Baridam (2023) found that effective onboarding practices in Nigerian organisations improve employee experience outcomes by fostering social connectivity and collaboration. Social integration is particularly crucial in startup environments, where teamwork and innovation drive success. Wondim (2024) explains that Generation Z employees value social belonging and mentorship, preferring environments that encourage collaboration and mutual learning. Structured socialisation activities, such as team-building events and peer mentoring, provide new hires with opportunities to adapt to company norms and communication styles. Abu Ziden and Chin Joo (2020) add that digital onboarding platforms can further enhance social inclusion by facilitating virtual introductions and collaborative learning. Odom (2025) also stresses that leadership plays a vital role in promoting integration by modelling inclusive behaviour and supporting transparent communication. When leaders actively engage with newcomers, they reinforce trust and reduce adjustment stress. The outcomes of social integration extend beyond morale enhancement; they contribute to improved teamwork, reduced turnover, and greater organisational citizenship behaviour. For startups in Port Harcourt, where cultural diversity and rapid growth can create social fragmentation, promoting integration during onboarding ensures that employees remain connected, cooperative, and motivated. In essence, social integration transforms onboarding from a procedural activity into a relational strategy that strengthens collaboration, innovation, and collective commitment to organisational success.

Continuous Feedback Mechanism

Continuous feedback mechanisms refer to structured systems that provide employees with regular, constructive insights on their performance, progress, and development needs throughout the onboarding process. These mechanisms extend beyond initial orientation, ensuring that new hires receive ongoing support and guidance. According to Bauer, Erdogan, and Taylor (2021),

continuous feedback strengthens employee engagement by promoting clarity, motivation, and learning. Similarly, Wondim (2024) highlights that younger generations of employees, particularly Generation Z, prefer frequent and transparent feedback to maintain their performance and personal growth trajectory. In startups, the absence of structured appraisal systems can create uncertainty and hinder professional development. Don-Baridam (2023) observes that limited feedback during onboarding leads to disengagement and slower adaptation. Conversely, consistent coaching and evaluation foster psychological safety and enhance employees' willingness to learn. Odom (2025) notes that incorporating human resource analytics into feedback systems allows organisations to monitor learning progress and identify skill gaps efficiently. This data-driven approach enables managers to personalise feedback and create development plans aligned with both individual and organisational objectives. Burhanuddin (2025) adds that sustainable onboarding models, which integrate digital tools for performance tracking, enhance environmental and operational efficiency by reducing paper-based evaluation processes. For startups in Port Harcourt, where resource constraints and rapid scaling are common, implementing continuous feedback systems ensures sustained performance improvement and employee retention. Feedback-driven onboarding also cultivates adaptability, a key attribute for employees in volatile business environments. Therefore, continuous feedback mechanisms are not merely evaluative tools; they represent developmental frameworks that reinforce engagement, accountability, and long-term alignment between employees and organisational goals.

Employee Performance

Employee performance represents the extent to which employees accomplish organisational goals through task completion, quality service delivery, and behavioural contributions that sustain overall effectiveness. It encompasses both the technical and contextual aspects of work, including job proficiency, teamwork, innovation, and adaptability. As Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined, performance extends beyond measurable tasks to include behaviours that maintain the organisational environment and culture. Effective onboarding serves as a key determinant of employee performance because it fosters early alignment between individual capability and organisational expectations. According to Dickson and Isaiah (2024), onboarding programmes that focus on engagement and development significantly enhance employees' motivation, satisfaction, and performance retention. Didion *et al.* (2024) further emphasise that organisational socialisation practices integral to onboarding strengthen the connection between employee adjustment and long-term productivity. These studies affirm that employee performance outcomes are shaped by how well individuals are introduced, supported, and integrated into organisational life. Maharani, Izzati, and Ramadhan (2025) argue that effective onboarding in modern workplaces produces faster learning, better communication, and improved performance through continuous feedback and mentoring. In the same vein, Godinho *et al.* (2023) highlight that structured onboarding handbooks and digital support tools reduce performance variation by providing clarity and reinforcement. In Port Harcourt's startup ecosystem, where flexibility and innovation are vital, employee performance cannot be limited to technical output alone. It includes adaptive behaviours, initiative, and collaboration that enable firms to thrive under uncertainty. Therefore, this study conceptualises employee performance as a multidimensional construct consisting of task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and adaptive performance. Each of these measures captures a unique facet of how onboarding influences productivity, engagement, and alignment with organisational goals, reflecting the overall effectiveness of startup employees in competitive and evolving environments.

Task Performance

Task performance refers to the proficiency with which employees execute their assigned duties and responsibilities that directly contribute to organisational productivity. It encompasses efficiency, accuracy, and the quality of work outcomes that support core business objectives. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) describe task performance as activities formally recognised as part of the job description and essential to operational success. In this study, task performance represents the most direct measure of how onboarding influences technical effectiveness and work output. According to Bauer *et al.* (2007), onboarding processes that enhance role clarity and self-efficacy lead to improved task accomplishment and faster adjustment. Dickson and Isaiah (2024) found that employees who experience structured onboarding demonstrate higher commitment and consistency in task delivery compared to those who receive minimal induction. Similarly, Jeske and Olson (2022) argue that onboarding fosters mutual learning, equipping employees with the knowledge required to perform their duties efficiently. Czopek and Kazusek (2021) observed that remote onboarding systems implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic helped employees sustain performance levels despite physical constraints, illustrating the adaptability of digital approaches. Furthermore, Didion *et al.* (2024) emphasise that continuous support and reinforcement during onboarding enhance job proficiency and task completion rates. In the context of startups in Port Harcourt, where work processes are often fluid and multidimensional, task performance is essential for achieving organisational stability and meeting operational milestones. Employees who are effectively onboarded are better positioned to understand procedures, manage responsibilities, and deliver expected results. Therefore, task performance not only signifies individual contribution but also reflects the overall success of onboarding in transforming new hires into competent, productive, and goal-oriented professionals capable of sustaining the growth of emerging enterprises.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) refers to the voluntary, discretionary actions of employees that promote the social and psychological environment of the workplace beyond formal job requirements. According to Organ (1988), such behaviours include helping colleagues, showing initiative, maintaining positive attitudes, and supporting organisational objectives. These behaviours are vital in startups, where collaboration and flexibility underpin innovation and survival. Effective onboarding promotes OCB by fostering commitment, engagement, and belongingness. Jeske and Olson (2022) found that mutual learning during onboarding cultivates empathy and collaboration, which translate into greater discretionary effort. Similarly, Dickson and Isaiah (2024) argue that when employees feel valued and supported during onboarding, they reciprocate through loyalty and prosocial behaviour. Didion *et al.* (2024) also emphasise that socialisation mechanisms embedded in onboarding processes reinforce shared norms and encourage voluntary cooperation. Maharani *et al.* (2025) describe onboarding as a social process that shapes workplace identity and stimulates civic-mindedness. In their analysis, employees who are effectively integrated into organisational culture exhibit higher willingness to assist others and adapt to evolving work demands. Godinho *et al.* (2023) add that well-structured onboarding manuals and digital learning tools provide a shared framework that enhances understanding, communication, and trust among employees. In the context of Port Harcourt startups, fostering OCB through onboarding is particularly significant due to the collaborative and rapidly changing nature of these enterprises. Employees who engage in teamwork and support one another contribute to innovation, problem-solving, and morale, which are indispensable for growth and resilience. Hence, organisational citizenship behaviour, as a measure of employee performance, reflects how onboarding transcends functional training to cultivate shared values and behaviours that sustain long-term organisational success.

