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Ambidextrous managers and the idea journey: an intra-organizational network perspective

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Organization studies increasingly recognize social networks as a lens to understand the effect of social context on creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Sosa, 2011). Creativity is associated to innovation and different types of social networks may exist between individuals within an organization. When considering the development of new ideas and creative solutions, advice networks play a relevant role (Li et al., 2018; Lomi et al., 2014), since the combination and recombination of knowledge is supported by informal advice sharing (Aalbers & Dolfsma, 2015). Through advice networks employees deliver and receive information regarding their work-related tasks; moreover, central positions in the advice network provide individuals with tangible and intangible resources needed for innovation (Cangialosi et al., 2021; Gulati & Srivastava, 2014). According to Cangialosi et al. (2021), there are two main reasons explaining the importance – in terms of creativity and thus innovative performance – of centrally positioned individuals in the advice network: first, a central position exposes employees to a wider array of professional information that can be combined to generate and implement new ideas; second, central individuals are likely to be seen as having higher status, which leads to an increase in support from their colleagues and supervisors. Ambidexterity represents ‘successful management of both exploration (e.g., creating new products) and exploitation (e.g., production and implementation of products)’ (Anderson et al., 2014). However, there is still a lack of studies focusing of its association with individual-level centrality in advice networks towards novel ideas. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by investigating the association between ambidexterity and network centrality – at individual level – when considering idea generation and implementation within an organization. For our empirical analysis, we use original data collected in 2021 from a consultancy company offering services in the field of environmental analysis and health and food safety.

Keywords

Intra-organizational networks - Business model innovation - Ambidexterity

Topics

- Organizational networks

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