

Ambidextrous Leadership in the Context of Modern Organizations: A Systematic Review of Its Impact on Innovation and Performance

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 18 Dec 2024 Revised: 20 Feb 2025 Accepted: 27 Feb 2025	<p>This research aims to systematically examine the role of ambidextrous leadership in improving innovation and organizational performance. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol, a total of 11 selected articles from the Scopus database published between 2020 and 2024 were analyzed in depth. The results of the study show that ambidextrous leadership, which combines exploration and exploitative behaviors, has a significant positive impact on various dimensions of organizational performance, such as project performance, innovative work behavior, and organizational resilience in the face of change. In addition, the influence of ambidextrous leadership is mediated by variables such as work engagement, business model innovation, and job happiness; and moderated by intellectual capital, environmental dynamics, and entrepreneurial orientation. These findings confirm that ambidextrous leadership is a relevant adaptive leadership approach to be applied in various sectors. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed to support leadership capacity development in today's organizations.</p> <p>Keywords: ambidextrous leadership, innovative work behavior, organizational innovation, systematic literature review, PRISMA, organizational performance</p>

INTRODUCTION

In line with the development of this approach, Rosing et al. (2011) developed an ambidextrous leadership theory for innovation, which emphasizes the importance of a combination of open and closing behaviors to respond to the changing needs of the innovation process. Andriopoulos & Lewis, (2009) added that the success of an organization in managing exploration and exploitation depends on the ability to manage strategic paradoxes simultaneously.

In an era of organizational complexity and accelerating change, a leader's ability to deal with the conflicting demands of innovation and efficiency is very important. In this context, ambidextrous leadership emerges as a promising approach, as it allows leaders to balance exploratory and exploitative behaviors through the integration of opening and *closing* leadership styles (Zacher & Rosing, 2015; Klonek et al., 2023). This approach is rooted in the theory of ambidexterity, which emphasizes the importance of a balance between the development of new ideas and the optimization of existing processes to maintain the sustainability of organizational performance.

Ambidextrous leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to flexibly adopt transformational behaviors that encourage creativity and transactional behavior that guarantee stability and work structure. This duality allows organizations to stimulate innovative work behaviors while maintaining performance standards, and has been widely applied in various sectors such as public services,

telecommunications, higher education, and entrepreneurship (Zain et al., 2025; Misbahuddin et al., 2025; Wahab et al., 2024). For example, research conducted at an Indonesian immigration office showed that ambidextrous leadership significantly affects innovative work behaviors and employee performance (Zain et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in the telecommunications industry, ambidextrous leadership has been proven to be able to improve project performance through the development of structured leadership training programs (Misbahuddin et al., 2025).

Various empirical studies show that the influence of ambidextrous leadership is not only direct but also mediated and moderated by various organizational factors. Among them are business model innovation capacity (Indrianti et al., 2024), intellectual capital (Effendi et al., 2024a), and organizational ambidexterity (Katou et al., 2023). In addition, workplace variables such as job happiness (Kebede et al., 2024) and innovation climate (Wahab et al., 2024) also reinforce the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership in supporting employee performance and innovative behavior.

Although the number of studies in this field continues to increase, the existing literature is still scattered and fragmented, with diverse contexts, variables, and methodological approaches that make it difficult to generalize. Therefore, a comprehensive synthesis is needed that can integrate empirical findings from various organizational contexts to better understand the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership. In response to this need, this study conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) using the PRISMA protocol to explore how ambidextrous leadership affects innovation, organizational performance, and employee work behavior. By synthesizing empirical evidence from recent Scopus-indexed articles, this study aims to identify key themes, mediation and moderation mechanisms, and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership styles, so that they can contribute both theoretically and practically.

Research by Turner et al. (2013) specifically classifies the mechanisms of ambidexterity management into temporal, structural, and contextual forms, and emphasizes the importance of intellectual capital integration. On the other hand, Mom et al. (2015) highlight that managers' work experience, especially organizational tenure, influences the level of ambidexterity, which is reinforced by work contexts such as uncertainty and high interdependence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Ambidextrous Leadership

Ambidextrous leadership is a leadership concept that emphasizes a leader's ability to balance two different but complementary leadership orientations: open *leadership behavior* that encourages exploration and creativity, and *closing leadership behavior* that emphasizes control, efficiency, and stability (Zacher et al., 2016). This approach allows leaders to accommodate the organization's short-term and long-term needs simultaneously. In practice, ambidextrous leadership is largely associated with the success of organizations in dealing with complex environmental dynamics and demanding rapid change, such as the technology and public services sectors (Klonek et al., 2023; Wahab et al., 2024).

