

The Significance Of Intelligent Leadership In Attaining Strategic Ambidexterity

Alendy Abdulahad Mansor¹, Vian Hussein Bakr², Abdulkhaleq Nader Qader³, Aram Ibrahim Qanbar⁴

¹Business administration department, Shaqlawa technical college, ERBIL POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, IRAQ, E-mail: Alandiabdualahad@epu.edu.iq

²Business administration department, Shaqlawa technical college, ERBIL POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, IRAQ, E-mail: Vyanhuseen@epu.edu.iq

³Business administration department, Shaqlawa technical college, ERBIL POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, IRAQ, E-mail: abdulkhalqnadr@epu.edu.iq

⁴Business Administration Department , Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research , Central Admission Office E-mail: arami.ibrahim@gmail.com

Abstract

Organizations must navigate longing to embrace rapid transformation through emerging technologies and market volatility while also capitalizing on businesses' core competencies in an age of volatility. One of the major drivers of organizational success has been identified to be strategic ambidexterity, an organization's capability to engage in both exploration and exploitation simultaneously. Yet this effort is, in its nature, complex, demanding leaders who can manage uncertainty, foster innovation, and ensure operational efficiency. The study aims to explore how implementing intelligent leadership can facilitate organizations dealing with strategic ambidexterity. Moreover, the paper uncovers the significance of intelligent leadership in attaining strategic ambidexterity, defined as the alignment of capability exploitation and capability exploration within an organization. The goals of this study are to integrate the emerging literature on intelligent leadership and to conceptually clarify the attributes involved, such as emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making, and to see how intelligent leadership mitigates the tensions between exploration and exploitation in organizations through a literature review. Intelligent leadership engenders a culture of innovation, increases organizational agility, and promotes sustainable competitive advantage. Finally, the paper presents implications for practice as well as avenues for future research. Intelligent leadership incorporates emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making. These qualities enable leaders to balance conflicting demands, build an environment of invention, and determine organizational nimbleness.

Keywords: Intelligent leadership, strategic ambidexterity, exploitation, exploration, organizational agility, innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations need to adapt to changing environments while maintaining operational efficiency in the increasingly rapid business landscape. The need for strategic ambidexterity (the simultaneous pursuit of exploitation, capturing past successes, and exploration uncovering new paths) has emerged as essential to organizational success. Yet balancing both at once is no easy task it calls for leaders who can master complexity, can inspire innovation, and can spur performance (Baškarada, Watson, and Cromarty 2016). Indeed, intelligent leadership (through emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making) has emerged as a key enabler of strategic ambidexterity. Investigation of Intellectual Strategy Intelligence Leadership and Performance of organizations concerning strategic ambidexterity (Van De Wetering, Mikalef, and Dennehy 2022).

As technology evolves and the business landscape rapidly shifts, organizations are met with challenges they have never witnessed before. In order to navigate these complexities, organizations need to integrate two competing logics: exploitation (i.e., "doing what we are doing better") and exploration (i.e., "doing new things and innovating") (March 1991). Striking this balance, known as strategic ambidexterity, has become a key driver of organizational success and sustainable organizations (Ahmad et al. 2022). Strategic ambidexterity is difficult but necessary for organizations to thrive in today's fast-paced business landscape, leaders must

embrace the balancing act of managing dualities and cultivating visionary thinking alongside a strong operational focus (Sadler-Smith and Shefy 2004),(Ed-Dafali et al. 2023a).

This multitude of challenges falls on leaders, who are crucial for organizations to achieve strategic ambidexterity. Generic models of leadership based on hierarchical control and short-term performance often fall short when it comes to tackling the challenges of ambidexterity(Birkinshaw and Gupta 2013). Organizations instead need intelligent leaders with emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making who can effectively negotiate the tension between exploitation and exploration (Ed-Dafali et al. 2023a). It is well-known that intelligent leaders have great skills in managing resources and processes (Carmeli and Halevi 2009) and an even stronger ability to inspire creativity (Katou, Budhwar, and Patel 2021),(Hsing-Er Lin and McDonough 2011), boost collaboration (Wang, 2018), and promote organizational agility(Carmeli and Halevi 2009).

