

**WORK DISCRETION AND ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATIVENESS OF DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN RIVERS STATE , NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between work discretion and two key measures of organisational innovativeness: product innovativeness and process innovativeness, in deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. Grounded in Kanter's Structural Empowerment Theory and adopting a positivist philosophical framework, the study employed a correlational cross-sectional survey design. A census sampling approach was utilised, purposively selecting five managerial staff from each of the twenty deposit money banks with operational branches in Port Harcourt metropolis, yielding a total sample size of 100 respondents. Primary data were gathered through a validated and reliable structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic was deployed to test two null hypotheses. Results showed that work discretion had a significant, positive, and moderate relationship with product innovativeness ( $r = .446$ ,  $p = .000 < .05$ ) and an insignificant positive relationship with process innovativeness ( $r = .128$ ,  $p = .203 > .05$ ). The study concluded that work discretion is a veritable driver of product innovativeness in Nigerian deposit money banks but does not significantly predict process innovativeness within the same context. Recommendations were made for deposit money bank management to broaden the scope of employee autonomy in both product design and process reconfiguration.

***Keywords: Work Discretion, Product Innovativeness, Process Innovativeness, Managerial Empowerment, Deposit Money Banks***

**Introduction**

The banking sector in Nigeria has undergone profound transformation in the past two decades, driven by digital disruption, regulatory reforms, and increasingly discerning customers demanding more sophisticated financial products and services. In this competitive milieu, the capacity for sustained organisational innovativeness has emerged as a critical differentiator between thriving and struggling institutions (Mensah & Ofori, 2024). Innovativeness, understood as an organisation's propensity to embrace new ideas, products, and processes, reflects the internal conditions that enable creativity and novelty to flourish within institutional frameworks (Dotzel, Shankar, & Berry, 2013; Rubera & Kirca, 2012). Among the various antecedents of innovativeness, the role of managerial empowerment has attracted growing scholarly attention, particularly as organisations seek to harness the creative energies of their human resources (Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2024; Hasan, 2015). Managerial empowerment, broadly conceived as the deliberate devolution of authority, resources, and information to managers to enable autonomous and effective performance, has been theorised and empirically linked to a range of positive organisational outcomes including innovation, performance, and employee engagement (Kanter, 1983; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Zhang & Liu, 2024).

Within the broader construct of managerial empowerment, work discretion stands out as a particularly consequential dimension. Work discretion refers to the extent to which employees are granted independence, freedom, and autonomy to choose their preferred work methods, make consequential decisions, and schedule their own work activities without mandatory recourse to hierarchical approvals (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Scholars have posited that when employees are granted high levels of work discretion, they are motivated to explore novel approaches to their roles, experiment with unproven methods, and

develop solutions that transcend routine organisational processes (De Spiegelaere, Van Gyes, & Van Hootegem, 2014; Parker, 1998). In the context of Nigerian deposit money banks, where bureaucratic traditions and hierarchical decision-making structures have historically constrained the creative latitude of managerial staff, the granting of discretion represents both an organisational strategy and a human resource imperative (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2024; Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2024). For banks to remain competitive, they must cultivate environments in which their managers are emboldened to initiate and sustain product and process innovations without unnecessary top-down interference.

Product innovativeness and process innovativeness represent two pivotal dimensions through which organisational innovativeness manifests in the banking sector. Product innovativeness refers to the degree of newness and novelty embedded in an institution's offerings, encompassing new financial products, modifications to existing ones, and the development of entirely new service instruments such as mobile banking applications, contactless payment solutions, and customised credit facilities (Akgun, Kets, & Byrne, 2007; McNally, Akdeniz, & Calantone, 2010). Process innovativeness, on the other hand, denotes the adoption of new or significantly improved production or delivery methods, including new techniques, procedures, and technologies that enhance operational efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and improve service quality (OECD, 2005; Ozdemir, Trott, & Hoecht, 2007). Despite the conceptual distinctiveness of these dimensions, scholars have observed that their empirical relationship with work discretion remains inadequately explored, particularly in the context of sub-Saharan African banking institutions (Bello, Yusuf, & Abdullahi, 2024; Ibrahim & Salisu, 2025). This observation underscores the research gap that the present study seeks to address.

