Public sector management: indispensable facilitating factors in sculpting organizational ambidexterity

Tukiran, Martinus and Sunaryo, Widodo and Ghufron, Nurul and Rusli, Zil Irvan and Dalilah, Elih

Pakuan University, Indonesia, Pakuan University, Indonesia, Jember University, Indonesia, Corruption Eradication Commission, Indonesia, Corruption Eradication Commission, Indonesia

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PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT: INDISPENSABLE FACILITATING FACTORS IN SCULPTING ORGANISATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY

Tukiran, M., Ghufron, N., Sunaryo, W., Rusli, Z.I., Dalilah, E.[1]

Abstract: Organisational ambidexterity, the ability of the organisation to maintain dual attention on *exploitation* (processing and refining the core production) and *exploration* (prospecting activities for new opportunities and innovation) to support sustainable growth, has been widely applied in a business organisation. However, the concept of organisational ambidexterity applied in public and nonprofit organisations currently facing unprecedented challenges in carrying out their mission is not much researched. Under the new reform, a public organisation is not only expected to accomplish the mission but also is expected to be innovative. This study aims to fill in the gap by exploring the strategy of the Indonesian super body organisation known as *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK) or Corruption Eradication Commission in achieving organisational ambidexterity. This body is commissioned as in most comparative studies of corruption between countries; Indonesia is on the top of the pyramid. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is tested on 200 Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission officers to confirm the underlying factors. The dynamic interactions among management innovation, organisational adaptation, organisational design, and organisational learning to organisational ambidexterity are examined with path analysis. The research shows the significant impact of all variables as causes for organisational ambidexterity. The model is expected to provide the model for government institutions on managing organisational ambidexterity in line with delivering accountability of mandate fulfilment to respective stakeholders by particular reference to business organisations' concept.

Keywords: business process, government organisation, organisational ambidexterity, organisational learning.

Introduction

Today, government agencies face unprecedented challenges in fulfilling their important mission. Increasing demands on accountability and transparency and the use of government budgets related to success requirements are just some of the pressing challenges that businesses must meet the expectations of their stakeholders (Felicio et al., 2021). Government agencies need to achieve this in an environment of limited budgets, complex regulations and changing stakeholders' expectations (Newman et al., 2022), yet to innovate. Up to this point, the public sector was regarded as being far from innovative (Abbas et al., 2018; Rajiani & Ismail, 2019; Riana et al., 2020; Ronquillo et al., 2021), although the word "innovation" is presently at the heart of public sector organisation agenda, and various initiatives and studies are available highlighting this complicated phenomenon (Kuziemski & Misuraca, 2020; Demircioglu & Vivona, 2021; Cruz & Paulino, 2022).

In studies of innovation in the business sector, some authors (for example, Sjödin et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022; Kapler, 2021) have argued that the innovation capabilities of organisations are determined by capabilities of synthesising the paradigms of *exploitation* (processing and refining the core production) and *exploration* (prospecting activities for new opportunities and innovation). The capability to exploit and explore simultaneously in an organisation usually applies the concept of organisational ambidexterity (Clauss et al., 2021; Konrad et al., 2021; Kassotaki, 2022). But, successful completion of this synthesis is difficult for organisations as exploitation and exploration depend upon reversed systems and competition in gaining rare resources (Chizaryfard et al., 2022).

In the public sector, organisational ambidexterity is under-researched (Page et al., 2021; Houtgraaf, 2022). Nevertheless, the current block to innovation in the public sector is underpinned by exploitation and exploration, for this is proven in the business sector (Sjödin et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022). Further, public sector innovation capabilities depend on the collaboration of various stakeholders (Lopes & Farias, 2022), including those who are already involved in the daily business process (Straková et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2021), as well as resting on a particular organisational strategy map alignment that enhances the development

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[1]**Martinus Tukiran** Dr., **Widodo Sunaryo** Dr., Pakuan University, Indonesia **Nurul Ghufron,** Jember University, Indonesia. **Zil Irvan Rusli, Elih Dalilah,** Corruption Eradication Commission, Indonesia.
✉ corresponding author: martinus.tukiran@unpak.ac.id
✉widodosunaryo20@gmail.com;Nurul.Ghufron@kpk.go.id;zilirvan@kpk.go.id; Elih.Dalilah@kpk.go.id

of innovative work behaviour (Felicio et al., 2021). Organisational learning is a systematic way of empowering joint effort between individuals to improve proficiency, viability and new product creation in the organisation (Subiyakto et al., 2020; Ziaran et al., 2020).