1.1 The Concept of Intelligent Leadership

Intelligent leadership is a contextualized construct that defines multifaceted emotional intelligence aspects, cognitive abilities, and adaptive decision-making. Emotional intelligence was defined by(Alon and Higgins 2005) as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and that of others. Furthermore, leaders who possess high emotional intelligence skills are more apt to establish trust and solutions to conflicts, promoting a positive workplace climate that fosters innovation and risk-taking(Carmeli and Halevi 2009). On the contrary, cognitive flexibility allows leaders to adjust their thinking styles and network out of their respective boxes ,(Jannusch et al. 2021; Parker, Bindl, and Strauss 2010); (Cai et al. 2019). Additionally, adaptive decision-making allows leaders to adjust their decision-making process as new information becomes available, which is critical in today's fast-paced environment(Baškarada et al. 2016).

1.2 Strategic Ambidexterity: A Balancing Act

Strategic ambidexterity, in turn, is defined as an organization's simultaneous pursuit of exploitation and exploration (March 1991). The former focuses on the improvement of current processes, the enhancement of efficiency, and short-term profit maximization, and the latter on innovation, experimentation, and long-term success. Organizations need to be ambidextrous, as achieving this balance requires systematic resource allocation, management of conflicting priorities, and creating a culture of innovation (Bedford 2015). Nonetheless, a balance achieves itself, as exploitation and exploration are in direct competition for resources and attention(Baumane-Vītoliņa et al. 2022).

1.3 The Role of Intelligent Leadership in Achieving Strategic Ambidexterity

Strategic ambidexterity is enabled through intelligent leadership. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can foster a supportive environment for exploration through experimentation and risk-taking (Carmeli and Halevi 2009). Simultaneously, perceptive leaders utilize their intellectual flexibility to judiciously share resources and ensure that exploitation efforts are not sidelined (Cai et al. 2019). To illustrate, leaders who can manage paradoxes and embrace competing demands are more able to achieve ambidexterity (Anon 2024b). Intelligent leaders can also create a culture of continuous learning, which is key for balancing exploitation versus exploration(Birkinshaw and Gupta 2013).

But balancing this nature is easier said than done, as it needs leaders who are adept at leading through complexity, creativity, and performance. In this context, intelligent leadership, defined as high emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making, has emerged as a key enabler of strategic ambidexterity. Intelligent leadership for strategic ambidexterity: Implications for performance(Baškarada et al. 2016).

1.4 Aim of the Study

By addressing these objectives, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on leadership and organizational ambidexterity while offering actionable insights for practitioners.

1. This study mainly focuses on how these variables lead to achieving strategic ambidextrous. In particular, the study aims to:
2. Assess the main elements of intelligent leadership.
3. Examine how intelligent leadership, through specific mechanisms, facilitates the balance of exploitation and exploration within organizations.

4. Offer actionable advice for practitioners who want to boost their ambidextrous capabilities as leaders and organizations.

Thus, this research hopes to make a contribution to the theoretical literature on leadership and organizational ambidexterity, providing practical implications for practitioners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Intelligent Leadership: Definition and Key Attributes

The concept of intelligent leadership encompasses a multi-dimensional construct of emotional awareness, cognitive agility, and adaptive decision-making. Leaders who have sense probably can understand and manage emotions, engage in critical thinking, and respond to changing contexts (Bell and Hofmeyr 2021a). According to (Anon 2024a), this emotional intelligence allows leaders to form strong bonds, promote cooperation, and develop a healthy organizational climate. As (Carmeli and Halevi 2009) have noted, leaders who have high emotional intelligence are capable of better conflict management, building trust, and innovation, which are cornerstones for exploration.

Cognitive flexibility is also an important characteristic of intelligent leadership and is the ability to shift thought processes and consider problems from many different perspectives (Jannusch et al. 2021). This is especially critical in dynamic environments, where leaders must manage competing needs and prioritize limited resources. For example, it can enable leaders to spot the innovation potential without risking neglect of existing operations (Sadler-Smith and Shefy 2004). Adaptive decision-making adds an extra dimension to a leader's capacity to react quickly to changing situations, thereby maintaining flexibility and resilience in the organization under waiting conditions of uncertainty (Jia, Hu, and Li 2022).

2.2 Strategic Ambidexterity: Exploitation and Exploration

Strategic ambidexterity is an organizational ability to exploit and explore simultaneously. Exploitation encompasses refining processes, enhancing efficiencies, and capturing short-term wins, whereas exploration pursuits include innovation, experimentation, and long-term growth (Anon 2021). To achieve ambidexterity, organizations must effectively allocate resources, manage competing priorities, and promote a culture of innovation. However, this balance has proven challenging to strike because exploitation and exploration often vie for the same resources and attention (Baškarada et al. 2016).