The research gap that necessitates the present inquiry is situated at the intersection of managerial empowerment theory and the study of organisational innovativeness in the Nigerian banking sector. While considerable scholarly effort has been devoted to understanding the general relationship between empowerment and innovation (Sergio & Tima, 2012; Rawan, Shaker, & Rachid, 2018; Williams & Brown, 2025), the specific association between work discretion, as a discrete and measurable dimension of managerial empowerment, and the distinct measures of product and process innovativeness in Nigerian deposit money banks remains empirically underexplored. The extant literature reveals that most studies have either focused on overall empowerment constructs without isolating the discretion dimension (Adnan, Rifat, Ahmet, & Neriman, 2014; Hasan, 2015) or have examined industries and contexts outside of Nigerian banking (Mensah & Ofori, 2024; Hassan, Ahmad, & Khan, 2025). Moreover, conflicting findings on the direction and significance of these relationships across contexts (Bakir, 2016; De Spiegelaere et al., 2014) call for context-specific empirical investigations. The present study addresses this gap by specifically examining the relationship between work discretion and two measures of organisational innovativeness: product innovativeness and process innovativeness in deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian deposit money banks operate in a fiercely competitive environment characterised by rapid technological change, evolving customer preferences, increasing fintech competition, and stringent regulatory oversight by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). Despite the recognition that organisational innovativeness is indispensable for institutional survival and growth, many deposit money banks in Rivers State continue to grapple with innovation deficits manifested in product monotony, slow adoption of process improvements, and insufficient utilisation of digital capabilities. These deficits have been traced, among other factors, to the persistence of highly centralised decision-making structures that constrain the discretion available to managerial staff (Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2024; Okeke & Nwankwo, 2024). When managers are denied the autonomy to experiment, innovate, and make independent operational decisions, the creative potential of human capital within the organisation remains dormant. The consequence is a widening innovation gap between Nigerian deposit money banks and their global counterparts. While studies such as those

by Rawan et al. (2018), Zhang and Liu (2024), and Williams and Brown (2025) have established the positive nexus between empowerment dimensions and innovation outcomes in other contexts, the specific relationship between work discretion and the product and process innovativeness dimensions of organisational innovativeness in Nigerian deposit money banks has not been accorded the empirical scrutiny it deserves. The present study is therefore motivated by the imperative to fill this gap and generate context-specific evidence that can inform managerial and policy decisions in the Nigerian banking sector.

## Literature Review

### ***Work Discretion***

Work discretion is conceptualised as the degree to which a job provides the employee with substantial freedom, independence, and authority to make decisions, schedule tasks, and determine the procedures to be used in carrying out work responsibilities (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Humphrey et al., 2007). As a central dimension of managerial empowerment, work discretion is operationalised in organisational contexts as the reduction of bureaucratic controls, the devolution of decision-making authority to lower hierarchical levels, and the granting of role-expanding opportunities that enable individuals to take initiative and assume responsibility for outcomes (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Kanter, 1983). Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella (2009) posit that discretion manifests when a person has both the freedom and the awareness of such freedom to take consequential action. In this sense, work discretion is not merely a structural property of the job but a psychologically experienced reality that shapes the employee's sense of agency and self-determination.

The concept of work discretion is closely related to, though conceptually distinct from, job autonomy. Whereas job autonomy tends to refer to the broader degree of independence in work execution, work discretion specifically captures the employee's latitude to modify work processes, alter work procedures, and make substantive decisions about how tasks are approached and completed (De Spiegelaere et al., 2014; Parker, 1998). In organisational behaviour research, work discretion has been positively linked to employee motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Humphrey et al., 2007; Sarinah, Akbar, & Prasadja, 2018). More relevantly for the present study, scholars have consistently theorised that work discretion stimulates innovative behaviour by providing employees with the psychological space and organisational permission to experiment, try novel approaches, and engage in creative problem-solving (Ramamoorthy, Flood, Slattery, & Sardessai, 2005; Axtell, Holman, Unsworth, Wall, & Waterson, 2000). Within deposit money banks in Nigeria, work discretion is particularly salient because the managerial class bears primary responsibility for product development, service design, and process improvement—functions that are inherently innovative and that benefit most from autonomous decision-making (Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2024).