Since corruption is an epidemic problem in Indonesia and widespread across public organisations, the Indonesian government establishes the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantas Korupsi - KPK) to stop corruption in all economic sectors (Prabowo, 2022). Although KPK has successfully brought many corruption cases to court (Alfada, 2019), corruption cases have increased over time. The corruption cases involve local government leaders (Halaskova et al., 2022, Haque et al., 2020) involved in bribery, budget misuse, and abuse of license agreements. Moreover, the relationship between economic growth and corruption in Indonesia's provinces shows a unique pattern where some provinces have strong economies despite high levels of corruption (Subanti et al., 2021). In contrast, other regions experience middle to low-income levels under the low incidence of corruption cases. This peculiarity provides an ideal case for the study of organisational ambidexterity. Being the frontline in corruption eradication, KPK should deliver daily services efficiently and effectively. The efficiency of exploitation and exploration relies on standardised and well-monitored performance management and organisational learning, in line with the development of innovation capabilities. Therefore, this article aims to examine these interactions by applying the concept of organisational ambidexterity.

Literature Review

Muller et al. (2021) postulate that an ambidextrous organisation can implement both incremental and revolutionary alterations, which can be both exploitative and explorative. Yan et al. (2021) describe ambidextrous organisations as an organisation capable of exploiting present competencies and exploring new opportunities with equal agility. Likewise, Johnson et al. (2022) conclude that most researchers express ambidexterity as the concurrent search for exploration and exploitation. The ambidexterity conception thus highlights the necessity of organisations to harmonise the pressure of exploiting their existing resources and opportunities. Also, the organisation exerts equal and sufficient effort toward exploring new capabilities to ensure long-term competitiveness (Ochie et al., 2022). Exploitation is about improving operational efficiency, productivity, control, risk avoidance, and safeguarding certainty, whereas exploration is about new pursuits, risk-taking, distinction, discoveries and innovation (Kassotaki, 2022; Simionescu et al., 2021). Exploration permits organisations to adapt and spread new inventions, technologies and information (Christofi et al., 2021; Grebski & Mazur, 2022). Both undertakings are essential as only concentrating on exploiting current capabilities without exploring new ones can lead to a success trap (Ferreras-Méndez et al., 2022). Correspondingly, a focus on exploration without commitment to exploitation causes an organisation to display too many immature new ideas and too little distinctive capability (Cruz & Paulino, 2022).

Empirical studies specify that organisational ambidexterity positively impacts organisational excellence (Sjödin et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022). But, previous studies also demonstrate and contend that organisational ambidexterity is complicated to attain (Chizaryfard et al., 2022). They argue that the problems of all organisations are to find out proper balances between exploration and exploitation. Still, at the same time, they examine a clash between the two phenomena. However, although the previous study on the phenomenon, organisational ambidexterity rests as an under-theorised, under conceptualised, and, therefore, imperfectly comprehended phenomenon (Page et al., 2021; Houtgraaf, 2022).

Similarly, Palmi et al. (2021) summarise that although the proximate agreement is necessary for balancing exploitation and exploration, there is substantially less clearness on how this balance can be accomplished. Moreover, they assure that it is difficult to find studies investigating ambidexterity in public sector organisations. This is undoubtedly challenging as previous studies have debated that the business and public sectors have dissimilar circumstances to realise organisational ambidexterity (Page et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2022). However, Kregel et al. (2021) determine the differences: public organisations are more rigid, public managers are less money-oriented, and public managers have weaker organisational commitment. With this condition, it is questionable if public organisations can be ambidextrous. But, Cannaerts et al. (2020) emphasise that public sector organisations can perform ambidextrously and have the capacity and opportunity to implement ambidextrous structures and cultures.

Management innovation alters how and what managers do in setting directions, making decisions, coordinating activities and motivating people. These alterations are displayed in new

managerial practices, structures, or processes that are context- specific and difficult to imitate, making them a strong foundation of competitive advantage (Rajiani & Ismail, 2019; Bednarova et al., 2018). At the heart of the study on organisational ambidexterity is management innovation derived from the necessity for leaders intermittently to abolish significant elements of tried-and-tested corporate strategies. However, upcoming attainment depends on leaders being ready to cannibalise their own business during industry transitions (Sjödin et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022). Here, the competing logics and time horizons of exploration and exploitation produce possibly unbearable tensions as organisational members with different urgencies and agendas concurrently oppose the demands of each (Chizaryfard et al.,2022). Achieving ambidexterity, therefore, is challenging as exploration and exploitation conflict. The former is based on path-breaking technological change, the latter on a path entrenching incremental improvements in managing products and processes (Zu et al., 2022). Yet, organisational survival requires executives to balance innovation pathways while narrowing organisational tensions through appropriate management actions (Han et al., 2022). Thus, the authors have framed the following hypothesis: H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between management innovation and organisational ambidexterity in a public organisation.