Adaptive Performance

Adaptive performance refers to an employee's ability to adjust to new conditions, learn emerging skills, and remain effective amidst organisational or environmental change. Pulakos *et al.* (2000) conceptualise it as behavioural flexibility that allows individuals to cope with uncertainty, technological advancement, and evolving job demands. In the context of onboarding, adaptability is a crucial outcome because new hires must navigate unfamiliar systems, cultures, and expectations. According to Bauer *et al.* (2007), successful onboarding enhances self-efficacy, enabling employees to respond effectively to change. Czopek and Kazusek (2021) found that virtual onboarding practices during the COVID-19 pandemic improved adaptability by exposing employees to digital communication tools and flexible learning environments. Similarly, Jeske and Olson (2022) observed that onboarding encourages mutual learning between employers and new hires, fostering resilience and problem-solving capacity. Didion *et al.* (2024) confirm that the dynamic nature of organisational socialisation research increasingly recognises adaptability as a critical competency for modern employees. Godinho *et al.* (2023) further highlight that effective onboarding frameworks incorporate continuous learning opportunities, allowing employees to update their skills and remain relevant. In startups especially in Port Harcourt's fast-paced and innovation-driven economy adaptive performance determines whether employees can sustain productivity under shifting market conditions and technological change. Bass and Avolio (1994) argue that leadership support reinforces adaptability by inspiring learning and confidence. When onboarding is paired with transformational leadership, employees feel encouraged to experiment, innovate, and embrace change constructively. Therefore, adaptive performance, as a measure of employee performance, encapsulates the long-term impact of onboarding on resilience, creativity, and sustainable effectiveness. It underscores that onboarding is not a one-time event but a developmental process that prepares employees to thrive in complex, evolving organisational contexts.

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, norms, and assumptions that shape behaviour and guide decision-making within an organisation. It represents the collective psychological framework through which employees interpret their work environment and relate to one another. Schein (2010) defines culture as the set of underlying assumptions developed through shared experiences that determine acceptable behaviour and operational standards. In onboarding, culture serves as a contextual filter that determines how newcomers perceive, internalise, and enact organisational expectations. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) argue that onboarding is most effective when it aligns with the organisation's cultural orientation, allowing new employees to quickly absorb norms and expectations. A strong, cohesive culture enhances this process by providing clear behavioural cues, promoting inclusivity, and reinforcing commitment. Conversely, a weak or fragmented culture creates confusion and hinders socialisation. Mitchell *et al.* (2001) highlight that employees remain in organisations where cultural embeddedness fosters belonging and job satisfaction an idea consistent with job embeddedness theory. Similarly, Kossivi (2016) identifies culture as a determinant of employee retention, explaining that when employees feel culturally aligned, they exhibit loyalty and discretionary effort. In startups, especially those in Port Harcourt, organisational culture often emerges informally yet powerfully influences performance and innovation. Cosmas and Macdonald (2022) observe that teamwork-oriented cultures in Nigerian enterprises enhance collective learning and survival by encouraging open communication and shared purpose. Likewise, Ismael (2023) found that collaborative work cultures significantly improve employee motivation and creativity. These insights affirm that culture moderates the relationship between onboarding and performance by either amplifying or weakening the socialisation and motivation effects of onboarding practices. Therefore, organisational culture functions as the environmental platform upon which onboarding outcomes are built. In startups,

fostering a cohesive culture rooted in trust, inclusivity, and innovation ensures that onboarding transitions seamlessly into engagement, adaptability, and sustained employee performance.

Leadership Support

Leadership support refers to the extent to which leaders actively guide, mentor, and empower employees to perform effectively. It encompasses managerial accessibility, communication, and the emotional encouragement that leaders provide during onboarding and beyond. Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) describe perceived supervisor support as the degree to which employees believe their leaders value their contributions and care about their well-being. In this context, leadership support moderates the impact of onboarding by shaping employees' motivation, adjustment, and engagement. Pulakos and O'Leary (2011) note that the success of performance management systems depends largely on leaders' ability to communicate expectations, deliver feedback, and support continuous learning. When applied to onboarding, this principle suggests that supportive leaders accelerate role clarity, learning, and integration. Nnaji (2023) and Okeke (2021) emphasise that information management systems enhance managerial effectiveness by facilitating timely feedback and supervision elements critical to leadership support. Furthermore, O'Leary's perspective aligns with Kehoe and Boughton (2018), who assert that digital human resource systems can help leaders personalise onboarding experiences, improving employee retention and performance outcomes. From a behavioural standpoint, leadership support influences trust and commitment. Organ (1988) and Pulakos *et al.* (2000) argue that leaders who display empathy and guidance encourage citizenship behaviours and adaptive performance, strengthening both morale and productivity. In Nigerian contexts, Nthiga and Samson (2024) demonstrate that HR information systems enhance leaders' capacity to support and monitor employees efficiently. Similarly, Hossain, Shahriar, and Al Mamun (2019) found that managerial support systems significantly impact performance in knowledge-intensive industries. In startup organisations, where roles evolve rapidly and formal hierarchies are minimal, leadership support becomes indispensable. Leaders who mentor, coach, and communicate transparently create psychological safety and stimulate learning. Thus, leadership support moderates the onboarding–performance relationship by ensuring that new employees receive the guidance, motivation, and confidence needed to perform effectively and sustain long-term organisational success.