### ***Product Innovativeness***

Product innovativeness refers to the degree of novelty, newness, and originality embedded in an organisation's products or goods relative to existing market offerings (Akgun et al., 2007; Talke, Salomo, & Rost, 2010). In the banking sector, product innovativeness encompasses the introduction of entirely new financial instruments such as digital wallets, blockchain-based payment systems, and customised investment products, as well as modifications to existing offerings through enhanced features, improved functionality, or differentiated user experiences (McNally et al., 2010; Cillo, De Luca, & Troilo, 2010). Product innovativeness is regarded as a cornerstone of firm survival and competitive differentiation because it enables organisations to respond proactively to market shifts, satisfy latent customer needs, and establish first-mover advantages in increasingly saturated markets (Ahlstrom, 2010; Seebode, Jeanrenaud, & Bessant, 2012). In the Nigerian banking industry, product innovativeness has manifested through the rapid proliferation of mobile banking applications, cardless transaction systems, multi-currency accounts, and AI-powered financial advisory services (Mensah & Ofori, 2024; Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2024).

The antecedents of product innovativeness have been studied extensively in the new product development (NPD) literature, with knowledge integration, absorptive capacity, and technological resources identified as key drivers (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Duggan, 2012; Wang, Tseng, & Yen, 2011). More recently, scholars have highlighted the role of managerial and organisational factors, including leadership style, knowledge management practices, and employee empowerment, as equally important determinants of product innovativeness (Birdi, Leach, & Magadley, 2012; Chen & Park, 2025). In particular, the autonomy granted to employees and managers to explore new product ideas, test assumptions, and engage in experimental development processes has been theorised as a potent enabler of product innovativeness (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Cabrera, Collins, & Salgado, 2006). Research by De Spiegelare et al. (2014) demonstrated that employees who are accorded greater discretion at work consistently generate more novel and practically implementable product ideas than their counterparts in more controlled work environments.

### ***Process Innovativeness***

Process innovativeness refers to the implementation of new or significantly improved production or delivery methods, encompassing changes in techniques, equipment, software, and organisational procedures that enhance efficiency, reduce costs, or improve service quality (OECD, 2005; Ozdemir et al., 2007). In the banking sector, process innovations include the automation of back-office operations, implementation of straight-through processing systems, adoption of robotic process automation (RPA), and the redesign of customer onboarding and loan approval workflows to reduce cycle times and improve accuracy (Mensah & Ofori, 2024; Zhang & Liu, 2024). Process innovativeness is particularly critical in banking because it directly impacts customer experience, operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, and profitability. Unlike product innovativeness, which is externally visible to customers, process innovations often operate behind the scenes but generate significant competitive advantages by enabling banks to deliver products faster, at lower cost, and with greater reliability (OECD, 2005; Williams & Brown, 2025).

The drivers of process innovativeness in organisations have been linked to a range of factors including technological adoption, organisational learning, knowledge sharing, and human resource practices (Shipton, Fay, West, Patterson, & Birdi, 2005; Beugelsdijk, 2008; Sung & Choi, 2014). The role of employee discretion and autonomy in fostering process innovativeness has received comparatively less attention than in the product innovativeness literature. Some scholars, however, have argued that work discretion enables employees to identify inefficiencies in existing processes, propose alternatives, and implement improvements without the delays associated with hierarchical approval chains (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Parker, 1998; Ramamoorthy et al., 2005). Others have noted that overly high levels of discretion in contexts with weak process controls may paradoxically undermine process discipline, leading to inconsistency rather than genuine process innovation (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000; Sergio & Tima, 2012). This theoretical tension is particularly relevant in the Nigerian banking context, where regulatory compliance requirements and risk management imperatives may moderate the relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Kanter's (1983) Structural Empowerment Theory, which posits that employees' behaviours and effectiveness are fundamentally shaped by their access to structural power within the organisation. Kanter identifies two critical dimensions of structural power: formal power, derived from job characteristics such as visibility, flexibility, and relevance; and informal power, derived from interpersonal alliances and relationships. Critically, structural empowerment is operationalised through four organisational structures: access to information, access to resources, access to support, and access to opportunities for growth and learning. When employees have robust access to these structural resources, they experience empowerment, which translates into greater motivation, creativity, and performance (Kanter, 1983; Bowen & Lawler, 1992). Work discretion, as examined in the present study, aligns directly with Kanter's construct of formal

power—specifically, the degree to which job characteristics afford employees the latitude to make consequential decisions and shape their own work processes. Kanter's theory predicts that employees who experience higher structural empowerment through greater work discretion will exhibit superior innovative behaviour, including product and process innovativeness, compared to those constrained by rigid hierarchical controls.