Numerous scholars have emphasised that business survival demands an organisational harmony between continuity and change (e.g., Klein et al., 2019; Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020; Manca & Delfino, 2021). Consequently, prosperous organisations not only focus on exploitation and alignment in the evolutionary period but also chase radical exploration in revolutionary change (Miceli et al., 2021). Similarly, Ciampi et al. (2022) connect an organisation's capability for change to its ability to harmonise the necessity to implement changes and the need to maintain daily operations. The necessity of balancing continuity and change is also affected by various constructs, including organisational identity (Cloutier et al., 2020), absorptive capacity (Yuan et al., 2022) and organisational routines (Wenzen et al., 2021). The underlying belief is that extreme radical change will generate administrative confusion if continuity is not considered, whereas the opposite could lead to lethargy (Ozawa, 2021). Accordingly, regular and rhythmical organisational changes in time pacing are sensitive (Rodl et al., 2022). Top management is general reckoned as the primary driver of intermittent transformation. In contrast, middle management is assumed to have incremental upkeep modification and assist organisational adaptation through the passionate harmonising of continuity and change (Lundmark et al., 2022). Therefore, it is hypothesized as follows:

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between organisational adaptation and organisational ambidexterity in a public organisation.

Scholars have long reviewed the use of efficiency and flexibility in organisational design (Smith & Besharov, 2019). The compromise of these two issues is a pivotal paradox in public management (Todisco et al., 2022). Kessler et al. (2017) contend that mechanistic structures relying on standardisation, centralisation, and hierarchy reinforce efficiency, while organic structures characterised by high levels of decentralisation and autonomy support flexibility. Kagono et al. (2019) recommend that organisations necessitate both structures: organic to conceive innovations and mechanistic to execute and apply them. Since mechanistic and organic structures are hard to reunite within one firm (Sandhu & Kulik, 2019), the current studies declare that companies may settle the absurdity by merging mechanistic and organic designs or fostering a collective organisational context (He & Ortiz, 2021). From this outlook, ambidexterity can be described as a company's proficiency in running complicated organisational designs for short-term efficiency and long-term innovation (Clauss et al., 2021). Consequently, it is hypothesized that

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between organisational design and organisational ambidexterity in a public organisation.

The disputations between exploitation and exploration, as well as the need to reunite the two orientations, have been deliberated in the context of organisational learning (Peters & Buijs, 2022), which is a systematic way of endowing joint effort between individuals in the organisation to increase proficiency, practicability, and new product creation (Abvy, 2022). The debate is whether exploitation and exploration should be linked with learning activities. Hu and Gao (2021) propose that exploitation denotes learning acquired via local search, practical improvement, assortment, and reuse of present routines. Exploration refers to learning attained through processes of rigorous modification, planned experimentation and play. Despite the dissimilarities between the two learning processes, researchers have long thought that a well-balanced blend of the two types of

learning is indispensable for continuing organisational accomplishment (Kengatharan, 2021). Thus, consequent studies regularly theorise exploitation and exploration as orthogonal variables that can be attained (Abvy, 2022). Leaders may involve in high levels of exploitation and exploration undertakings. Top-down knowledge influxes from persons at higher levels are positively associated with exploitation. On the other hand, horizontal and bottom-up knowledge inflows from peers and persons at lower levels are positively linked to exploration (Kim & Lee 2021). The findings, hence, specify that the more people obtain top-down knowledge flows, the higher the levels of exploration and exploitation in which they participate. Thus, it can be hypothesized as follows.   H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between organisational learning and organisational ambidexterity in a public organisation.

Research Methodology

This research uses quantitative methods of data to analyse organisational ambidexterity practices in the area of management innovation, organisational adaptation, organisational design and organisational learning in the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission, a government agency established to fight corruption all over the country. The target population of this study is 200 officers in Jakarta. The data was collected from June 2020 until January 2022. The sample selection method uses purposive sampling, which is based on the willingness of the members to participate in responding to questionnaires sent in Google form. In a multivariate model, the standard rule is that the minimum number of observations is at least five times as many observations (Hair et al., 2020). As there were 31 indicators to be tested, a sample of 200 falls within an acceptable sample range.