Studies have also found that firms that demonstrate strategic ambidexterity tend to gain sustainable competitive advantage (Birkinshaw and Gupta 2013). Ambidextrous Organizations Respond Better to Market Changes. (Jansen et al. 2008) Highlight that ambidextrous organizations are better placed to respond to changes in the market in terms of innovating and maintaining operational effectiveness. Ambidexterity, however, needs leaders who can embrace complexity, navigate paradoxes, and create an innovation-friendly culture (Zahoor et al. 2024).

2.3 The Role of Intelligent Leadership in Enabling Strategic Ambidexterity

In this sense, intelligent leadership is an essential enabler of the strategic ambidexterity of organizations. Leaders who have high emotional intelligence can provide support and a safe zone to take risks, which is a vital aspect of exploration (Baumane-Vītoliņa et al. 2022). For instance, (Carmeli and Halevi 2009) finds that emotionally intelligent leaders are more successful at building trust, managing conflict, and catalyzing teamwork, all of which are crucial to creativity. Simultaneously, intelligent leaders can use cognitive flexibility to utilize their resources well, thereby balancing exploration and exploitation (Birkinshaw and Gupta 2013). For a leader's ability to balance exploitation and exploration, adaptive decision-making is the crowning piece. (Ali et al. 2024) suggests that leaders who make decisions quickly and effectively, as attention needs change, are more competent in dealing with complexity and creating agility within their organizations. (Smith and Lewis 2011), for example, suggest that leaders capable of more effectively managing paradoxes and embracing competing demands are more prepared to hit ambidexterity. Besides, able leaders can also cultivate a climate of learning, which is essential in balancing exploitation and exploration (Anon 2019).

2.4 Challenges in Achieving Strategic Ambidexterity

While enabling strategic ambidexterity has benefits, doing so isn't without its challenges. The fundamental challenge is the tension between exploitation and exploration. Exploitation emphasizes efficiency and short-

term savings; exploration entails experimentation and long-term investments(Benkirane and Benazzi 2023). This dichotomy frequently gives rise to competing demands on resources because organizations must determine how much to allocate toward existing functions and ventures versus new opportunities(Anon 2019).

The other challenge is the need for organizational alignment. It takes a lot of coordination and collaboration across a variety of different units and functions to realize ambidexterity (Benner and Tushman 2015). However, achieving this alignment can be challenging, especially for larger and more complex organizations. Leaders with high emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making skills are essential for managing these challenges and ensuring leaders can balance competing priorities and encourage collaboration while choosing the intelligent path during such testing times(Carmeli and Halevi 2009).

Comparative Table of Key Studies

Study	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Paper
(Ed-Dafali et al. 2023b)	Organizational ambidexterity	Ambidexterity requires structural and contextual alignment.	Highlights the importance of leadership in enabling ambidexterity.
(Bedford 2015)	Paradox management	Leaders must embrace competing demands to achieve ambidexterity.	Aligns with the role of intelligent leadership in managing paradoxes.
(Anon 2024b)	Behavioral integration	behavioral integration enables ambidexterity.	Supports the role of emotional intelligence in fostering collaboration.
(Hsing-Er Lin and McDonough 2011)	Ambidexterity frameworks	Clarifies the theoretical foundations of ambidexterity.	Provides a foundation for understanding ambidexterity.
(Esra' et al. 2019)	study of ambidexterity	Ambidexterity positively impacts performance.	Reinforces the importance of balancing exploitation and exploration.
(Mainardi 2024)	Mechanisms for ambidexterity	Identifies key mechanisms for managing ambidexterity.	Highlights the role of leadership in implementing these mechanisms.
(Asif 2020)	Social-cognitive underpinnings	Leadership supports employees' ambidextrous behavior.	Links leadership behaviors to individual-level ambidexterity.
(Baumane-Vītolīņa et al. 2022)	Ambidextrous organization	organization play a critical role in enabling ambidexterity.	Emphasizes the importance of leadership at the executive level.
(Ali et al. 2024)	Initiation of ambidexterity	Ambidexterity is initiated through emergent processes.	Highlights the role of leadership in initiating and sustaining ambidexterity.
(Ehrich and Kimber 2016)	Network perspective	Ambidexterity is influenced by social networks.	Suggests that leaders must manage networks to enable ambidexterity.