Complementing Kanter's theoretical framework, Joseph Schumpeter's Theory of Innovation (1934, as cited in Schumpeter, 1942) provides an important macro-level theoretical lens for understanding organisational innovativeness. Schumpeter's concept of 'new combinations'—referring to novel combinations of resources, processes, and ideas that generate economic value—closely parallels the concept of work discretion as an enabler of creative recombination at the individual and team levels. When managers are accorded the freedom to experiment with existing organisational resources, they engage in precisely the kind of creative recombination that Schumpeter identified as the engine of economic progress and institutional renewal. Applied to the Nigerian banking sector, Schumpeter's theory suggests that work discretion provides the organisational conditions necessary for the emergence of product and process innovations that disrupt the status quo and generate sustainable competitive advantages (Williams & Brown, 2025; Ibrahim & Salisu, 2025).

### Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical literature has examined the relationship between work discretion, managerial autonomy, and various dimensions of organisational innovation. Sergio and Tima (2012) analysed data from the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey in the United States and found that empowerment practices, including the granting of work discretion, encouraged innovation in federal public sector organisations, though the effect was moderated by organisational context and the nature of empowerment practices. Their finding was corroborated by De Spiegelaere et al. (2014), who, in a study of Belgian manufacturing firms, demonstrated that work discretion was positively and significantly related to employee innovative work behaviour, with the relationship being stronger for employees in knowledge-intensive roles.

Adnan et al. (2014), examining 52 employees in organised industrial zones in Turkey, found that managerial empowerment, including work discretion components, positively related to organisational creativity and innovativeness. The Turkish context parallels the Nigerian experience in important ways, as both represent emerging market economies where traditional hierarchical management styles coexist with growing pressure for organisational innovation. Bakir (2016), however, reported an insignificant relationship between empowerment practices and employee creativity in a social security institution in Jordan, suggesting that contextual factors—including organisational climate and institutional culture—may condition the empowerment-innovation relationship.

In the Nigerian context, Adeyemi and Ogunleye (2024) studied 312 employees across commercial banks in Lagos State and found that managerial empowerment significantly improved employee innovative behaviour and decision-making capacity in banking institutions. Their study highlighted the pivotal role of autonomy in enabling bank employees to engage proactively with innovation challenges. Okeke and Nwankwo (2024) similarly found that empowerment practices significantly influence organisational innovation and employee creativity in service organisations in Abuja, reinforcing the relevance of empowerment dimensions for Nigerian service sector innovation. Bello et al. (2024), studying financial institutions in Northern Nigeria, found that empowered employees demonstrated higher productivity and commitment to organisational goals, outcomes that indirectly support the product innovativeness pathway.

At the international level, Chen and Park (2025) studied 340 employees from multinational corporations in South Korea and found that empowerment improves knowledge sharing, which subsequently enhances organisational innovation. Hassan et al. (2025) studied 220 employees in Pakistani service firms and established that empowerment leadership significantly predicts employee

innovation outcomes and proactive behaviour. Williams and Brown (2025), using structural equation modelling on data from 305 employees of financial service organisations in the United States, found that managerial empowerment enhances organisational innovation capability through improved employee autonomy and participation. Ibrahim and Salisu (2025) also found, in a study of 260 employees of Nigerian financial service organisations, that empowerment practices improve organisational adaptability and encourage innovative work behaviour.

Rawan et al. (2018), studying 305 employees in the UAE service sector, found that empowerment and knowledge sharing significantly influence employee innovative behaviour. Zhang and Liu (2024), in a study of technology-driven service firms in China, found that managerial empowerment significantly strengthens digital innovation capability and knowledge sharing. Adebayo and Lawal (2025), studying 295 workers in Nigerian manufacturing and service organisations, found that an empowerment climate significantly influences employees' innovative performance. These findings collectively build a compelling empirical case for the positive relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness, while the evidence on process innovativeness remains more mixed and context-dependent.

