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AMBIDEXTERITY AT WORK: HOW EMBRACING RISK CAN BOOST YOUR CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract *The ever-changing environment has led to the need to find new ways to manage and develop individuals for long-term success. This study aims to investigate ambidexterity at the individual level, which can help manage paradoxical tensions and improve employees' creative performance. Additionally, this research also examines the role of risk propensity in mediating this relationship. A quantitative research methodology has been used to explore the impact of individual ambidexterity on employees' creative performance. Indian nationalised bank employees have been contacted for data collection. The data have been thoroughly examined for reliability and validity. Further, structural equation modelling and Hayes PROCESS macros has been used to evaluate the relationships. The findings revealed that Individual ambidexterity significantly enhance the employees' creative performance. Further, risk propensity mediates the relationship between Individual ambidexterity and employees' creative performance. Finally, the theoretical and managerial implications have also been put forth.*

Keywords: *Individual Ambidexterity, Risk Propensity, Employees' Creative Performance*

INTRODUCTION

In order to survive in the difficult economy of today, businesses must constantly innovate (Anderson et al., 2014). While still attempting to be future-oriented and recognise potential changes in customer bases or growing markets, businesses try to strike a balance between researching new ideas and utilising existing competencies in an effort to satisfy existing consumers. The act of pursuing both exploratory and exploitative activities at the same time is known as organisational ambidexterity (March, 1991). Exploitative actions are related to things like increasing effectiveness, implementation and execution. Exploratory activities strive to explore, challenge and fundamentally alter organisational practices (March, 1991). Exploitative actions are related to things like increasing effectiveness, implementation and execution. Exploratory activities strive to explore, challenge and fundamentally alter organisational practices (March, 1991). Utilising current knowledge and skills to quickly increase efficiency and effectiveness are considered exploitative behaviours at the employee level (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Kang & Snell, 2009). In contrast, exploratory activities include actions like looking for innovative new products and processes, looking for rival solutions and acting in ways that force an employee to pick up new knowledge or abilities while also modifying their usual routines. According to Mom et al. (2009), individual ambidexterity is the tendency of employees to combine activities linked to exploitation and exploration within a certain time frame.

In the literature of today, there are two basic theoretical perspectives on organisational ambidexterity that can be applied to the personnel level. First, many studies (such as Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) have adopted a contextual perspective on ambidexterity. Contextual ambidexterity proposes that the organisational context should permit concurrent exploration and exploitation of activities. According to this theory of organisational ambidexterity, there is a strong requirement for both exploration and exploitation. Exploration and exploitation should support one another. The better it is for organisational performance, the higher the level of both activities, or the higher the level of true ambidexterity. Similar to this, it is expected that each employee will perform at their highest level in terms of creativity as it necessitates both exploration and exploitation

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(Rosing et al., 2011). Second, a number of research studies (such as Benner & Tushman, 2003; Lavie et al., 2010) have taken a structural approach to ambidexterity. Because exploration and exploitation pursue competing objectives, contend for the same resources and necessitate different organisational capabilities (e.g., March, 1991; Smith & Tushman, 2005) and incompatible organisational structures (Benner & Tushman, 2003), structural ambidexterity suggests that these activities be carried out separately. The requirement for a temporal sequencing of exploratory and exploitation actions has been advanced by several researchers (e.g., Puranam et al., 2006). Longer periods of exploitation may be broken up by brief exploring periods (Levinthal & March, 1993). This viewpoint assumes that employees specialise in either exploratory or exploitative activities at the level of the individual employee. Each employee who participates in either exploration or exploitation is expected to deliver their best creative work.

But one drawback of existing studies is that we don't know much about how ambidexterity affects creativity. The fact that ambidexterity is almost exclusively studied at the organisational level is a second drawback of current empirical research (Junni et al., 2013; Zacher et al., 2014). As a result, we are unable to provide comprehensive explanations of how ambidexterity at the employee level relates to particular employee behaviour in order to improve performance (Janssen, 2000). There are more and more requests for studies that examine ambidexterity in workers (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013; Zacher et al., 2014). Therefore, rather of focusing on organisational ambidexterity in this study, we concentrate on employee-level ambidexterity. Theoretically, employees should be equally adept at being exploratory and exploitative at the same time in order to be considered ambidextrous. Given that employees must perform exploratory and/or exploitative actions, this is a significant research gap to fill (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Kang & Snell, 2009).