The conceptual review establishes that successful onboarding is a multidimensional construct comprising role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback mechanisms, each enhancing employee adaptation and productivity. These dimensions collectively influence employee performance measured through task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and adaptive performance by aligning skills, motivation, and behaviour with organisational goals. Organisational culture and leadership support further moderate this relationship, strengthening the impact of onboarding on employee outcomes. Together, these concepts reveal that onboarding in Port Harcourt startups functions as both a developmental and relational process that fosters engagement, innovation, and retention, thereby driving long-term organisational effectiveness and sustainability.

Empirical Review

The Relationship between Role Clarity and Employee Performance

Bauer *et al.* (2007) demonstrated that employees who received explicit instructions and well-defined job roles during onboarding performed their tasks with greater accuracy and speed. The study established that clarity of roles builds self-efficacy and accelerates work adjustment. Similarly, Wondim (2024) revealed that clear performance expectations at entry level improved individual productivity and confidence among Generation Z employees. Within Nigerian contexts,

Don-Baridam (2023) found that employees who understood their functions from the outset delivered superior results compared to those onboarded informally. These findings contradict the null hypothesis, confirming that role clarity significantly enhances task performance.

Jeske and Olson (2022) found that when employees understood their roles and responsibilities, they were more likely to exhibit voluntary cooperation, initiative, and mutual support—hallmarks of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). The study explained that defined roles encourage teamwork by reducing ambiguity and interpersonal friction. In a related context, Dickson and Isaiah (2024) observed that clear communication of duties during onboarding increased employee willingness to help colleagues and contribute beyond formal job requirements. The empirical evidence therefore rejects the null hypothesis, establishing that role clarity significantly promotes OCB through improved collaboration and mutual understanding.

Czopek and Kazusek (2021) reported that remote employees who were provided explicit job guidance adapted more efficiently to new work conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings suggest that clarity of duties allows employees to reorganise priorities during change. Pulakos *et al.* (2000) also identified clarity of expectations as a precondition for adaptive performance because it provides a stable foundation from which flexibility can develop. Empirical results show that ambiguity undermines adaptability, while clear onboarding communication facilitates learning and problem-solving. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, affirming a significant positive relationship between role clarity and adaptive performance.

The Relationship between Social Integration and Employee Performance

Cornelia, Nicolaie-Catalin, and Elena-Claudia (2025) revealed that employees who experienced social belonging and team connection during onboarding performed better on assigned tasks. Their study demonstrated that social ties improve coordination, information sharing, and accountability. In a related observation, Godinho *et al.* (2023) found that new hires who engaged in peer networking completed their tasks more efficiently due to easier access to informal support channels. These findings underscore that social inclusion fosters cooperative effort, which directly improves performance outcomes. Thus, the empirical evidence contradicts the null hypothesis, confirming that social integration significantly enhances task performance.

Didion *et al.* (2024) demonstrated that onboarding activities promoting cultural assimilation and team connection increased employees' voluntary efforts and loyalty. Their bibliometric analysis revealed that social integration enhances psychological ownership, which in turn encourages OCB. Likewise, Jeske and Olson (2022) showed that shared learning environments foster empathy and collaboration, inspiring employees to contribute beyond contractual obligations. In startups, such social cohesion translates to innovation and adaptability. Hence, empirical evidence clearly refutes the null hypothesis, confirming that social integration significantly strengthens organisational citizenship behaviour by enhancing employees' sense of belonging and mutual responsibility.

Maharani, Izzati, and Ramadhan (2025) observed that newcomers who participated in interactive and socially engaging onboarding sessions adjusted more quickly to new technologies and work processes. The researchers explained that integration facilitates collective problem-solving and emotional stability—key enablers of adaptability. Furthermore, Jeske and Olson (2022) highlighted that shared onboarding experiences encourage resilience and openness to change. These findings indicate that employees who feel socially connected possess greater learning agility, which enhances adaptive performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, validating that social integration positively influences adaptability within dynamic organisational environments such as startups.

The Relationship between Continuous Feedback Mechanism and Employee Performance

Bauer, Erdogan, and Taylor (2021) provided empirical evidence that regular performance feedback during onboarding improved precision and job mastery. Their research on digital onboarding confirmed that structured evaluations help employees correct errors and meet expectations efficiently. Similarly, Abu Ziden and Chin Joo (2020) found that continuous feedback through virtual platforms improved employee comprehension and work outcomes. In emerging firms, feedback loops function as learning mechanisms that accelerate productivity. Consequently, empirical findings disprove the null hypothesis, establishing that continuous feedback mechanisms significantly enhance task performance through sustained communication and corrective learning.

Dickson and Isaiah (2024) discovered that continuous feedback during onboarding increased engagement and emotional commitment, leading employees to exhibit stronger cooperative behaviour and willingness to assist colleagues. The study established that when employees perceive ongoing support, they develop reciprocity, resulting in OCB. Similarly, Jeske and Olson (2022) noted that open feedback channels create transparency, promoting voluntary teamwork. These results demonstrate that sustained communication and recognition stimulate intrinsic motivation and organisational trust. Therefore, empirical evidence refutes the null hypothesis, confirming a significant positive relationship between continuous feedback and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Burhanuddin (2025) found that virtual onboarding systems incorporating real-time feedback improved employees' ability to adjust to new work models and sustainability practices. The study indicated that feedback promotes learning agility by allowing workers to refine behaviour continuously. Don-Baridam (2023) also observed that Nigerian firms using regular progress reviews achieved faster employee adjustment to organisational routines. Together, these findings show that feedback cultivates adaptability through iterative improvement and reflection. The empirical evidence thus invalidates the null hypothesis, confirming a significant positive relationship between continuous feedback mechanisms and adaptive performance.

The Moderating Effect of Organisational Culture on the Relationship between Successful Onboarding and Employee Performance

Schein (2010) empirically established that culture shapes the effectiveness of onboarding by defining acceptable workplace norms and behavioural standards. When culture supports openness and teamwork, onboarding outcomes improve significantly. Cosmas and Macdonald (2022) confirmed this in Nigerian enterprises, revealing that cohesive, teamwork-oriented cultures enhance learning and performance. Additionally, Kossivi (2016) identified culture as a predictor of retention, showing that cultural congruence motivates persistence. These findings collectively invalidate the null hypothesis, confirming that organisational culture moderates the onboarding–performance relationship by amplifying employee motivation, engagement, and overall productivity in startup settings.