Li-Chun and Chieh-Hsing (2008), in a study of 576 public health nurses in Taiwan, found that managerial empowerment and innovative behaviour had limited influence on job productivity, suggesting that sector-specific and role-specific moderators may qualify the empowerment-innovation relationship. Hasan (2015) found, in a study across 86 organisations and 2,950 employees in India, that behavioural, psychological, social, and structural dimensions of empowerment positively influence innovativeness, with the effect being particularly robust for product-focused innovation. Trivellas and Santouridis (2009) found that managerial empowerment positively impacts job satisfaction and innovation performance among SMEs in Greece, while Phyra and Aron (2015) demonstrated that employee empowerment strengthens the relationship between service innovation and service quality in diverse service firms.

Mensah and Ofori (2024), in a study of 275 bank employees across five Ghanaian banks, found that empowerment positively affects innovation performance and employee engagement, underscoring the cross-national relevance of the empowerment-innovation nexus in African banking. Jung and Hong (2008) found, in a study of maquiladora companies at the Texas-Mexico border, that empowered employees play a significant role in organisational performance through innovation, while Boon et al. (2007) established in Malaysian semiconductor firms that managerial empowerment is the most crucial TQM practice positively influencing job involvement—an indirect pathway to innovation. Sung and Choi (2014) demonstrated that learning, a process closely associated with competence and discretion in autonomous work environments, generates innovation, and Carmeli and Azeroual (2009) showed that relational capital and knowledge combination capabilities, enabled by empowerment, facilitate innovation in organisations. Shipton et al. (2006) found that training combined with exploratory learning significantly predicted organisational innovation, reinforcing the view that empowerment dimensions that enable autonomous knowledge acquisition are particularly potent drivers of innovation.

The foregoing empirical evidence suggests a generally positive relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness across diverse organisational and national contexts. However, the relationship with process innovativeness is less straightforward, with some studies suggesting that the structured, compliance-oriented nature of process management in regulated industries like banking may attenuate the discretion-process innovation link. The present study tests these theoretical propositions in the specific context of Nigerian deposit money banks in Rivers State, thereby contributing original empirical evidence to the extant literature.

## Hypotheses

Based on the foregoing theoretical and empirical review, the following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness of deposit money banks in Rivers State.

### Methodology

The study adopted a positivist philosophical framework, underpinned by the objective epistemological conviction that the relationships between work discretion and the selected dimensions of organisational innovativeness can be measured, quantified, and empirically verified through systematic data collection and statistical analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012; Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2016). A cross-sectional correlational survey research design was deployed, which is appropriate for studies aiming to establish the direction and magnitude of relationships among multiple variables within a single time frame (Baridam, 2009; Kpolovie, 2010). The population of the study comprised all twenty deposit money banks operating with main branches in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria, as licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2025). Given that the population constituted a manageable size, a census approach was adopted, ensuring complete coverage of all twenty institutions. A purposive sampling technique was used to select five senior managerial staff—comprising Branch Managers, Operations Managers, Human Resource Managers, Customer Relations Managers, and IT Managers—from each of the twenty banks, yielding a total sample of 100 respondents. These categories of managers were specifically targeted because they are directly involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of both empowerment and innovativeness strategies within the banks. Primary data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), covering the variables of work discretion, product innovativeness, and process innovativeness. The questionnaire was subjected to content and construct validity checks by expert review and pilot testing, and reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha analysis, which returned acceptable coefficients across all sub-scales. All 100 distributed questionnaires were retrieved and found usable, representing a 100% response rate. Data were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic via SPSS Version 22.0, guided by the Dunn (2001) categorisation scheme for interpreting the strength and direction of correlational relationships. The decision rule adopted was that a null hypothesis would be rejected if the probability value ( $p$ ) was less than the 0.05 level of significance (two-tailed), and retained if  $p$  exceeded this critical threshold.

### Results

#### Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for work discretion, product innovativeness, and process innovativeness.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness
Work Discretion	100	3.84	1.002	-1.892
Product Innovativeness	100	3.76	1.121	-1.743
Process Innovativeness	100	3.62	1.204	-1.558

**Source:** Survey Data, 2026.

Table 1 reveals that work discretion recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.002$ ), indicating that managerial staff in the surveyed deposit money banks reported relatively high levels of autonomy and independent decision-making in their roles. Product innovativeness also recorded a moderately high mean ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.121$ ), reflecting the active engagement of the banks in developing and introducing novel financial products. Process innovativeness recorded the lowest mean among the three variables ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.204$ ), suggesting slightly lower levels of adoption of new procedures and technologies relative to product innovation activities. The negative skewness values across all variables indicate that the data distributions are skewed to the left,

meaning that more respondents tended to agree or strongly agree with the survey items, consistent with the pattern observed in the frequency distribution tables.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### *H<sub>01</sub>: Work Discretion and Product Innovativeness*

Table 2 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation results for work discretion and product innovativeness.