Further, Kao and Chen (2016) suggested that future studies should investigate the impact of personal characteristics on individual ambidexterity. Pertusa-Ortega et al. (2020) reported that there are various studies on the impact of individual characteristics on individual ambidexterity (Garcia et al., 2019; Mom et al., 2019) but there is a dearth of studies, which explain the impact of individual ambidexterity on individuals' characteristics. Pertusa-Ortega et al. (2020) suggested conducting future research on the influence of individual ambidexterity on individuals' psychological micro-foundations. In this context, it is assumed that individual ambidexterity positively influences individuals' characteristics, specifically, risk propensity, which in turn positively influence the employees' creative performance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

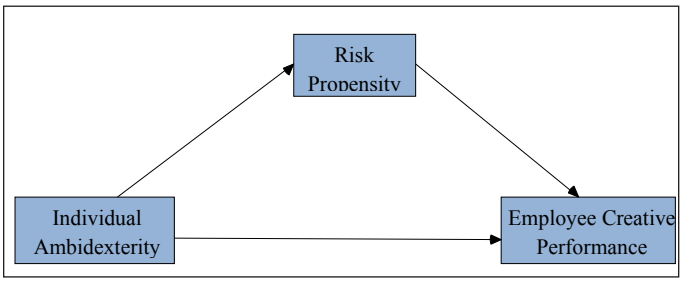

Fig. 1: Proposed Theoretical Model

Individual Ambidexterity, Risk Propensity and Employee Creative Performance

Every individual in today's world experiences some form of paradoxical tension, which is contradictory yet interconnected, and these tensions can be handled with the help of ambidexterity (Cunha et al., 2019). Individual ambidexterity, according to previous study, comprises of exploration-related tasks and trial; error or learning by doing; and exploitation-related activities and concentrated learning (Mom et al., 2009; Rosing & Zacher, 2017). Individual ambidexterity improves existing and new knowledge and skills, as well as job experience (Mom et al., 2007), which serves as the foundation for taking prudent risks (Sitkin & Weingart, 1995). Ambidextrous people constantly do something creative and innovative with the least amount of risk (Mom et al., 2009). An ambidextrous person is a decision maker who accepts a certain amount of risk when utilising existing resources and exploring new and creative items. Furthermore, exploration (an ambidextrous dimension) has a positive link with risk inclination (Rosing & Zacher, 2017). Risk propensity refers to an individual's current tendency or willingness to determine whether to take or avoid risk (Gilley et al., 2002). It can be learnt and changed over time by experience (Sitkin & Weingart, 1995). However, risk propensity rules and controls individuals' risk handling and risk perception, which may affect their performance, according to behavioural choice theory (Sitkin & Pablo, 1992). Furthermore, Kraiczy et al. (2015) defined risk propensity as a personality trait or cognitive process that an individual uses to determine how much risk to accept. Employees' creative performance is favourably influenced by their intrinsic drive and readiness to take high risks (Dewett, 2007). For example, if a person believes he or she can accomplish something creative at work but has a low risk-taking proclivity, he or she will not be able to produce that creative performance. Earlier research (Luo et al., 2018) demonstrated that persons with a higher risk proclivity are

more engaged in profit and growth, which may encourage them to attain greater and better performance. Researchers discovered that intellectual risk taking is critical and positively associated to creative outputs (Ma et al., 2021; Wan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the Capital Asset Pricing Model (Sharpe, 1964) shows a positive link between risk and return, implying that the higher (lower) the risk, the higher (lower) the return. In this context, Schneider and Lopes (1986) discovered that risk-averse personnel prioritise dangers and bad outcomes while ignoring potential possibilities, resulting in loss. Furthermore, Luo et al. (2018) discovered that risk propensity promotes creativity since a manager with a high risk propensity actively accepts risk in order to develop creative products. It is an important factor that shapes people's perceptions of threat and opportunity and has a favourable impact on creativity and invention (Das & Joshi, 2007). We assume that ambidextrous people positively boost risk propensity behaviour and that employees with high risk propensities have a stronger possibility of enhancing their creative performances based on the explanation above. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Individual ambidexterity positively affects employee creative performance.

