

Relationship between Remote Work Structure and Employee Innovativeness in Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study empirically examined the relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness in deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. The basic objectives of the study was to theoretically examine if there exist any relationship between the dimensions of remote work structure and the measures of employee innovativeness. Four hypotheses were put forth in ascertaining the empirical relationship between the two variables. The study adapted autonomy and flexibility as the dimensions of the predictor variable and product innovativeness and process innovativeness as measures of the criterion variable. The research adopted a cross sectional survey design which adopted the use of the questionnaire for data collection. The total population of the study consist of 120 staff of deposit money bank within the Rumuola and Rumuokwuta axis of PortHarcout due to the smallness of its population a census was adopted. The study adopted the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient with the aid of the statistical package for social sciences in the assessment of the relationship between the predictor and the criterion variable. The test of hypotheses adopted a 95percent confidence interval implying a 0.05percent level of significance. The findings of the study indicate there is strong significant relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness. Based on the findings of the study, we therefore make the following vital recommendations: Organizations should allow employees a level of autonomy to permit them sometimes to work in the confined of their homes. Organizations need to organize training and retraining programs bothering on the creativity to enhance the quality of their products. The organizations should also operate a relatively flexible structure so as to give employees a sense of entitlement in the discharge of their duty.

Keywords: Remote Work Structure, Employee Innovativeness, Autonomy, Flexibility, Process Innovativeness, Product Innovativeness.

Introduction

To remain competitive in the global market, organizations must continuously develop innovative and high-quality products and services, and renew their way of operating. This therefore calls for the need for employee innovativeness. Employee innovativeness can be defined as an engagement in innovative behaviours, which includes behaviours related to the innovation process, i.e. idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with the aim of producing innovations (Flood, Slattery & Sardessai 2015). Employee innovativeness referring to employees' propensity to innovate can be conceived as complex behaviour consisting of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with the aim of meeting

organizational goals in novel ways (Kanter, 2019). Individuals, alone or in groups, undertake innovative activities from the intention to derive anticipated benefits.

Creativity is central to innovativeness, but the concepts are not synonymous. Innovation can be seen as a successful and intentional implementation of creativity, which is more subjective and context specific by its nature (Miron, Erez & Naveh, 2018). Creativity as such may be limited to idea generation alone but by definition innovation produces benefits for the people involved (Anderson, De Dreu & Nijstad, 2004). Therefore, innovativeness requires creativity, but creativity does not always lead to an innovation. Innovativeness requires that the individual is both able and willing to be innovative. With respect to abilities, above average general intellect certain cognitive capabilities, general skills and task and context-specific knowledge, for example, facilitate innovativeness (Taggar, 2022). Innovations which have to do with the implementation or adoption of novel ideas can in turn be categorized as either technological (changes in products, services, production processes) or administrative (changes in activities, social processes, structures), and as either radical or incremental, depending on the extent of their influence for existing products or processes (Damanpour 2018). Employee innovativeness can thus be examined throughout the innovation process, from the initial idea generation to product development and eventually to product commercialization, or to the adoption of new processes or structures in the organization.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of remote work was established decades ago, however, this phenomenon is only really gaining importance nowadays. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of countries adopted physical lock down and stay at home measures to reduce social contact. Consequently, many countries now encourage their employees to work from home, especially with the help of advanced communications and technology, which have brought changes to every aspect of work and social life. The possibility of working remotely can reduce the risk of exposure to the disease and the economic shocks associated with government actions to combat the Covid-19 pandemic (Alipour, (2020). According to Olson (2021) remote work refers to "organizational work that is performed outside the normal organizational confines of space and time". One of the significant benefits of remote work is that it can allow the employees to work at their preferred times instead of having fixed office hours.

Remote work describes a situation in which employees can work from home or any other location outside their company's physical office (Hedges 2020). Oftentimes, that involves creating a workspace at home. However, working remotely can extend beyond the confines of your living space. Remote work is changing everything, from how we approach work-life balance to the ways we communicate and even how we measure productivity.

Recent studies within the Nigeria context have sought to address the issues of employee innovativeness using other antecedents, such studies as include: A study by Alipour et al. (2020) which measured the feasibility of WFH among German employees using survey and administrative data, Alipour, Falck & Schüller (2020) on Germany's Capacities to Work from Home, Baker, Avery and Crawford (2017) did a work on Satisfaction and Perceived

Productivity when Professionals Work From Home. Presenting the benefits that can be attained with remote structure system inclusiveness in organizations especially in the money deposit banks.