Organisational ambidexterity was estimated utilising a 9-item test adopted from the work of Palm and Lilja (2017). The items are: organising for a good understanding of user needs and situations $(y1.1)$, leadership with insight on the need for exploration $(y1.2)$, dialogue $(y1.3)$, ambassadors $(y1.4)$, a culture that allows mistakes $(y1.5)$, budget for exploration and exploitation $(y1.6)$, a system view $(y1.7)$, focus on implementing innovations $(y1.8)$, and incentives for both exploration and exploitation $(y1.9)$.

Management innovation was calculated with a 4-item test used by Rajiani & Ismail (2019). The items are new managerial practices $(x1.1)$, new managerial processes $(x1.2)$, new organisational structures $(x1.3)$, and new managerial techniques $(x1.4)$. Organisational adaptation was quantified with 5 indicators developed by Xiao et al. (2021). The indicators were dynamic adaptability of the environment $(x2.1)$, ego organisation learning $(x2.2)$, updating and reviewing the existing knowledge $(x2.3)$, the capability of independent innovation $(x2.4)$, and flexible collaboration of the department $(x2.5)$.

The organisational design was measured with 8 indicators suggested by Pereira- Moline et al. (2016). The indicators were: written procedures to deal with any matter $(x3.1)$, the central role of rules and procedures in the organisation $(x3.2)$, registered forms of employees' work $(X3.3)$, periodic checks of employees' compliance with rules and procedures $(x3.4)$, written job descriptions for all position $(x3.5)$, implementing few actions without a supervisor approval $(x3.6)$, compulsory to consult issues of little significance with a supervisor $(x3.7)$, and asking supervisors before doing anything $(x3.8)$.

The assessment instrument for learning organisations used 5 items adopted from Brix (2017). The items were: creating opportunities for continuously learning $(x4.1)$, promoting a principle of inquiry and dialogue $(x4.2)$, encouraging collaboration and team learning $(x4.3)$, establishing and embedding systems to create and share learning $(x4.4)$, and empowering people towards a collective and shared vision $(x4.5)$.

For every item, respondents expressed their degree of agreement on a point scale from 1, do not agree, to 5, strongly agree. Path analysis using a regression model was used to examine the relationship among the underlying structures validated with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), where only items with factors loading above
0.50 remained in the model (Hair et al., 2020). Reliability test was carried out via Cronbach's alpha tests.

Research Results

Respondent's demographic profiles related to gender, age, education and length in current business are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent' Profiles.

	N	%
Gender:		
Male	170	85
Female	30	15
Total	200	100
Ages:		
50 above	50	25
40-49	105	52.5
30-39	45	22.5
< 30	0	0
Total	200	100
Education:		
Undergraduate	75	37.5
Graduate	125	62.5
Total	200	100
Tenure		
>10 years	80	40
5-9 years	112	56
< 5 year	8	4
Total	200	100

Most of the respondents were male (85%), with the majority (52.5%) of respondents were in between 40-49 years old. Further, most of the respondents (62.5%) possessed master degrees. Most of the respondents are relatively experienced as most respondents (56%) had been in the organisation for around 5-9 years, and even forty per cent of respondents have served the public for more than ten years.

The measurement model in Table 2 shows that the factors loading all surpassed 0.50, signifying that the instrument had satisfactory convergent validity. The result of Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant (*Chi-Square* = 3431.49, *p* = 0.00), indicating that a nonzero correlation existed. The overall value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) is 0.930, which is above the recommended threshold of sampling adequacy at the minimum of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2020). The results showed that the alpha coefficients for the five factors ranged from 0.72 to 0.86 above 0.60, which is the threshold for accepted reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015).

Table 2. Factors loading for convergent validity.

Attributes	Factor loadings
Factor 1: Management Innovation (F1) α = 0.86	
-new managerial practices	0.769
-new managerial processes	0.810
-new organisational structures	0.751
-new managerial techniques	0.622
Factor 2: Organizational Adaptation (F2) α = 0.76	
-dynamic adaptability of the environment	0.713
-ego organisation learning	0.552
-updating and reviewing the existing knowledge	0.711
-the capability of independent innovation	0.692
-flexible collaboration of the department	0.702

Factor 3: Organizational Design (F3) α = **0.75**	
-written procedures to deal with any matter	0.621
-the central role of rules and procedures in the organisation	0.578
-registered forms of employees' work	0.639
-periodic checks of employees' compliance	0.717
-written job descriptions for all position	0.781
-implementing a few actions without a supervisor's approval	0.619
-compulsory to consult issues with a supervisor	0.750
-asking supervisors before doing anything	0.752
Factor 4: Organizational Learning (F4) α = **0.72**	
-creating opportunities for continuously learning	0.812
-promoting a principle of inquiry and dialogue	0.850
-encouraging collaboration and team learning	0.801
-systems to create and share learning	0.782
-empowering people towards a collective and shared vision	0.769
Factor 5: Organizational Ambidexterity (F5) α = **0.82**	
- organising for a good understanding	0.761
-leadership with insight on the need for exploration	0.651
-dialogue	0.710
-ambassadors	0.631
-a culture that allows mistakes	0.701
-budget for exploration and exploitation	0.623
-a system view	0.597
-focus on implementing innovations	0.761
-incentives for both exploration and exploitation	

The summary result of path analysis is presented in Table 3. The table indicates that all values in Sig. Column are below 0.005, denoting that all four hypotheses are accepted.