H2: Risk propensity mediates the relationship between Individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance.

METHODS

Sample

To test the hypotheses, the data has been collected from employees of banking sector. In view of the fact that banks are the foundation of a nation's financial system and need an ambidextrous strategy to preserve stability and deal with a turbulent and changing environment (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2019). For that reason, the information was gathered from the banking industry, and questionnaires were given to bank employee in the UT of J&K (North India). The survey has been conducted to collect the data. Of the 200 employees, 186 returned responses (93%) were received. The goal of the research has been thoroughly presented to the employees via personal interaction. The data has been properly validated for normality before analysis. After the outliers (9) were found using box plot analysis, the sample size was decreased to 177. On average, between 2 and 3 responses were received from bank branches. The majority of respondents (62%) had post-graduate degrees or higher. 98 men and 79 women were represented in the data. The respondents' average age was 31. About 69.8% of responders have experience of above 5 years.

Measures

The data have been collected on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Individual Ambidexterity: Individual level ambidexterity has been adopted from Mom et al.'s (2009) (originally consisting 14-item) scale. In our questionnaire, we included all the items for both subscales of exploitation and exploration. The sample items for exploitation measurement are (1) activities that I could conduct based on my existing knowledge and (2) activities for which I could rely on prior experience. The sample items for exploration measurement are (1) activities for which I did not proceed as usual but significantly adapted my behaviour, (2) evaluation of different possibilities to conduct my tasks, and (3) search for new approaches to my tasks.

Risk Propensity: Risk propensity has been measured with the help of five items adopted from Zhang et al. (2019). These five items are as following: (1) I am a believer of taking chances; (2) I enjoy taking risks in most aspects of my life; (3) Taking risks is an important part of my life; (4) I commonly make risky decisions; and (5) I am attracted, rather than scared, by risk.

Employee Creative Performance: Employee creative performance has been measured by adopting the four-item measures from Wang and Netemeyer (2004), which best fit the academic context of this study. Those four items are as following: (1) I come up with new ideas for satisfying customer needs. (2) I Generate and evaluate multiple alternatives for novel customer problems. (3) I have fresh perspectives on old problems. (4) I generate creative ideas for performing job.

Reliability and Validity

The validity and reliability of the scales employed in this study have been evaluated using CFA (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first stage, the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs were assessed. The average variance extraction method was used to determine the convergent validity, and all results fall under the threshold, i.e., > 0.50 limit (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, the squared correlations between various constructs and the variance recovered have been used to demonstrate discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). The discriminant validity of all the constructs is demonstrated by the average extracted variance being higher than the squared correlation (Table 1). The constructs' reliability has been examined using composite reliability (Table 1). According to O'Leary-Kelly and Vokurka (1998), all of the scales employed in this study have CR values greater than 0.70, indicating their

high level of reliability. The build models were put to the test using SEM in the second phase. According to Hair et al. (2010), the threshold value for RMSEA and RMR should be less than 0.80 and 0.50, and for GFI, CFI and AGFI it should be larger than 0.90. Additionally, in the current investigation, all second-order models' fit indices fall within the predetermined range (Table 1).

Table 1: Model Fit Indices, Reliability, Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Construct	Model Fit Indices	CR	AVE	IA	RP	ECP
Individual Ambidexterity (IA)	CMIN/df = 2.696, GFI=0.945, AGFI=0.91, CFI=0.970, RMR=0.019 and RMSEA= 0.070	0.711	0.554	**.744**		
Risk Propensity (RP)	CMIN/df =2.279, GFI = 0.992, AGFI =0.960, CFI = 0.997, RMR= 0.018 and RMSEA = 0.061	0.846	0.570	.538	.754	
Employee Creative Performance (ECP)	CMIN/df= 2.922, GFI=0.967, AGFI=0.930, NFI=0.971, CFI=0.981, RMR= 0.011 and RMSEA= 0.074	0. 701	0.540	.417	.432	.734

RESULTS

Hypotheses Testing

The data (N = 186) have been analysed using structural equation modelling (with maximum likelihood) with AMOS software (version 16). It is regarded as one of the crucial methods for verifying proposed relationships (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). According to Hair et al. (2010), it describes the correlation between one or more independent variables and one or more dependent variables. Further, PROCESS macros method has also been used to assess the mediation.