Statement of the Problem

Despite all these studies above, to the best of my knowledge no exact study has been carried out on remote work structure and employee innovativeness in money deposit banks in Port Harcourt hence a gap. Innovation appears a far cry to organizations in terms of building remote work structure. In these days of borderless workspace, it is important for organizations to build the required robust technology to accommodate all shades of staff. Employee innovativeness lies in the fact that staff are given the leeway to operate with discretion and available technology. This will require funding of training and retraining of staff by management. However, this doesn't seem to be the case as most employees of selected organizations have rather continued to stick to traditional modes of operation. This study will therefore investigate the relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness in the Nigeria context.

Objectives of the Study

The core objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness in the Nigeria context. The other sub-objectives are;

1. To determine the relationship between autonomy and process innovativeness in money deposit banks.
2. To ascertain the relationship between autonomy and product innovativeness in money deposit banks,
3. To determine the relationship between flexibility and process innovativeness in money deposit banks
4. To establish the relationship between flexibility and product innovativeness in money deposit banks.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of relationship between autonomy and process innovation?
2. What is the nature of relationship t between autonomy and product innovation?
3. What is the nature of relationship between flexibility and process innovation?
4. What is the nature of relationship between flexibility and product innovation?

Hypothesis

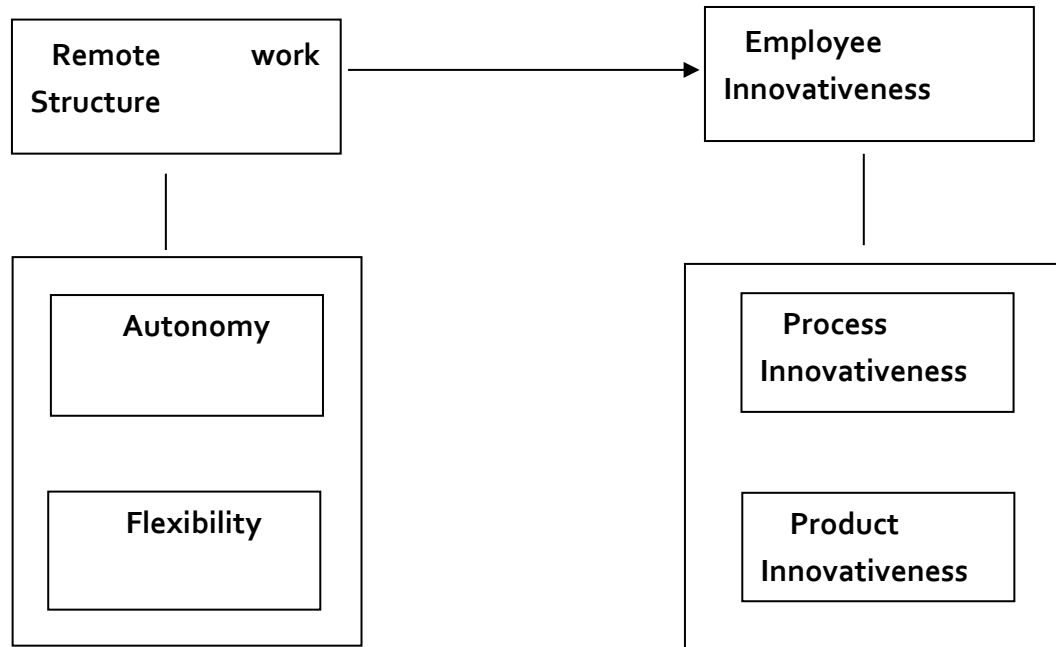
The study put forth the following null hypotheses which will be analyzed in the later part of this work:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and process innovativeness.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and product innovativeness

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between flexibility and process innovativeness

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between flexibility and product innovativeness



Source: Desk Research 2023

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of Remote work structure and Employee Innovativeness

Literature Review

Many of us work at least partially from home these days. A phenomenon that was only imagined few years back has become a norm and has challenged, in potentially profound ways, traditional work structure. There has been so much great improvement in work structure that workers can talk, chat, and send information in documents, databases, audio, and video without delays at barest minimal costs. However, although information technology clearly complements remote work, advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) increased remote work only became obvious between 1980 and 2019.