The Moderating Effect of Leadership Support on the Relationship between Successful Onboarding and Employee Performance

Bass and Avolio (1994) demonstrated that transformational leadership fosters follower confidence, creativity, and commitment, significantly improving onboarding outcomes. Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) also reported that employees who perceive strong supervisor support display higher engagement and lower turnover rates. Nthiga and Samson (2024) further showed that leadership aided by human resource information systems enhances communication and monitoring efficiency, strengthening employee performance. Collectively, these studies contradict the null hypothesis, establishing that leadership support significantly moderates the relationship between

onboarding and performance by reinforcing motivation, learning, and psychological safety within the workplace.

Summary and Gap in Literature

Empirical studies across diverse sectors consistently reveal that onboarding dimensions—role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback—exert significant effects on employee performance measures including task efficiency, citizenship behaviour, and adaptability. Furthermore, organisational culture and leadership support have been empirically confirmed as moderating forces that strengthen onboarding's influence on performance. Evidence from Bauer *et al.* (2007), Schein (2010), Bass and Avolio (1994), and Don-Baridam (2023) indicates that successful onboarding is not an administrative event but a strategic process shaped by supportive contexts. Despite extensive empirical evidence linking onboarding practices to employee performance, significant contextual and methodological gaps persist—particularly within the Nigerian startup ecosystem. Most existing studies, such as those by Bauer *et al.* (2007), Schein (2010), and Bass and Avolio (1994), were conducted in advanced economies with mature organisational structures, digital infrastructure, and formalised human resource systems. These contexts differ considerably from the informal, resource-constrained, and dynamic environment characterising startups in Port Harcourt, where onboarding processes are often unstructured or entirely absent. Consequently, findings from developed contexts cannot be generalised without local empirical validation. Furthermore, previous Nigerian studies (e.g., Don-Baridam, 2023; Nthiga & Samson, 2024) have predominantly examined onboarding in established organisations such as oil and gas firms or public service institutions. Very few have focused on startup businesses, which face unique challenges of limited hierarchy, role fluidity, and cultural instability. This neglect has left a gap in understanding how onboarding can be effectively implemented in early-stage enterprises to enhance employee performance and retention.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance in startup businesses within Port Harcourt. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify, quantify, and analyse the relationships among variables objectively using numerical data. The approach also allowed for hypothesis testing and statistical generalisation across the study population. By employing a correlational framework, the study determined the extent to which successful onboarding practices such as role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback predicted employee performance dimensions—task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and adaptive performance—while considering the moderating effects of organisational culture and leadership support.

The population of the study comprised employees of registered startup businesses in the Port Harcourt metropolis. These included firms operating within the technology, service, and creative sectors. Startups were targeted due to their dynamic work structures, fluid role definitions, and high reliance on adaptive human resource practices. The total accessible population was approximately 2,100 employees, based on data obtained from startup clusters and business registration units in Port Harcourt (Startup Blink, 2025).

A sample size of 340 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for finite populations, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sample size was considered statistically adequate to represent the target population while ensuring precision in data estimation. The sample was proportionately distributed across the different categories of startup businesses to maintain representativeness.

A **simple random sampling technique** was employed to minimise selection bias and ensure that every respondent had an equal chance of inclusion in the study. This method was suitable for a quantitative design because it enhanced objectivity and the external validity of findings.

The study relied primarily on **primary data** collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire. In addition, **secondary data** were consulted from journals, books, and previous studies to support the conceptual and theoretical framework. The combination of these data sources enriched the empirical analysis and ensured methodological triangulation.

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed on a **five-point Likert scale**, ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. The instrument was divided into four main sections.

- i. **Section A** captured demographic information such as gender, age, education, and work experience.
- ii. **Section B** measured the **predictor variable—successful onboarding**, with its dimensions: *role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback mechanism*.
- iii. **Section C** measured the **criterion variable—employee performance**, through *task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and adaptive performance*.
- iv. **Section D** addressed the **moderating variables—organisational culture and leadership support**.

Each variable was measured using five items developed and adapted from existing literature, particularly from Bauer *et al.* (2007), Schein (2010), Don-Baridam (2023), and related onboarding and human resource performance studies. Items were contextualised to reflect the realities of startups in Port Harcourt. Construct validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested using SPSS version 27. Construct validity was examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) employing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. KMO values for all variables ranged between 0.801 and 0.853, exceeding the 0.6 benchmark, indicating adequate sampling. Bartlett's tests were all significant at $p < 0.05$, confirming that the correlation matrices were appropriate for factor analysis. The factor loadings for all items ranged from 0.70 to 0.89, demonstrating strong convergent validity and confirming that each item reliably measured its intended construct. Reliability was determined through Cronbach's Alpha, which measured internal consistency among items. The coefficients ranged between 0.87 and 0.91, surpassing the minimum acceptable value of 0.70. The overall reliability coefficient for the entire instrument was 0.92, indicating high reliability and consistency across all constructs. These results confirmed that the questionnaire was both valid and reliable for data collection and subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 1: Construct Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Dimensions / Measures	KMO	Bartlett's Sig.	Factor Loadings Range	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Decision
Successful Onboarding	Role Clarity	0.841	0.000	0.711–0.874	0.88	Reliable
	Social Integration	0.853	0.000	0.694–0.892	0.90	Reliable
	Continuous Feedback	0.826	0.000	0.702–0.861	0.87	Reliable
Employee Performance	Task Performance	0.818	0.000	0.728–0.875	0.89	Reliable
	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	0.832	0.000	0.715–0.861	0.91	Reliable
	Adaptive Performance	0.801	0.000	0.703–0.867	0.88	Reliable
Moderating Variables	Organisational Culture	0.845	0.000	0.717–0.876	0.90	Reliable
	Leadership Support	0.838	0.000	0.729–0.881	0.91	Reliable

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Data were collected using both physical and electronic methods. Hard copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to employees working onsite, while electronic copies were shared via Google Forms and email to accommodate participants working remotely. The process lasted four weeks, ensuring sufficient coverage of all targeted organisations. Trained research assistants facilitated distribution and collection to enhance response rates. Out of the 340 questionnaires distributed, 315 were returned and found usable, yielding a response rate of 92.6%, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis.

The data collected were coded and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to questionnaire items. Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses and determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables. Specifically:

- i. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance dimensions.
- ii. Multiple Regression Analysis tested the predictive influence of onboarding practices on employee performance.
- iii. Hierarchical Regression examined the moderating effects of organisational culture and leadership support on the onboarding–performance relationship.

The significance level was set at 0.05.

Results were presented in tables and charts for clarity and interpreted in alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses.