This concept developed from the theory of ambidexterity in organizations which explains the importance of an organization's ability to exploit and explore simultaneously to create a competitive advantage. In the context of leadership, this requires leaders to have behavioral flexibility in creating conditions conducive to innovation and at the same time ensuring efficient operational processes.

Ambidextrous Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior

Several studies show that ambidextrous leadership has a positive influence on employees' innovative work behavior, both directly and indirectly. A study by (Zain et al., 2025) in the context of Indonesian immigration offices shows that ambidextrous leadership behavior is able to promote innovative work behaviors which ultimately contribute to improved employee performance. This research highlights the important role of leaders' abilities in integrating open and closed leadership styles to encourage creativity and efficient task completion.

In addition, research in the higher education sector also confirms that ambidextrous leadership has a strong relationship with the innovative performance of academic staff through the mediation of innovative work behaviors (Wahab et al., 2024). This shows that this leadership style is not only relevant in the business sector, but also in the academic and public sectors.

The Role of Mediation and Moderation in the Effectiveness of Ambidextrous Leadership

Several studies emphasize that the influence of ambidextrous leadership on organizational outcomes is often mediated by factors such as job satisfaction (Kebede et al., 2024) business model innovation capacity (Indrianti et al., 2024) and organizational ambidexterity (Katou et al., 2023). In the context of microfinance, (Effendi et al., 2024b) found that competitive advantage mediates the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and financial performance, with intellectual capital acting as a moderator. This shows that the role of ambidextrous leadership does not stand alone but interacts in a complex way with other organizational capabilities.

Similar findings are also found in the technology sector, where ambidextrous leadership influences product innovation through the mediation of organizational agility and is moderated by entrepreneurial orientation (Zhang & Suntrayuth, 2024). Overall, the role of these mediation and moderation variables suggests that ambidextrous leadership works through layered pathways in generating significant impacts on organizational outcomes.

The Context of Ambidextrous Leadership Implementation

Ambidextrous leadership has been widely applied in various sector and industry contexts. For example, in the telecommunications industry in Indonesia, ambidextrous leadership has been proven to improve project performance through leadership development strategies and change management programs (Misbahuddin et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in the context of startup organizations, (Indrianti et al., 2024) shows that ambidextrous leadership contributes to entrepreneurial resilience through increasing the capacity of business model innovation. In the microfinance sector, (Effendi et al., 2024b) concluded that this leadership style is an important factor in creating competitive advantage and improving the financial performance of organizations.

These results show that ambidextrous leadership is universal and can be applied in different types of organizations. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on the context of the external environment, organizational structure, and the readiness of human resources within it.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach by adopting the 2020 version of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. The goal of this approach is to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant previous research results in a systematic and transparent manner, especially related to the influence of ambidextrous leadership on innovation and organizational performance.

The main data source comes from the **Scopus** database due to its high reputation in presenting global scientific literature. Keywords used in the search included: "*ambidextrous leadership*", "*dual leadership style*", "*exploratory and exploitative leadership*", combined with contextual terms such as "*innovation*", "*employee performance*", and "*organizational outcomes*". The search filter is limited to English-language articles, "article" or "review" document types, and the publication period between 2020 and 2024.

The initial search results yielded 898 articles. After the process of removing duplication and filtering based on abstract and topic relevance, there are 237 articles left that have entered the screening stage. Of these, a *full-text review* was carried out on 38 articles that met the inclusion criteria, such as focusing on ambidextrous leadership and the use of explicit quantitative or qualitative approaches. The final stage of selection resulted in 11 main articles that directly addressed the relationship between

ambidextrous leadership and various organizational variables, and these articles formed the basis for the literature synthesis in this study.

A visualization of the article selection process is shown in the PRISMA diagram that depicts the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion flows sequentially and systematically.