Remote work, however, offers workers and employers the new decision of working in the same city without interfacing physically. Since workers do not internalize many of the benefits they convey to others, this alternative possibility leads to a novel coordination problem.

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The bedrock on which this study is built is the two factor theory by Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman (1966). They proposed a two-factor theory in which job satisfaction and dissatisfaction were influenced by different factors. The two-factor theory emphasized that employees' needs are influenced by two types of factors: hygiene (or extrinsic) and

motivating (or intrinsic) factors. Extrinsic factors include salary, working conditions, supervision, company policy, poor interpersonal relations and job security (Mullins, 2010). The absence of hygiene factors will result in employees' job dissatisfaction. Contrariwise, the fulfillment of extrinsic needs only eliminates hindrances to job satisfaction and in itself does not bring about job satisfaction.

The theory, however, proposed that intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, the nature of work, responsibility, advancement, and growth seem to be related to job satisfaction. Hence, organizations cannot motivate employees until what dissatisfies them has been removed (Herzberg, 1966). In line with this assertion, Mullins (2010) stressed that to motivate employees to give out their best, management must give proper attention to the motivation or growth factors. Nevertheless, hygiene factors are necessary to avoid unpleasantness at work and to deny unfair treatment (Mullins, 2010). Put differently, the meeting of lower-level needs of employees is not motivating but can have a demotivating impact if not met. Therefore, true motivation occurs only when an employee's higher-level needs are met. Moreover, Herzberg's (1966) growth needs are the factors that motivate employees to the highest level of performance. According to Schultz (1982), these motivators are an integral part of work itself and include factors such as nature of work itself, the person's sense of achievement, level of responsibility, personal development and growth, recognition for a job well done and feedback. The fulfillment of the motivators can promote employees' job satisfaction (Furnham, Petrides, Jackson & Cotter, 2002; Herzberg et al., 1993). In a later study, Spector (1997) generalized fourteen job satisfaction facets based on Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory.

The relevance of the theory to social intelligence and employee work attitude cannot be underestimated. In line with the forgoing discourse, Nel et al. (2018) opined that it is therefore imperative that an organization first gives attention to hygiene factors before introducing growth factors in the workplace.

Remote Work Structure

Remote work structure refers to a working model in which employees can pursue work tasks outside the organization due to the use of technology. Remote work has become an increasingly common form of labor delivery over the past few decades. This model consistently looked at the share of all working hours performed at home over time (Liu & Su, 2023). Part of this increase is likely due to improvements in communication technologies, while another part may be due to gradual changes in the composition of the labor force, both in terms of educational attainment and employment by occupation and industry.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the ability for employees to control their work situation with little or no supervision. Employee autonomy might involve a choice in the selection of projects, roles or clients. Traditionally, only top level management employees do have much autonomy,

and this most times leave lower-level staff members feeling disenfranchised. Allowing employees a level of autonomy can boost their level of involvement, morale and motivation. However, this can be very tactful.

Everyone enjoys a level of freedom and no one likes to be micromanaged at work. Having a manager or supervisor constantly looking over your shoulder can be quite discouraging and frustrating and when not properly managed can actually damage leadership trust in the workplace. Hence, the need for work place autonomy. Autonomy in the workplace means giving employees the freedom to work in a way that suits them best. With autonomy at work, employees get to decide how and when their work should be done. Workplace autonomy will look different depending on organizations. But if done rightly, can benefit employees and company at large in so many ways.

Flexibility

Workplace flexibility means providing the conditions for employees to thrive. Workplace flexibility embraces the idea that employees can be productive no matter when or where they perform their work (Hastwell 2022). Rather than enforcing a rigid workplace environment or schedule, workplace flexibility acknowledges individual needs and supports better work-life balance and employee well-being.

Flexibility in the workplace was already on the rise pre-pandemic, with forward-thinking, globalized organizations adopting non-traditional setups such as remote teams and flex schedules. But then lockdowns forced *everyone* to embrace workplace flexibility — whether they were ready or not.

In a flexible workplace, management trusts employees to perform their work in a non-traditional structure, and provides the necessary resources and environment to empower employees to work with little or no supervision.