Findings

In hierarchical regression analysis, established benchmarks ensured model adequacy and statistical validity. Predictors with $p \leq 0.05$ were considered significant, while $p \leq 0.01$ indicated strong associations. Beta coefficients (β) measured effect direction and strength, with values between 0.60–0.79 signifying strong relationships. Coefficient of determination (R^2 , Adjusted R^2) indicated model fit, with small gaps denoting stability. Change in R^2 (ΔR^2) assessed improvement when moderators were introduced, with significant F-change ($p \leq 0.05$) confirming model enhancement. Multicollinearity was acceptable at Tolerance ≥ 0.10 and VIF ≤ 10 . These standards guided interpretation of relationships among onboarding, organisational culture, leadership, and employee performance.

Effect of Successful Onboarding Dimensions and Interaction Terms on Task Performance

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Task Performance

Model ^c	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.812 ^a	.659	.654	.31812	.659	184.123	3	311	.000
2	.828 ^b	.685	.677	.31245	.026	3.912	6	305	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role Clarity, Social Integration, Continuous Feedback.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Role Clarity, Social Integration, Continuous Feedback, Role Clarity×Culture, Role Clarity×Leadership, Social Integration×Culture, Social Integration×Leadership, Feedback×Culture, Feedback×Leadership.

c. Criterion Variable: Task Performance

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Table 2 show that - Model 1 showed a strong fit ($R = .812$, $R^2 = .659$), explaining 65.9% of variance in task performance. Adding the six interaction terms increased R^2 to $.685$ ($\Delta R^2 = .026$), a small but statistically significant improvement ($\Delta F = 3.912$, $p = .001$), indicating meaningful moderation by culture and leadership.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Predictors of Task Performance

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	82.340	3	27.447	184.123
	Residual	46.742	311	.150	
	Total	129.082	314		
2	Regression	88.488	9	9.832	70.389
	Residual	40.594	305	.133	
	Total	129.082	314		

a. Criterion Variable: Task Performance.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Role Clarity, Social Integration, Continuous Feedback.

c. Predictors: Model 1 predictors plus six interaction terms.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Table 3 show that the ANOVA confirms both models were highly significant. While Model 2's mean square is smaller due to more predictors, the full model remains highly significant ($p < .001$), validating the incremental explanatory value of interaction effects.

Table 4: Coefficients of Hierarchical Regression for Predictors of Task Performance

Coefficients ^a							
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance VIF
Model 1							
(Constant)	2.745	.048		57.188	.000		
Role Clarity	.321	.049	.321	6.520	.000	.233	4.294
Social Integration	.289	.049	.289	5.910	.000	.247	4.048
Continuous Feedback	.267	.049	.267	5.470	.000	.259	3.858
Model 2							
(Constant)	2.712	.052		52.154	.000		
Role Clarity	.315	.051	.315	6.176	.000	.231	4.326
Social Integration	.281	.050	.281	5.612	.000	.243	4.115
Continuous Feedback	.262	.050	.262	5.240	.000	.256	3.902
Role Clarity × Culture	.138	.058	.112	2.379	.018	.186	5.366
Role Clarity × Leadership	.164	.057	.133	2.877	.004	.179	5.580
Social Integration × Culture	.081	.056	.067	1.446	.149	.193	5.174

Social Integration Leadership Feedback Culture Feedback Leadership	×		.102	.055	.086	1.855	.064	.188	5.319
Feedback Culture Feedback Leadership	×		.095	.056	.078	1.696	.091	.190	5.252
Feedback Leadership	×		.134	.055	.111	2.436	.015	.184	5.444

a. Criterion Variable: Task Performance.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Table 4 - The regression results presented above provide detailed insights into the relationships between the dimensions of successful onboarding—Role Clarity, Social Integration, and Continuous Feedback—and task performance, as well as the moderating effects of organisational culture and leadership support. The analysis was conducted in two stages: Model 1 assessed the direct effects of the onboarding dimensions, while Model 2 incorporated interaction terms to examine moderation. In Model 1, the overall regression results indicate a strong and statistically significant model fit, as all predictors were significant at $p \leq 0.001$. Role Clarity ($\beta = .321$, $t = 6.520$, $p = .000$) demonstrated a strong and positive influence on employee performance. This implies that when employees clearly understand their job roles, responsibilities, and expectations, their performance improves significantly. The standardised beta value of .321 represents a strong relationship, while the positive coefficient suggests a direct effect. The model further shows that Social Integration ($\beta = .289$, $t = 5.910$, $p = .000$) also exerts a substantial positive effect on performance, confirming that employees who feel connected and supported within their work teams exhibit higher engagement and adaptability. Similarly, Continuous Feedback ($\beta = .267$, $t = 5.470$, $p = .000$) significantly predicts performance, emphasising the importance of regular feedback mechanisms in improving employee motivation and role adjustment. All three variables indicate strong predictive power, with variance inflation factors (VIF) below 5 and tolerance values above 0.10, suggesting no multicollinearity issues. The overall model demonstrates a strong fit within the benchmark range of R^2 values between 0.60–0.79, confirming the robustness of the results.

In Model 2, interaction terms between onboarding dimensions and the moderating variables—organisational culture and leadership support—were introduced to assess their joint effects. The results reveal that Role Clarity $\times$ Culture ($\beta = .112$, $t = 2.379$, $p = .018$) and Role Clarity $\times$ Leadership ($\beta = .133$, $t = 2.877$, $p = .004$) were both statistically significant. These findings indicate that organisational culture and leadership support significantly strengthen the relationship between role clarity and employee performance. When a supportive culture reinforces clarity of expectations, and leaders actively guide employees, performance outcomes improve markedly. In contrast, Social Integration $\times$ Culture ($\beta = .067$, $p = .149$) and Social Integration $\times$ Leadership ($\beta = .086$, $p = .064$) were not statistically significant, suggesting that the influence of social relationships on performance is relatively independent of cultural or leadership variations.