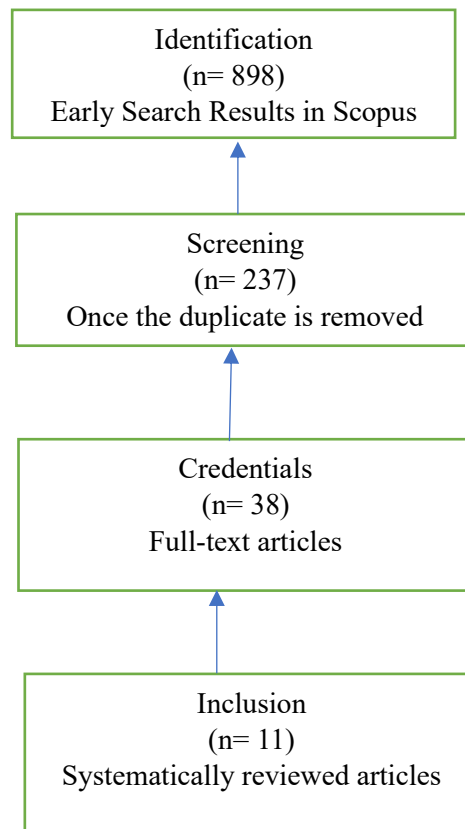


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

The results of this systematic review show that ambidextrous leadership has become a rapidly growing topic in the management and organizational behavior literature in the last five years. Out of a total of 898 articles identified, a rigorous selection process based on the PRISMA protocol resulted in 11 key articles that were relevant and met the inclusion criteria.

In general, the results of the literature synthesis show that ambidextrous leadership has a consistent positive impact on various organizational and individual performance indicators, especially in terms of innovation, adaptability, and project performance. For example, in the context of the telecommunications industry in Indonesia, Misbahuddin et al., (2025) show that ambidextrous leadership-based leadership development programs are able to significantly improve project performance. Meanwhile, a study by Zain et al. (2025) in the public sector confirms that ambidextrous leadership directly influences the innovative work behavior and performance of immigration office employees.

Another study conducted by Indrianti et al. (2024) highlights the mediating role of business model innovation capacity in strengthening the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and entrepreneurial resilience in the startup community. In the microfinance sector, two studies from Effendi et al. (2024a; 2024b) successively affirming the importance of intellectual capital and

environmental dynamics as a moderator, as well as the role of business models as mediators between ambidextrous leadership and financial performance.

Furthermore, job happiness and innovative work behaviors were found to be important mediation mechanisms that bridge the influence of ambidextrous leadership on academic staff innovation in the higher education sector, as shown by Kebede et al. (2024) and Wahab et al. (2024). Theoretical contributions also come from experimental research conducted by Klonek et al. (2023), which offer a revalidation of ambidextrous leadership theory and suggest that its effects may be more contextual and partial than previously thought.

These results show that the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership is strongly influenced by the context of its implementation, as well as by the mediation and moderation variables that strengthen or weaken its impact. These findings strengthen the position of ambidextrous leadership as one of the adaptive, strategic, and relevant leadership approaches in driving organizational success in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research by Zimmermann et al. (2015) adds an important dimension of how ambidexterity can be initiated through a bottom-up approach, specifically through the charter definition process by frontline managers. These findings enrich our understanding of the internal dynamics of organizations that contribute to the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership.

In addition, a study by Wang & Libaers, (2016) revealed that unique external knowledge (nonmimetic knowledge) can improve the innovation performance of companies, especially in the context of developing countries and when supported by mature product strategies and adaptation to regulatory uncertainty. These findings provide additional justification for the importance of ambidextrous leadership in a dynamic and stressful environment.

Key Findings from Literature Reviewed

The results of the literature review show that ambidextrous leadership consistently contributes to improving various dimensions of organizational and individual performance. In the context of the telecommunications industry, Misbahuddin et al. (2025) highlight the importance of developing ambidextrous leadership competencies in improving project performance. The study shows that the combination of opening and closing behaviors shared by project managers allows organizations to respond to changes more flexibly without sacrificing the effectiveness of project implementation. The Fuzzy AHP-based approach used also helps prioritize leadership development strategies, particularly through leadership training and change management.