Employee Innovativeness

Employee innovativeness can be defined as engagement in innovative behaviours, which includes behaviours related to the innovation process, i.e. idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization, with the aim of producing innovations. Innovations connected to the implementation or adoption of novel ideas can in turn be categorized as either technological (changes in products, services, production processes) or administrative (changes in activities, social processes, structures), and as either radical or incremental, depending on the extent of their influence for existing products or processes (Damanpour 2018). Employee innovativeness can thus be examined throughout the innovation process, from initial idea generation to product development, and eventually to product commercialization, or the adoption of new processes or structures in the organization. Although creativity is central to the whole innovation process, many authors draw a line between creativity and innovation (Shalley& Gilson 2018). Innovation can be seen as a successful implementation of creativity and something that produces economic value, whereas creativity has to do with idea production.

Creativity is thus limited to idea generation alone, or concerns an individual's own pleasurable experience, when, for example, performing arts (Anderson et al. 2004, Miron et al. 2004). Therefore, it can be argued that every innovation requires creativity, but creativity does not necessarily lead to innovation. Employee innovativeness can thus be argued to cover a broader range of behaviours than creativity. Most of the recent empirical research on employee innovativeness has however adopted a micro-level approach and focused on assessing what contributes to an employee's tendency to generate innovative ideas that eventually lead to innovations (Anderson et al. 2019). Further, as argued by Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (2021), organizational creativity is dependent on the creativity of the group, which in turn is dependent on individual creativity. Actual new processes and products i.e. innovations reflect these creative efforts. Innovativeness inherently involves risks, and consequently, creative and innovative individuals have to be willing to try and accept the possibility of failing. However, environment and psychosocial safety at the workplace influence risk-taking; an employee's predisposition towards risk is also an important factor: some people are naturally more averse to taking risks than others.

Process Innovation

Process innovation represent change in the way an enterprise produces products and services (Forsman and Temel, 2021). A process innovation is the utilization of a new or drastically improved production or delivery method. Such changes are in techniques, equipment and/or software. A product innovation is the introduction of a good or service, which is new or radically enhanced with respect to its characteristics or intended usages. These radical improvements are in technical specifications, components and materials, incorporated software, user friendliness or other functional characteristics.

Lager (2002) explained that developing new products, improving product properties, enhancing product quality etc. are the objectives of product innovation. Market needs and eventually external customers mostly drive product innovation work that is principally effectiveness-driven. Respectively, the needs of production (i.e. internal customers) mostly drive process innovation work that can be said to be principally efficiency-driven. However, notably, these concrete descriptions and difference of product and process innovation activities do not mean that there cannot be a combination of the two activities and objectives in an innovation project. Nevertheless, the importance of distinguishing the two types of innovation activities and objectives is highlighted in these descriptions and separation. Pujari (2018) posited that the leading firms engage in developing eco-innovations by thinking in a positive sustainability mode rather than a reactive mode of just eliminating environmentally problematic features; have fully integrated such tools into their new product development planning.

Product Innovation

Product innovation reflect change in end product or services (Dibrell et al, 2019)..Product innovations are disruptive innovation (e.g. wind power, hybrid car); according to Hall and

Vredenburg (2003), product innovation for sustainability in companies is either public policy persuaded or is market-driven. Incremental or evolutionary innovation (e.g. remanufactured products, recycled content, organic cotton-based clothing, water-based paints, to name a few) are related to most of the sustainable innovation in New Product Development (Pujari, 2019). Product innovation are concerned with the development of new product and services for the market while process innovation relates to ways of undertaking production or services operations.

Product innovation aim to present a new or improved product or service for the customers and customers see the impact of such innovation in the products or services they receive. A product innovation is the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved regarding its characteristics or intended uses. Product innovations can utilize new knowledge or technologies, or can be based on new uses or combinations of existing knowledge or technologies. The strategic market behavior of firms (market pull effect) significantly drives the environmental product innovation; meanwhile, the regulation (regulatory push/pull effect) drives the environmental process innovation, more. Product innovation can be used to strategically differentiate an organization's product offerings in the marketplace, thereby satisfying market demands, building customer loyalty, and improving firm performance.