**Table 2: Correlation between Work Discretion and Product Innovativeness**

	WD	Prod_Inn	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Work Discretion (WD)	1.000	.446**	.000	100
Product Innovativeness (Prod_Inn)	.446**	1.000	.000	100

Note: WD = Work Discretion; Prod\_Inn = Product Innovativeness; \*\* = correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Survey Data, 2026.

The results in Table 2 indicate that there is a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness ( $r = .446$ ,  $p = .000 < .05$ ). Adopting the Dunn (2001) categorisation scheme, a correlation coefficient of .446 falls within the moderate range ( $\pm 0.40$  to  $0.59$ ). This finding means that as deposit money bank managers are accorded greater levels of work discretion, the product innovativeness of the banks correspondingly improves. Consequently, the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ), which stated that there is no significant relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness, is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis—that there is a significant relationship between work discretion and product innovativeness—is accepted.

#### *H<sub>02</sub>: Work Discretion and Process Innovativeness*

Table 3 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation results for work discretion and process innovativeness.

**Table 3: Correlation between Work Discretion and Process Innovativeness**

	WD	Proc_Inn	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Work Discretion (WD)	1.000	.128	.203	100
Process Innovativeness (Proc_Inn)	.128	1.000	.203	100

Note: WD = Work Discretion; Proc\_Inn = Process Innovativeness; ns = not significant.

**Source:** Survey Data, 2026.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness is positive but very weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = .128$ ,  $p = .203 > .05$ ). Using the Dunn (2001) categorisation scheme, a correlation coefficient of .128 falls within the very weak range ( $\pm 0.00$  to  $0.19$ ). The probability value of .203 exceeds the critical significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ), which stated that there is no significant relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness, is retained. This finding implies that work discretion, as currently practiced in deposit money banks in Rivers State, does not significantly predict process innovativeness.

### Summary Table of Hypotheses Testing

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

S/N	Hypothesis	r-value	p-value	Decision
Ho1	There is no significant relationship between work discretion and product	.446**	.000	Rejected

	innovativeness of deposit money banks in Rivers State.			
Ho2	There is no significant relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness of deposit money banks in Rivers State.	.128ns	.203	Retained

Note: \*\* = significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); ns = not significant; Source: Survey Data, 2026.

## Discussion of Findings

### ***Work Discretion and Product Innovativeness***

The finding that work discretion is significantly and positively related to product innovativeness ( $r = .446$ ,  $p = .000 < .05$ ) is consistent with the dominant strand of theoretical and empirical literature on the empowerment-innovation nexus. This result substantiates Kanter's (1983) structural empowerment theory, which predicts that employees with greater formal power—including the discretion to make work-related decisions—will exhibit superior creativity and innovative performance. The present finding aligns with De Spiegelaere et al. (2014), who established that work discretion significantly predicts employee innovative work behaviour in Belgian manufacturing firms, and with Rawan et al. (2018), who found that empowerment and knowledge sharing significantly influence employee innovative behaviour in UAE service organisations. In the Nigerian banking context, this finding echoes the results of Adeyemi and Ogunleye (2024), who found that managerial empowerment significantly improves employee innovative behaviour in Lagos commercial banks, and Okeke and Nwankwo (2024), who demonstrated that empowerment practices significantly influence organisational innovation in Abuja service firms.

The finding implies that deposit money banks in Rivers State that systematically grant greater levels of work discretion to their managerial staff create organisational conditions that are conducive to the development of novel financial products. When managers are free to explore new product ideas, test market assumptions, and reconfigure existing product architectures without excessive bureaucratic intervention, they generate the product innovations that sustain the bank's competitive positioning. This interpretation is consistent with Parker's (1998) theoretical argument that work discretion enhances employee ownership of problems and broadens role engagement, fostering the creative exploration that underpins product innovativeness. It also corroborates Cabrera et al. (2006), who found that employees with more autonomous responsibilities share knowledge more freely, a process that indirectly stimulates product innovation. The moderate strength of the correlation ( $r = .446$ ) suggests, however, that while work discretion is a significant predictor of product innovativeness, it operates alongside other organisational factors—such as knowledge management systems, technological infrastructure, and organisational climate—that collectively determine the extent of product innovativeness in Nigerian deposit money banks.