In the public sector, Zain et al., (2025) found that ambidextrous leadership has a positive effect on *innovative work behavior* (IWB) and employee performance at immigration offices. Through the PLS-SEM approach, this study proves that a leadership style that can manage exploration and exploitation simultaneously can encourage creativity while maintaining public service performance. These findings reinforce the evidence that ambidextrous leadership is not only relevant in the business sector, but also in bureaucratic and regulatory work environments.

In the context of entrepreneurship and startups, ambidextrous leadership has been found to play an important role in creating **entrepreneurial resilience**. A study by Indrianti et al. (2024) shows that the innovation capacity of business models is the main mediator between ambidextrous leadership and entrepreneurial resilience. Leaders who can combine exploratory creativity with exploitative control create strategic space for organizations to adapt to market changes, while maintaining a resilient and competitive business model.

Mediation and Moderation in Ambidextrous Leadership Relationships

Several studies reviewed also confirm the importance of mediation and moderation variables in explaining how ambidextrous leadership affects organizational outcomes. Effendi et al. (2024a)

examine the role of competitive advantage as a mediator and intellectual capital as a moderator in the microfinance sector. Their findings suggest that the competitive advantage built through an ambidextrous leadership style will be stronger when the organization has high intellectual capital.

In a follow-up study, Effendi et al. (2024b) explored the role of business models and environmental dynamics as mediators and moderators in the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and financial performance. This research broadens the understanding of the complexity of external contexts that can strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership styles.

The concept of mediation is also strengthened by the study of Kebede et al. (2024) who found that workplace happiness is an important bridge between ambidextrous leadership and innovative behavior of academic staff at universities. Meanwhile, Wahab et al. (2024) show that *innovative work behavior* (IWB) plays a mediating role in improving the innovative performance of academic staff, confirming that flexible leadership is essential in the context of higher education that is full of demands for curriculum adaptation and digitalization of learning.

Implementation Context and Sectoral Dynamics

The effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership seems to depend heavily on the sectoral context and the approach to its implementation. Zhang & Suntrayuth. (2024) In their study on AI technology development companies, it shows that ambidextrous leadership enhances product innovation through increased organizational agility, with entrepreneurial orientation as a moderator that strengthens the relationship. This suggests that an entrepreneurial-oriented organization will be better able to leverage leadership flexibility to support sustainable innovation.

The study of Nasution et al. (2024) in the context of marketing personnel in the pharmaceutical sector shows that *work engagement* is a mediator in the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and the performance of medical personnel. These findings highlight the importance of employee emotional engagement as a psychological mechanism that links leadership style to individual performance outcomes.

Meanwhile, Katou et al., (2023) combine sustainability and circular economy approaches in exploring how ambidextrous leadership can improve *sustainability performance*. Through sequential mediation pathways of organizational ambidexterity and circular economy fields of action, this study provides important insights into the contribution of ambidextrous leadership to sustainable development in the public and private sectors.

Finally, an experimental study by Klonek et al. (2023) provides a revalidation of the ambidextrous leadership theory through the 2SLS approach. Although their findings provide only partial support for the ambidexterity hypothesis, this study remains important because it offers a rigorous methodological approach and recommends further development of such theoretical models in experimental and temporal contexts.

No	Author (Year)	Research Context	Method	Key Findings
1	Misbahuddin et al. (2025)	Indonesian telecommunications industry	Fuzzy AHP	Development of ambidextrous leadership improves project performance
2	Zain et al. (2025)	Indonesian Immigration Office	PLS-SEM	Ambidextrous leadership has a significant effect on IWB and performance
3	Indrianti et al. (2024)	Indonesian startup community	PLS-SEM	Ambidextrous leadership increases resilience through business model innovation

4	Effendi et al. (2024a)	Indonesian microfinance institutions	Moderated Mediation	Ambidextrous leadership plays a role in competitive advantage and financial performance
5	Effendi et al. (2024b)	Indonesian microfinance institutions	ModMed (Process 4.o)	Business model mediates the relationship between AL and financial performance
6	Kebede et al. (2024)	University in Ethiopia	SEM	Workplace happiness mediates the relationship between AL and staff innovation
7	Wahab et al. (2024)	State Universitas in Malaysia	Regresi dan Mediasi	IWB mediates the relationship between AL and academic innovative performance
8	Zhang & Suntrayuth (2024)	International AI industry	PLS-SEM	AL enhances product innovation through agile organizations
9	Nasution et al. (2024)	Medical Representative in Indonesia	PLS-SEM	Work engagement mediates the relationship between AL and employee performance
10	Katou et al. (2023)	Public and private sector organizations in Greece	Structural Equation Modeling	Ambidextrous leadership and circular economy improve sustainability performance
11	Klonek et al. (2023)	Eksperimen laboratorium di Eropa	Experiment (2SLS)	Partial AL effect; supports the revision of the AL theory in an experimental context