The interactions between Continuous Feedback and both moderators yielded mixed results. Feedback $\times$ Culture ($\beta = .078$, $p = .091$) was statistically insignificant, indicating that cultural context alone does not significantly alter the effect of feedback on performance. However, Feedback $\times$ Leadership ($\beta = .111$, $t = 2.436$, $p = .015$) was significant, suggesting that leadership support plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the impact of feedback. When feedback is complemented by supportive leadership, employees are more likely to translate constructive criticism into improved performance outcomes. In evaluating the model against established benchmarks, the coefficients reveal predominantly strong direct relationships (β values between .26 and .32) in Model 1, consistent with a strong predictive model. In Model 2, although moderation effects were modest (β values between .078 and .133), they provide meaningful incremental improvement, consistent with a small but statistically significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 \approx 0.02$). All tolerance values

remained above 0.10 and VIF values below 10, meeting the standard thresholds for acceptable multicollinearity. Overall, these findings confirm that successful onboarding practices—particularly clarity of roles, social inclusion, and ongoing feedback—are strong predictors of employee performance. Moreover, leadership support and organisational culture enhance these effects, especially in contexts where employees receive clear guidance and are embedded in a collaborative environment. This reinforces the importance of structured onboarding frameworks integrated with supportive cultural and leadership systems in improving workforce efficiency, motivation, and adaptability within startup organisations.

Effect of Successful Onboarding Dimensions and Interaction Terms on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Predictors of OCB

Model ^c	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.784 ^a	.615	.609	.33711	.615	158.921	3	311	.000
2	.803 ^b	.645	.637	.32904	.030	3.586	6	305	.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role Clarity, Social Integration, Continuous Feedback.

b. Predictors: Model 1 predictors plus six interaction terms.

c. Criterion Variable: OCB.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

In Table 5 - Model 1 explained 61.5% of variance in OCB. Adding interactions produced a statistically significant, small improvement ($\Delta R^2 = .030$, $p = .002$), indicating moderation by culture and leadership.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Predictors of OCB

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.489	3	25.163	158.921
	Residual	49.217	311	.158	
	Total	124.706	314		
2	Regression	80.445	9	8.938	56.627
	Residual	44.261	305	.145	
	Total	124.706	314		

a. Criterion Variable: OCB.

b. Predictors: Model 1 predictors.

c. Predictors: Model 1 predictors + interactions.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Table 7: Coefficients of Hierarchical Regression for Predictors of OCB

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients B	Standardised Coefficients Std. Error Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
Model 1 (Constant)	2.684	.042	63.905	.000	
Role Clarity	.276	.054	.276	5.120	.000
Social Integration	.302	.051	.302	5.890	.000
Continuous Feedback	.265	.052	.265	5.070	.000

Model 2 (Constant)	2.659	.045	59.089	.000
Role Clarity	.271	.055	.271 4.927	.000
Social Integration	.296	.052	.296 5.692	.000
Continuous Feedback	.259	.053	.259 4.887	.000
Role Clarity × Culture	.095	.060	.078 1.583	.114
Role Clarity × Leadership	.121	.059	.099 2.034	.043
Social Integration × Culture	.121	.057	.097 2.123	.035
Social Integration × Leadership	.149	.056	.120 2.661	.008
Feedback × Culture	.082	.058	.066 1.414	.158
Feedback × Leadership	.145	.056	.117 2.598	.010

a. Criterion Variable: Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

In Table 7 - The regression results presented in Table 7 explore the influence of the dimensions of successful onboarding—Role Clarity, Social Integration, and Continuous Feedback—on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), while also examining the moderating effects of organisational culture and leadership support. The analysis was conducted in two stages: Model 1 assessed the direct effects of the onboarding variables on OCB, while Model 2 incorporated interaction terms to determine the extent of moderation. In Model 1, the results reveal a strong and statistically significant model fit, with all three predictors—Role Clarity, Social Integration, and Continuous Feedback—showing significant positive effects ($p \leq .001$). Role Clarity ($\beta = .276$, $t = 5.120$, $p = .000$) exhibited a strong positive relationship with OCB, implying that when employees clearly understand their duties and work expectations, they are more likely to engage in voluntary, helpful behaviours that benefit the organisation. Similarly, Social Integration ($\beta = .302$, $t = 5.890$, $p = .000$) had the strongest effect among the three predictors, indicating that employees who are socially connected and experience a sense of belonging are more inclined to display cooperative and altruistic behaviours. Continuous Feedback ($\beta = .265$, $t = 5.070$, $p = .000$) was also significant, suggesting that consistent feedback fosters a culture of support and recognition, motivating employees to exceed their formal role expectations. All tolerance values were above 0.10 and variance inflation factors (VIF) were below 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. The strength of the model aligns with benchmark standards for moderate to strong fit (R^2 between 0.40–0.79), indicating that onboarding practices significantly predict OCB.

In Model 2, the moderating effects of Organisational Culture and Leadership Support were introduced through interaction terms. The results show mixed effects, with some interactions achieving statistical significance while others did not. The interaction between Role Clarity × Culture ($\beta = .078$, $t = 1.583$, $p = .114$) was not significant, suggesting that cultural context alone does not meaningfully alter how role clarity influences OCB. However, Role Clarity × Leadership ($\beta = .099$, $t = 2.034$, $p = .043$) was significant, implying that leadership support enhances the positive relationship between clear role definitions and citizenship behaviours. This demonstrates that effective leaders who reinforce clarity and direction can foster an environment where employees voluntarily go beyond their job descriptions to contribute to organisational goals.

Similarly, both Social Integration × Culture ($\beta = .097$, $t = 2.123$, $p = .035$) and Social Integration × Leadership ($\beta = .120$, $t = 2.661$, $p = .008$) were statistically significant. These results indicate that when an inclusive organisational culture and strong leadership support exist, the positive impact of social relationships on citizenship behaviour is magnified. Employees in cohesive and supportive work environments are more likely to help co-workers, advocate for the organisation, and uphold positive norms. Conversely, the interactions Feedback × Culture ($\beta = .066$, $t = 1.414$, $p = .158$)** and Feedback × Leadership ($\beta = .117$, $t = 2.598$, $p = .010$)** revealed that while

cultural moderation was insignificant, leadership support significantly strengthened the influence of continuous feedback on OCB. This underscores the importance of responsive and communicative leadership in reinforcing the behavioural outcomes of feedback processes.

Interpreted against established benchmarks, the beta values in Model 1 (ranging from .265 to .302) reflect strong direct relationships, consistent with a robust predictive model. In Model 2, the significant moderation effects—particularly those involving leadership—showed small but meaningful improvements ($\beta = .099-.120$), corresponding with a modest ΔR^2 improvement (approximately 0.02) that is statistically significant within the 0.05–0.09 benchmark range for small model enhancement. Additionally, tolerance and VIF values remained within acceptable limits (Tolerance ≥ 0.10 , VIF ≤ 10), indicating that the model estimates were reliable and free from multicollinearity. Overall, the findings confirm that successful onboarding practices—especially clear role communication, social integration, and regular feedback—are critical drivers of organisational citizenship behaviour. Moreover, leadership support plays a pivotal moderating role, amplifying the effects of onboarding practices on employees' willingness to engage in prosocial, discretionary acts that sustain teamwork, trust, and collective performance. Organisational culture, while supportive, exerts a lesser moderating effect, highlighting that leadership-driven onboarding reinforcement is central to fostering citizenship-oriented behaviour in startup organisations.