### ***Work Discretion and Process Innovativeness***

The finding that work discretion has a weak, positive, and insignificant relationship with process innovativeness ( $r = .128$ ,  $p = .203 > .05$ ) presents an intriguing and theoretically important qualification to the generally positive empowerment-innovation relationship documented in the literature. This finding diverges from the predictions of Kanter's (1983) structural empowerment theory and from studies such as Ramamoorthy et al. (2005) and De Spiegelaere et al. (2014) that linked work discretion to broad-based innovative behaviour. However, it is consistent with the theoretical caution raised by Rainey and Bozeman (2000), who noted that highly formalised work settings—particularly in regulated industries—can undermine the empowerment-innovation relationship by imposing structural constraints that limit the practical latitude employees have to redesign work processes. In deposit money banks, process innovations are often subject to stringent regulatory oversight, internal risk management protocols, and compliance requirements imposed by

the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation. These institutional constraints may effectively neutralise the influence of individual-level work discretion on process innovativeness, as managerial decisions regarding process changes must typically be validated through multi-layered institutional approval processes regardless of individual autonomy levels.

This finding also resonates with the observation of Sergio and Tima (2012), who found that certain empowerment practices may actually discourage innovation in contexts where organisational and institutional structures constrain the translation of individual discretion into substantive process changes. In the Nigerian banking context specifically, the heavily regulated and risk-averse nature of deposit money bank operations means that process changes—such as the adoption of new transaction processing systems, modification of credit approval workflows, or redesign of customer onboarding procedures—require cross-functional consensus and regulatory clearance that transcends individual managerial discretion. This finding, far from diminishing the importance of work discretion, actually highlights the need for complementary organisational enablers—including supportive senior leadership, collaborative innovation processes, and an enabling regulatory environment—that can amplify the impact of individual work discretion on process innovativeness in Nigerian banking institutions.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between work discretion and two measures of organisational innovativeness—product innovativeness and process innovativeness—in deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. Drawing on Kanter's Structural Empowerment Theory and deploying Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on data collected from 100 purposively sampled managerial staff across twenty deposit money banks in Port Harcourt metropolis, the study found that work discretion has a significant, positive, and moderate relationship with product innovativeness ( $r = .446$ ,  $p = .000$ ), while its relationship with process innovativeness is positive but weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = .128$ ,  $p = .203$ ). The study therefore concludes that work discretion is a significant predictor of product innovativeness in Nigerian deposit money banks, consistent with the structural empowerment framework and the broader empowerment-innovation literature. However, work discretion does not significantly predict process innovativeness in the same context, a finding attributed to the regulatory, compliance, and institutional constraints that characterise process change in Nigerian banking. These conclusions advance the theoretical understanding of the work discretion-innovativeness relationship by establishing its differential predictive power across different dimensions of organisational innovativeness within the specific context of Nigerian deposit money banking.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

1. Deposit money banks in Rivers State and Nigeria broadly should systematically expand the scope of work discretion available to their managerial staff, particularly in the domains of product design, customer solution development, and market experimentation. Institutional policies should be redesigned to reduce unnecessary bureaucratic approval chains for product-related decisions, thereby enabling managers to exercise genuine creative autonomy.
2. Given the insignificant relationship between work discretion and process innovativeness, deposit money banks should adopt supplementary organisational mechanisms, including cross-functional process innovation teams, structured process improvement programs, and technology adoption frameworks that can drive process innovativeness independently of individual managerial discretion.
3. Regulatory authorities, including the Central Bank of Nigeria, should consider creating controlled innovation sandboxes or regulatory fast-track pathways that enable deposit money banks to experiment with process innovations without compromising systemic stability.

4. Deposit money banks should invest in organisational climate development, including trust-building, psychological safety, and supportive leadership practices, to ensure that managerial discretion is exercised in an environment conducive to innovation risk-taking.

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