Impact of Individual Ambidexterity on Employee Creative Performance

The impact of individual ambidexterity on employees' creative performance have been analysed and the results revealed that individual ambidexterity positively affects employees' creative performance (SRW=0.61, p<0.001), which provides support for first hypotheses. Further, the dimension-wise impact of individual ambidexterity, i.e., explorative and exploitative activities on employee creative performance have been analysed and results revealed that both explorative (SRW=0.32, p<0.001) and exploitative activities (SRW= 0.35, p< 0.001) positively affect employees' creative performance.

Mediating Effect of Risk Propensity between the Individual Ambidexterity on Employee Performance Relationship

In the present study, Risk Propensity has been analysed as a mediator between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance relationship (Fig. 2). In order to check the mediation effect Hayes's procedure (2013) has been followed as it addresses mediation directly (Bahli & Rivard, 2013). According to Hayes (2013), to check the mediation effect, indirect effect ought to be significant and the bias corrected confidence should not contain zero value. Therefore, with the help of structural equation modelling in AMOS we estimated indirect effect with 2000 bootstrap at 95% bias corrected confidence interval. The results revealed significant effect of individual ambidexterity on risk propensity (SRW=0.245, p<0.001) and individual ambidexterity significantly affect employee creative performance (SRW= 0.56, p<0.001). The indirect effect after bootstrapping is significant (SRW= 0.035, p< 0.05) (table).

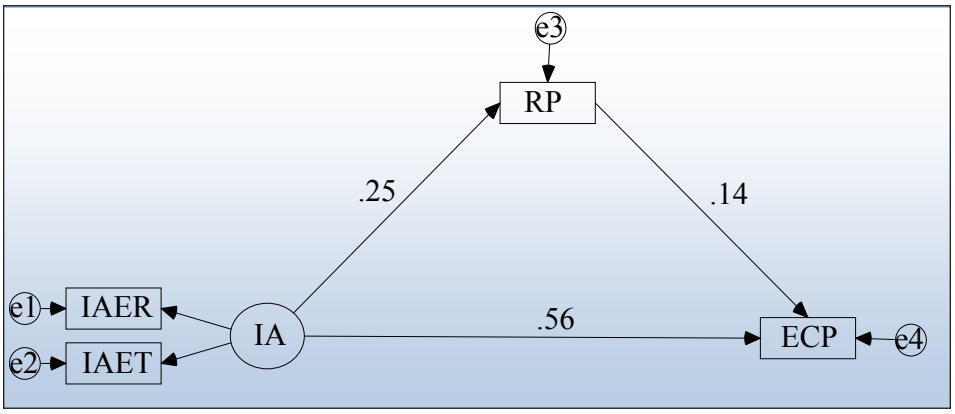

Fig. 2: Mediating Role of Risk Propensity between Individual Ambidexterity and Employee Creative Performance

Table 2: Mediating Role of Risk Propensity between Individual Ambidexterity and Employee Creative Performance

Relationship	Direct Effect Without Mediator	Direct Effect With Mediator	Main Effect of Independent Variable on Mediator (A)	Main Effect of Mediator on Dependent Variable (B)	Indirect Effect (a*b)	LL 95% - UL 95%
IA→RP→ECP	0.60***	0.563***	0.245***	0.143**	0.035**	.500 .684

Further, PROCESS macro (model 4) with bootstrapping (5000 bootstraps at 95% confidence interval) has been also used to analyse the mediating role of risk propensity between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance. However, to check the mediation effect, indirect effect have to be significant and the bias corrected confidence should not contain zero value (Hayes, 2013), Therefore, The results revealed significant effect of individual ambidexterity on employee creative performance as the zero value does not fall between its upper bound and lower bound (Table 3). So, on the basis of results we can conclude that risk propensity partially mediates the relationship between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance.