Table 3. Summary of results.

Model	nstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	-.291	.458		-.543	.422
Management Innovation	0.346	.098	0.248	2.610	0.004
Organizational Adaptation	0.376	.125	0.251	2.704	0.003
Organizational Design	0.502	.201	0.301	3.894	0.000
Organizational Learning	0.518	.245	0.273	2.845	0.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Organisational Ambidexterity. R = 0.691 R2 = 0.477

Discussion

Alike in business sectors (Sjödin et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022), a significant relationship between management innovation and organisational ambidexterity also exists in a public organisation. A significant relationship between organisational adaptation and organisational ambidexterity in a public organisation also supports the previous findings in business sectors (Chizaryfard et al., 2022; Zu et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022). Similarly, the finding is in line with the previous research in business sectors that there is a significant relationship between organisational design and organisational ambidexterity (Klein et al., 2019; Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020; Manca & Delfino, 2021). Finally, the study result supports the notion that organisational learning is related to organisational ambidexterity (Kim & Lee, 2021; Kengatharan, 2021; Peters & Buijs, 2022).

The concept of organisational ambidexterity is commonly practised in business sectors. Still, it is also practised in public organisations. It indicates the emergence and development of the New

Public Management that has shifted the emphasis for managers to make public organisations more market and business-like (Abbas et al., 2018). This trend toward importing private sector's procedures and management styles has been visible in the public sector of Indonesia for the past decades, and it is still recurrent in present times. There has been a shift in the paradigm of public organisations: the goal went from having innovation in public organisations to having innovative public organisations. Before, during the bureaucratic period, the focus on innovation was almost inexistent in public organisations, given that the aim was on exploration and short-term results. The finding of this study is that the Indonesian public organisation has started to implement new managerial practices, managerial processes, organisational structures, and managerial techniques. By implementing those, exploration must be conducted to achieve organisational ambidexterity in the public sector – the balance can be achieved when exploratory abilities are developed. Therefore, nine factors that support exploration are often raised as key enablers for organisational ambidexterity. Those factors are: organising for a good understanding of user needs and situations, leadership with insight on the need for exploration, and well-planned and regular discussion between those involved in exploration and those engaged in exploitation processes (dialogue). Further, the public organisation needs ambassadors (individuals who promote exploratory elements and support incorporating those elements into existing work processes). This culture allows mistakes budget for exploration and exploitation, a system view, a focus on implementing innovation, and incentives for both exploration and exploitation.

Managerial implications

This article extrapolates the concept of contextual ambidexterity to public organisations as, although having been traditionally designed for private firms, it can be expected to be valuable for understanding performance in these organisations.

Public organisations face several specific tensions, such as, for example, providing good, adjusted services for each client while also maintaining principles of equality of treatment. Therefore, these organisations and their individuals have a lot to balance. Thus, this study demonstrates that a contextually ambidextrous public organisation is expected to perform better since it provides its individuals with the tools to make these decisions.

Conclusion

Currently, public organisations are concentrated on developing innovation capabilities, and this shift involves deep structural, cultural and managerial adaptations. This article identifies the foundation challenges of these adaptations and the strategies deployed by a public organisation to overcome these challenges. To do so, the authors incorporate management innovation, organisational adaptation, organisational design, and organisational learning to identify nine empirically perceived factors indispensable for achieving organisational ambidexterity in the public sector. Through these factors, public organisations can more successfully analyse and get perspectives on their specific conditions and enablers for organisational ambidexterity. This problematic transition, along with all the tensions inherited from the past, poses some impending concerns mainly for Indonesian public organisations. These comprise inertia arising from the propensity to favour exploitation, obstacles to knowledge sharing and innovation diffusion, and, finally, lacking culture and structure for innovation capabilities because of the partial transition to contextual ambidexterity. Since this research was conducted in one organisation considered a "super body", this article does not aim to generalise but rather to identify and develop preliminary discussions related to the theoretical elements. This is undoubtedly the main limitation of this article. Future research on innovation capabilities in the public sector must seize the importance of these underpinning tensions.

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