Tabel 1 Tabel Sintesis Artikel Ambidextrous Leadership

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the validity of the ambidexterity theory in the context of leadership. Ambidextrous leadership has proven to be able to bridge the organization's need to innovate while maintaining stability. The existence of mediation channels such as business model innovation, employee engagement, and innovative behavior, as well as the role of moderation from external factors such as environmental dynamism and organizational trust, confirm that this leadership approach works in a complex and contextual manner.

From a practical point of view, this study has important implications for human resource development, especially in the design of leadership training programs that are oriented towards increasing the flexibility of leaders' behavior. Organizations are also advised to strengthen mediative and moderating factors such as intellectual capital, innovative climate, and adaptive work structures so that ambidextrous leadership can be optimally optimized.

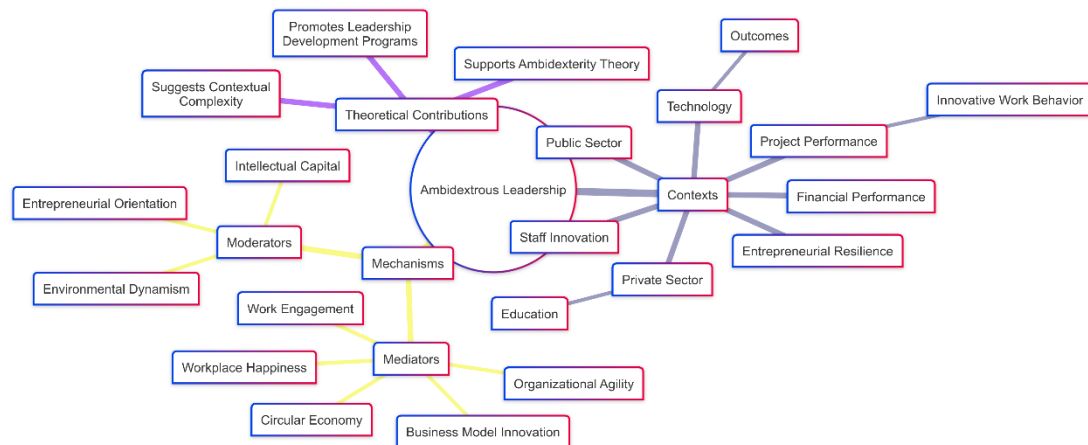


Figure 2: Mind mapping Study of Ambidextrous Leadership

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a systematic review of eleven selected articles published in the period 2020 to 2024, it can be concluded that ambidextrous leadership is an effective leadership approach in facing modern organizational challenges. This leadership style combines exploration and exploitation capabilities in a balanced manner through flexible opening and closing behaviors. The application of ambidextrous leadership has been proven to be able to improve project performance, innovative work behaviors, and organizational adaptability in various sectors such as telecommunications, public services, higher education, and technology-based industries.

Findings from the literature also show that the influence of ambidextrous leadership on organizational outcomes is not direct but rather mediated by various variables such as business model innovation capacity, work engagement, job happiness, and innovative work behavior. In addition, the effectiveness of this leadership is also strengthened by moderation factors such as intellectual capital, environmental dynamics, and entrepreneurial orientation. The sectoral context plays an important role in determining the success rate of the implementation of this leadership style, which indicates that the design of the leadership strategy needs to be tailored to the characteristics of the industry and the available resources.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to strengthening and expanding the theory of ambidexterity in leadership studies, especially in explaining the mechanisms of mediation and moderation that are relevant in the context of contemporary organizations. In practice, these findings encourage the importance of developing leadership training programs that can shape the flexibility of leaders' behavior in order to respond to dynamic environmental challenges. Organizations are advised to strengthen the structural and cultural foundations that support ambidextrous leadership as a strategy to improve innovation and performance in a sustainable manner.

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