Table 3: Mediating Role of Risk Propensity between Individual Ambidexterity and Employee Creative Performance through Hayes Process Macros Technique

Total effect of individual ambidexterity on employee creative performance:					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.588	.051	11.477	.000	.487	.688
Direct effect of individual ambidexterity on employee creative performance:					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.545	.051	10.601	.000	.444	.646
Indirect effect of individual ambidexterity on employee creative performance:					
		Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Risk propensity		.035	.013	.019	.070

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature by identifying the black box using risk propensity to understand the impact of individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance in banking sector. The objective of this study aimed to investigate the relationship between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance as well as underlying psychological process, i.e., risk propensity underpinning this relationship. This study examined the direct relationship between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance and the mediation of risk propensity. The result of data analysis supported the proposed theoretical model. First, the study found that individual ambidexterity is directly associated with employee creative performance. The study's results confirm the existing literature on ambidexterity, which suggests that ambidextrous people tend to demonstrate greater creativity (Caniels & Veld, 2019), as creativity requires both exploratory and exploitative behaviour (March, 1991; Rosing et al., 2011). This finding provides further support to the notion that ambidexterity can be an advantageous trait in terms of creative problem-solving. According to the study's findings, it is advantageous for innovative work behaviour when people are equally skilled at engaging in exploratory and exploitation activities. Employee specialisation in exploratory or exploitative behaviour is also favourably correlated with creativity. Second, we found that risk tendency mediates the relationship between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance. This finding indicates that the relationship between individual ambidexterity and employee creative performance involves a psychological process in which the tendency of taking risk plays an important transmitting role. This finding supports the idea that individual with high risk propensity tend to engage more in innovative activities (Kraiczy et al., 2015). This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, there is a lack of empirical examination of employee consequences of ambidextrous behaviour. This study provides empirical evidence that individual ambidexterity is a significant predictor of creative performance.

Practical Implications

This study has some significant practical implications:

- The findings of this study suggest that specialising in either exploitation or exploration is also advantageous

for creative performance. Therefore, it might be a good approach for businesses to look into the personal preferences of their employees.

- Managers can carefully assign jobs and build teams that take use of employees' ambidextrous ability. Organisations can achieve synergies that enhance creative performance while effectively managing associated risks by combining individuals with varying levels of risk propensity within teams.
- To recognise and reward employees that exhibit ambidexterity at work, performance assessment systems can include metrics that analyse both inquisitive and exploitative behaviours. This can help us understand what motivates performance and develop effective solutions.
- Leaders can create a supportive climate that supports experimenting and learning from failures, thereby increasing employees' willingness to take risks. Cultivating a culture that encourages both exploration and exploitation can help organisations adapt to changing surroundings and maintain their competitive advantage over time. Organisations that encourage cross-functional collaboration can facilitate information sharing and idea generation across many parts of the organisation. Organisations can utilise the complementary capabilities of ambidextrous persons by bringing together individuals with varied viewpoints and skill sets, promoting organisational creativity and innovation.

Implications for Banking Sector

- Ambidextrous employees in the banking sector can help to produce novel banking solutions that suit changing consumer expectations by balancing exploration (e.g., building new digital banking solutions) and exploitation (e.g., optimising existing customer care operations).
- While innovation is important, banks must manage risks effectively. Understanding how risk propensity affects the relationship between ambidexterity and creative performance might assist banks in striking the appropriate balance between innovation and risk reduction.
- By adding ambidextrous skill development into their training and development programmes, banks can build a workforce that fosters innovation while preserving operational efficiency and compliance standards.
- Ambidextrous employees can help improve the customer experience by discovering areas for innovation across several touch points. Banks can enable their workers to experiment with new ideas and processes, resulting in more personalised and efficient banking experiences for clients.
- In a continually changing banking environment, organisational agility is critical. Ambidextrous personnel who can navigate uncertainty and adapt to change can help banks stay ahead of the competition.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE AVENUES

Future research could expand several aspects of our work. First, Future research should replicate our study based on different samples in the different sectors like hospitality and healthcare sector to generalise the results. Second, the data is self-assessed. Future study can future research could examine this relationship by collecting the data from employees' respective supervisor. Third, this study is cross sectional in nature. In conclusion, although we acknowledge both the limitations of our study and the need for future research, we consider our study a valuable contribution to the literature on ambidexterity and the determinants of employee creative performance that has valuable implications for both future research and practitioners.

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