Effect of Successful Onboarding Dimensions and Interaction Terms on Adaptive Performance

Table 8: Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Adaptive Performance

Model ^c	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.769 ^a	.592	.585	.34212	.592	121.560	3	311	.000
2	.792 ^b	.627	.617	.33403	.035	4.412	6	305	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role Clarity, Social Integration, Continuous Feedback.

b. Predictors: Model 1 predictors + six interaction terms.

c. Criterion Variable: Adaptive Performance.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

In Table 8 - Model 1 explained 59.2% of variance in adaptive performance. Adding interactions increased R^2 to .627 ($\Delta R^2 = .035$), a small but statistically significant improvement ($p < .001$), showing culture and leadership strengthen adaptability effects.

Table 9: ANOVA Results for Predictors of Adaptive Performance

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	71.023	3	23.674	121.560
	Residual	60.165	311	.194	
	Total	131.188	314		
2	Regression	82.227	9	9.136	47.342
	Residual	48.961	305	.161	
	Total	131.188	314		

a. Criterion Variable: Adaptive Performance.

b. Predictors: Model 1 predictors.

c. Predictors: Model 1 predictors + interactions.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

Table 10: Coefficients of Hierarchical Regression for Predictors of Adaptive Performance

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients	Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Model 1 (Constant)	2.896	.028		103.429	.000
Role Clarity	.255	.053	.255	4.810	.000
Social Integration	.284	.052	.284	5.460	.000
Continuous Feedback	.299	.052	.299	5.720	.000
Model 2 (Constant)	2.884	.030		96.133	.000
Role Clarity	.249	.054	.249	4.609	.000
Social Integration	.279	.053	.279	5.264	.000
Continuous Feedback	.295	.053	.295	5.566	.000
Role Clarity × Culture	.119	.058	.096	2.052	.041
Role Clarity × Leadership	.128	.057	.102	2.245	.026
Social Integration × Culture	.121	.057	.097	2.123	.035
Social Integration × Leadership	.142	.056	.114	2.536	.012
Feedback × Culture	.128	.056	.105	2.285	.023
Feedback × Leadership	.142	.055	.116	2.582	.010

a. Criterion Variable: Adaptive Performance.

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025; SPSS v.27 Output

In Table 10 - The regression results presented in Table 10 examine the influence of the dimensions of successful onboarding—Role Clarity, Social Integration, and Continuous Feedback—on Adaptive Performance, alongside the moderating effects of Organisational Culture and Leadership Support. The analysis was conducted in two stages: Model 1 explored the direct effects of the onboarding variables on adaptive performance, while Model 2 incorporated interaction terms to assess moderation.

In Model 1, the results reveal a highly significant model, as all three predictors—Role Clarity, Social Integration, and Continuous Feedback—were statistically significant at $p \leq .001$. Role Clarity ($\beta = .255$, $t = 4.810$, $p = .000$) showed a strong and positive effect on adaptive performance, indicating that employees who understand their roles and expectations are more capable of adjusting to new or challenging situations. Similarly, Social Integration ($\beta = .284$, $t = 5.460$, $p = .000$) had an even greater effect, suggesting that socially connected employees who enjoy cooperative relationships with colleagues tend to adapt better to organisational change. Continuous Feedback ($\beta = .299$, $t = 5.720$, $p = .000$) emerged as the most influential predictor, signifying that ongoing feedback mechanisms enhance learning, flexibility, and resilience—key components of adaptive behaviour. The consistency of beta coefficients within the 0.25–0.30 range indicates a strong fit, falling within the “moderate to strong” benchmark threshold (0.40–0.79 for R^2). Furthermore, tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF scores below 5 confirm that multicollinearity was not an issue, supporting the stability of Model 1. In Model 2, interaction terms were introduced to evaluate the moderating influence of organisational culture and leadership support. The results show several significant moderation effects, highlighting the contextual importance of these variables. Specifically, Role Clarity × Culture ($\beta = .096$, $t = 2.052$, $p = .041$) and Role Clarity × Leadership ($\beta = .102$, $t = 2.245$, $p = .026$) were both significant, implying that adaptive performance is enhanced when role clarity operates within a supportive cultural and leadership context. These findings suggest that when organisational norms encourage flexibility and leaders provide guidance, employees are more likely to adjust effectively to change.

Both Social Integration $\times$ Culture ($\beta = .097$, $t = 2.123$, $p = .035$)** and Social Integration $\times$ Leadership ($\beta = .114$, $t = 2.536$, $p = .012$)** were also significant, indicating that culture and leadership jointly strengthen the relationship between social belonging and adaptability. In environments that value collaboration and where leaders promote inclusiveness, employees more readily adapt to evolving organisational demands. Likewise, both Feedback $\times$ Culture ($\beta = .105$, $t = 2.285$, $p = .023$)** and Feedback $\times$ Leadership ($\beta = .116$, $t = 2.582$, $p = .010$)** recorded significant moderation effects, demonstrating that feedback-driven adaptability is most effective when guided by a supportive leadership style and embedded within a responsive cultural framework.

Interpreting the findings against standard benchmarks, all significant beta values (.096–.299) fall within the moderate range, confirming that the predictors and moderators meaningfully influence adaptive performance. The significant interaction terms further suggest a small but important improvement in model explanatory power, consistent with a ΔR^2 between 0.02 and 0.05—classified as a small but meaningful improvement. Moreover, tolerance values (≥ 0.18) and VIF scores (≤ 5.6) were within acceptable thresholds, ensuring that the regression model maintained statistical validity and no multicollinearity distortion occurred. Overall, the findings affirm that successful onboarding dimensions—clarity in roles, social integration, and continuous feedback—are strong determinants of adaptive performance. More importantly, their effects are amplified under supportive organisational cultures and effective leadership. This implies that organisations that prioritise clarity, collaboration, and feedback within adaptive cultural and leadership systems cultivate employees who can swiftly respond to uncertainty, embrace innovation, and maintain performance during organisational transitions. These insights emphasise the strategic role of structured onboarding as a catalyst for adaptability and long-term workforce resilience in dynamic business environments.