Methodology

The cross sectional design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consist of 120 staff of money deposit bank within the Rumuokwuta and Rumuola axis of PortHarcourt . Due to the smallness of the population we decided to census the entire population. The instrument for the predictor and criterion variable were scaled on a 5 point Likert scale. The study adopted the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient in the assessment of the relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness. The test of hypotheses adopted a 95percent confidence interval implying a 0.05percent level of significance, 4 hypotheses were tested to determine the extent of relationship between the predictor and the criterion variable.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The result in the table below indicates that there is significant relationship between autonomy and process innovativeness, remote work structure and product innovativeness. autonomy is significantly correlated to process innovativeness ($r = 0.514$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Autonomy is significantly correlated to product innovativeness ($r = .437$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The relationship between autonomy and the measures of employee innovativeness is found to be very significant at the level of 0.05 significance. Going by this result, hypotheses one and two were rejected at .05 alpha level. This indicate that there is significant relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness.

Correlation Matrix for Autonomy and Employee Innovativeness

			Autonomy	Process Innovativeness	Product Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Autonomy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.514**	.437**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	54	54	54
	Process innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.514**	1.000	.802**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	54	54	54
	Product Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.437**	.802**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	54	54	54

The result in the below table indicates that there is significant relationship between flexibility and process innovativeness ($r = 0.269$, $p = 0.038 < 0.05$). Flexibility is not significantly associated to product innovativeness ($r = .176$, $p = 0.179 > 0.05$). Going by this result, hypotheses 4 was rejected at .05 alpha level, while hypothesis 3 was not rejected.

Correlation Matrix for Flexibility and Employee Innovativeness

			Flexibility	Process Innovativeness	Product Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.269*	.176*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.038	.179
		N	54	54	54
	Process Innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	.269*	1.000	.802**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.	.000
		N	54	54	54

	Product Innovativeness	Correlation	.176 [*]	.802 ^{**}	1.000
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.000	.
		N	54	54	54
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Relationship between Remote work structure and employee innovativeness

According to Alipour, Falck, & Schüller (2020) remote work are most effective in high-trust cultures. In high-trust company cultures, employees feel safe to speak up, feel safe to fail, and feel trusted by their leaders to get their job done regardless of when and where they work. Olson (2019) posited that increased autonomy contributes positively to an employee's work experience, boosting factors such as motivation, productivity, trust, and mental well-being. Replacing the command-and-control structure with a culture focused on customer-facing teams helped them perform better. It gave them more autonomy while serving customer needs. This approach transformed customer communication and provided a sense of purpose to employees.

Workplace flexibility also bursts your talent pool wide open. When you are no longer tied to only hiring people within commuting distance or who are always available Monday to Friday, nine-to-five, the world becomes your recruitment place. Flexible work opens you to the best recruits, from anywhere. Once location and hours aren't criteria, you're more likely to build a diverse team of top talent.

Several tech giants like Qualcomm, Lenovo, and Google have shared that remote work boosted productivity (Sanika 2021). Remote employees are more innovative because virtual communication, paired with the perception of being distant, activates the higher-construal thought process, also known as big-picture thinking (Sanika 2021). Thus, remote workers develop big-picture thinking because of virtual collaborations. According to a survey done by Global Workplace Analytics in 2020, Remote work structure can reduce the financial cost for organizations by reducing overhead costs, which leads to savings of around \$11,000 (Global Workplace Analytics 2020) per year for each person who works half of the time from home. It can also reduce healthcare costs by improving employees' mental and physical well-being. Moreover, working from home can reduce employees' travel costs for training and meeting purposes by using remote facilities for communication and video calls.

Remote employees are more innovative because virtual communication, paired with the perception of being distant, activates the higher-construal thought process, also known as

big-picture thinking Allen, Golden & Shockley (2021). Thus, remote workers develop big-picture thinking because of virtual collaborations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study does affirm a strong relationship between remote work structure and employee innovativeness. This implies that the antecedent of working from home does encourages employee innovativeness. Hence, we make up a strong argument in favor of remote work structure as a strong predictor of employee innovativeness.

Recommendations

1. Organizations need to allow employees a level of autonomy to permit them sometimes to work from confined places as that does give them a sense of responsibility.
2. Organizations staff training and retraining programs bothering on the for creativity and innovativeness to be able to enhance the quality of their product.
3. The organization need to encourage flexibility as remote work structure is best suitable to market customers with technological innovations.
4. The organization should operate a relatively flexible structure so as to give employees a sense of entitlement in the discharge of their duty.

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