This can help have a clear summarisation of what each article contributes to this study in terms of leaders who are intelligent and use their strategic ambidexterity, which, of course. The four columns within the table serve specific purposes: the first column titled "Study" contains the author(s) followed by the year of publication, the second column (Focus) presents the main focus or research question of each study, the third

column (Key Findings) provides a summary of the findings or contributions of each paper, and the last column (Relevance to Paper) connects the work to your paper's examination of intelligent leadership and strategic ambidexterity.

When the table is employed during the study, it offers a clear overview of the major studies conducted, assisting in recognizing trends, voids, and consensus in the literature. The table in the study is useful for discussion, allowing you to compare and contrast perspectives on aspects of intelligent leadership and ambidexterity, using evidence from various sources to support your argument. Moreover, for recommendations, the table lists pragmatic insights drawn from the literature insights that can inform what you recommend to leaders and organizations. This text-style approximation highlights the key contributions of the table by speaking to its organizational advantages (clarity, brevity, comparative analysis, etc.).

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The literature review and comparative analysis reveal several key insights into the role of intelligent leadership in achieving strategic ambidexterity. These insights are organized into three main themes: (1) the attributes of intelligent leadership, (2) the mechanisms through which intelligent leadership enables ambidexterity, and (3) the challenges and opportunities associated with achieving ambidexterity.

4.1 Attributes of Intelligent Leadership

The table summarizes the studies, all indicating that the general characteristics of the intelligent leader are emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making. (Carmeli and Halevi 2009), for instance, show that leaders high in emotional intelligence are more capable of facilitating teamwork and a supportive climate for exploration, which is vital for exploration. (Bell and Hofmeyr 2021a) discuss how cognitive flexibility allows leaders to navigate paradoxes and balance competing demands (e.g., exploitation and exploration). The existing literature on both the constructs of intelligent leadership as well as positive organizational outcomes support the current findings; the ability to lead intelligently requires emotional and cognitive abilities necessary for addressing complexity within tiers of outcomes within the organization (Asif 2020; Kannothra et al. 2024).

4.2. Strategies for Enabling Strategic Ambidexterity

The table also emphasizes many mechanisms through which intelligent leadership establishes strategic ambidexterity. Consider the work of (Bell and Hofmeyr 2021b), who highlight structural and contextual alignment with an organizational design that allows for exploitation as well as exploration. This word aligns with Birkinshaw and Gupta, who also emphasized the necessity of a well-defined mechanism for balancing resource allocation (Birkinshaw and Gupta 2013).

In addition, according to (Kauppila and Tempelaar 2016), leaders need to create an environment in which employees feel safe taking risks and trying new things in order to promote their ambidextrous behavior. Tushman et al. further support this. (a) find that the duality of ambidextrous CEOs is an important driver in reinforcing goal alignment and pioneering organizational culture (2011) This highlights the role of the leadership as it engages in trust, collaboration, and continuous learning, the key ingredients to creating the environment to be ambidextrous.

4.3. Challenges and Opportunities

Although strategic ambidexterity can confer important benefits, it is not without its challenges. The table identifies various tensions, such as the fundamental trade-off between exploitation and exploration (Ali et al. 2024), the requirement for organizational alignment (Katou et al. 2021), and the complexity of balancing competing priorities (Kannothra et al. 2024). Let us avatar a conceptual level in a considerably detailed way by taking the guidelines of (Raisch and Krakowski 2021), who claim that exploitation (efficiently utilizing the existing capabilities and assets) and exploration (discovery of new answering pathways) require different forms of investment and can interfere with each other.

But, the studies also highlight opportunities to overcome these challenges. As a case, (Zimmermann, Raisch, and Birkinshaw 2015) propose that ambidexterity may be formed via emergent processes, such as experimentation and learning, under the sponsorship of intelligent leadership. (Anon 2019) also reveal that social networks promote ambidexterity; therefore, leaders must manage networks to enable knowledge-

sharing and collaborative work. These show the potential of intelligent leadership to address the challenges of ambidexterity and exploit opportunities.

5. RESULTS

The findings of this research highlight the importance of intelligent leadership in attaining strategic ambidexterity through the equilibrium of exploitation and exploration. Through emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making skills, such leaders breed a culture of innovation, effective resource allocation, and organization agility to eventually achieve sustainable competitive advantage. The findings divide intelligent leadership into three key components: the attributes of an intelligent leader, enabling mechanisms, and outcomes (Lee et al. 2020). These include emotional intelligence to build trust and take risks, cognitive flexibility to manage competing priorities, and adaptive decision-making for agility. Infrastructure alignment, contextual alignment, creating innovative pathways, and engaging social networks are ensemble enabling mechanisms that glue these centers (Rosing, Frese, and Bausch 2011). Hyper-ambidexterity enables organizations to innovate faster, become more agile, and secure a sustainable competitive edge (Ferlie and Ongaro 2022). However, it is not without its challenges, such as resource allocation conflicts, organizational misalignment, and competing priorities. Our findings have not only important theoretical contributions in terms of the new knowledge they present but also practical contributions in terms of the managerial implications surrounding the need for leadership development and systems that will ensure leading these key drivers of operational excellence and innovation (Hsing-Er Lin and McDonough 2011).