Discussion of Findings

The findings are discussed in lien with the hypotheses:

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significant relationship between role clarity and task performance.

Based on Table 4.6, role clarity recorded a statistically significant effect on task performance ($\beta = 0.321$, $t = 6.520$, $p = .000$). This strong, positive relationship indicates that when employees clearly understand their responsibilities, their efficiency and productivity improve. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected. The finding agrees with Bauer *et al.* (2007), who stressed that structured onboarding through role definition enhances performance. The Beta coefficient (.321) signifies a moderate effect, confirming that clarity of roles enables focus, precision, and achievement of task objectives among startup employees.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant relationship between role clarity and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

As shown in Table 7, role clarity significantly influenced OCB ($\beta = 0.276$, $t = 5.120$, $p = .000$). The hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that employees with defined roles display higher voluntary and supportive workplace behaviours. The result supports Organ (1988), who asserted that clarity fosters organisational loyalty and prosocial conduct. The moderate Beta value reflects that role understanding strengthens cooperative and altruistic tendencies that improve collective performance.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): There is no significant relationship between role clarity and adaptive performance.

Table 10 reveals a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.255$, $t = 4.810$, $p = .000$). Thus, H_{03} is rejected. Employees with well-defined duties are more confident in adjusting to changing environments, confirming Pulakos *et al.* (2000). The moderate Beta coefficient indicates a consistent contribution to flexibility and problem-solving capacity under dynamic conditions.

Hypothesis Four (H_{04}): There is no significant relationship between social integration and task performance.

Findings in Table 4.6 show a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.289$, $t = 5.910$, $p = .000$), leading to the rejection of H_{04} . Social integration strengthens collaboration, teamwork, and trust, all of which enhance employee productivity. This finding aligns with Van Maanen and Schein (1979), who noted that employee adjustment through social belonging improves performance outcomes.

Hypothesis Five (H_{05}): There is no significant relationship between social integration and OCB.

Table 7 demonstrates a significant positive association ($\beta = 0.302$, $t = 5.890$, $p = .000$). H_{05} is rejected. Employees who experience social inclusion tend to help colleagues and uphold organisational goals beyond formal expectations. This supports Organ's (1988) view that cohesive workplace relationships foster organisational citizenship.

Hypothesis Six (H_{06}): There is no significant relationship between social integration and adaptive performance.

According to Table 10, the relationship is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 5.460$, $p = .000$), prompting the rejection of H_{06} . Integrated employees are more willing to embrace change and perform well under new challenges, consistent with Pulakos *et al.* (2000).

Hypothesis Seven (H_{07}): There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback and task performance.

Table 4.6 shows that continuous feedback significantly influences task performance ($\beta = 0.267$, $t = 5.470$, $p = .000$). H_{07} is rejected. Feedback mechanisms allow real-time corrections and performance reinforcement, enhancing output consistency. Klein *et al.* (2015) observed that ongoing feedback boosts motivation and accountability, aligning with this result.

Hypothesis Eight (H_{08}): There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback and OCB.

The analysis in Table 7 reveals that feedback positively affects OCB ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 5.070$, $p = .000$), resulting in the rejection of H_{08} . Employees who receive constructive feedback feel valued and engage in supportive behaviours that strengthen teamwork and organisational cohesion.

Hypothesis Nine (H_{09}): There is no significant relationship between continuous feedback and adaptive performance.

Results in Table 10 indicate a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.299$, $t = 5.720$, $p = .000$). H_{09} is rejected. Continuous feedback equips employees with the guidance needed to adjust swiftly to workplace changes, supporting Klein *et al.* (2015).

Hypothesis Ten (H_{10}): There is no significant moderating effect of organisational culture on the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance.

Across Tables 4.6–10, significant moderation effects were found between culture and onboarding components such as role clarity ($\beta = .138$, $t = 2.379$, $p = .018$) and feedback ($\beta = .128$, $t = 2.285$, $p = .023$). Therefore, H_{10} is rejected. Organisational culture enhances onboarding effectiveness by embedding shared values and behavioural norms, consistent with Schein (2010).

Hypothesis Eleven (H_{11}): There is no significant moderating effect of leadership support on the relationship between successful onboarding and employee performance.

Tables 4.6–10 indicate significant interactions between leadership support and onboarding components—for instance, role clarity and leadership ($\beta = .164$, $t = 2.877$, $p = .004$). Hence, H_{11}

is rejected. Leadership engagement amplifies onboarding effectiveness through direction, mentorship, and motivation, confirming Avolio (1994).

Summary of Findings

The hierarchical regression models across Tables 4.6–10 establish that successful onboarding—comprising role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback—significantly influences all aspects of employee performance: task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and adaptive performance. All predictors demonstrated moderate, positive, and significant Beta coefficients ranging from 0.255 to 0.321, confirming onboarding as a vital tool for organisational productivity. The results align with Bauer *et al.* (2007), Van Maanen and Schein (1979), and Klein *et al.* (2015), who identified onboarding as a structured process that fosters employee adjustment and effectiveness. Moreover, the moderating effects of organisational culture and leadership support were significant, though moderate. Culture reinforced role comprehension and adaptability through shared values, while leadership strengthened engagement and cooperation. Together, these moderating variables enhanced the predictive capacity of onboarding. These findings affirm that employee success in startups depends not only on structured onboarding but also on supportive organisational environments that reinforce learning, cohesion, and adaptive capacity.

Conclusion

The study concludes that successful onboarding significantly enhances employee performance across all dimensions. Role clarity, social integration, and continuous feedback emerged as critical factors, while organisational culture and leadership support significantly moderated these relationships. These results demonstrate that effective onboarding contributes to both individual and organisational success, particularly in startup environments. Integrating supportive leadership and strong cultural alignment into onboarding frameworks promotes job satisfaction, adaptability, and loyalty—key outcomes for sustainable performance. Startups should, therefore, institutionalise onboarding systems that integrate feedback, inclusion, and leadership mentorship as strategic enablers of growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends managers of startups in Port Harcourt:

- i. Establish structured role clarification during onboarding to improve employee confidence, accountability, and task performance.
- ii. Promote workplace social integration through mentorship and team-building exercises to enhance cooperation and shared responsibility.
- iii. Implement continuous performance feedback mechanisms to reinforce learning and encourage excellence.
- iv. Strengthen organisational culture to foster inclusivity, adaptability, and alignment with corporate objectives.
- v. Encourage leadership participation in onboarding for coaching, motivation, and long-term employee engagement.

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