Eventually, Intelligent leadership is defined by high emotional intelligence, cognitive complexity as well as adaptive decision-making, intelligent leaders promote ambidexterity through structural and contextual alignment, enabling a culture of innovation, as well as managing social networks through achieving that ambidexterity this helps in enhancing innovation, increasing agility and ultimately leading to sustainable competitive advantage. However, challenges remain, such as resource allocation, organizational misalignment, as well as managing competing priorities (Leppänen, George, and Alexy 2023).

The findings from this study have significant implications for theory and practice. The study contributes to the strand of literature on intelligent leadership and strategic ambidexterity from a theoretical perspective by identifying important attributes that help to develop intelligent leadership and assessing the mechanisms by which such leadership facilitates ambidexterity. Practically, the findings are relevant for organizations aiming to respond to future crises and should, therefore, prioritize the development of emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making capabilities. Leaders also need to focus on creating a culture of innovation and establishing systems that enable exploitation as well as exploration.

The study makes several significant contributions to leadership and organizational ambidexterity literature. More importantly, it offers an integrated perspective by explaining how intelligent leadership facilitates strategic ambidexterity. The framework elucidates that, through combining findings from multiple studies, emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making are identified as key enablers of ambidexterity. Second, the research provides concrete mechanisms underlying how intelligent leadership integrates exploitation and exploration, including structural and contextual alignment, fostering innovative culture, and social network management. Lastly, it discusses the pitfalls of ambidexterity, such as resource allocation conflicts, misalignment in their underlying firm organizations, and managing competing priorities, and provides practical suggestions for overcoming those pitfalls.

The findings of this study are relevant to both theory and practice. The research expands the literature on intelligent leadership and strategic ambidexterity by demonstrating how leaders facilitate the balance of exploitation and exploration in firms. It also identifies gaps in the literature, including a lack of research on the impact of leadership in different organizational contexts and industries.

The findings suggest that companies should implement leadership training programs that focus on these dimensions of emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making." This means that for leaders to pursue ambidexterity, they must also create a culture of creativity and continual learning.

Organizations can also design systems and processes that support both exploitation and exploration, such as flexible resource allocation and cross-functional teams.

And the recommendation for this study

- Show intelligent leadership through emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making.
- Facilitate a culture of innovation by taking steps to promote experimentation, nurture continuous learning, and develop cross-functional teams.
- Establish ambidextrous systems by allocating resources flexibly, aligning organizational structures, and utilizing social networks.
- Overcome ambidexterity challenges through resource allocation, ensuring organization alignment and embracing paradoxes.
- Study one or more industry contexts, individual and team-level moderating factors, and long-term outcomes in future research.

6. CONCLUSION

However, smart leadership is important for creating strategic ambidexterity, which allows businesses to strive for a proper balance between exploitation and exploration. Smart leaders can enable their firms to flexibly adapt to change and produce lasting results through enhanced creativity, increased agility, and accelerated decision-making. The present study adds to the extant literature by volumetrically examining the relationship between intelligent leadership and strategic ambidexterity.

The research examined how leaders manage a healthy balance between exploitation and exploration so that good leaders lead wisely. Through the literature review, three common denominators of intelligent leadership were detected: emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making conducted to the ambiguity of organization. These studies demonstrate the crucial role that leaders play in creating an environment conducive to innovation, in becoming more agile, and in maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage.

In summary, a crafty leader is crucial to maintain. Utilize and explore organizational strategic ambidexterity since it helps the organization accomplish both in the right way. This may lead leaders to develop emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive decision-making to create conditions for creativity, agility, and enduring competitive success. Ambidexterity, on the other hand, results in conflicting resource allocation and organizational misalignment. Coming research needs to better address these issues and start documenting the recommended approaches to fix them. In conclusion, the findings of our study have led to an improved understanding of the significance of intelligent leadership in guiding organizations through the challenges they face in today's business environment and ultimately achieving sustainable success.

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