



# Ambidextrous Leadership in Manufacture Industry in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective** – Leadership has evolved (Cogliser & Brigham 2004) and has become more dynamic than ever before (McClellan et. al. 2019). Prior research has shown that ambidexterity generates persistent and conflicting demands within an organization (Koryak et. al. 2018), while others have been successful (Diaz-Fernandez, Pasamar-Reyes & Valle-Cabrera, 2017). This paper highlights the strengths and challenges of two popular leadership styles in Indonesia, namely: transactional leadership and transformational leadership using two concepts of ambidexterity, exploitation and exploration. Ambidexterity is believed to be the answer to recent market shifts and can also help organisations to solve future problems. However, there is not a clear theory to determine when, where, and how to use ambidexterity.

**Methodology/Technique** – This study uses a systematic literature review (Okoli et. al., 2014, Okoli & John, 2015), 5 in-depth interviews, a case study and reports from Ministry of Commerce to provide a solid theory of ambidexterity. The writer concludes that having ambidextrous skills in leadership is mandatory for the manufacturing industry and will guarantee future success (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2012).

**Findings** – There are some barriers in implementing ambidextrous capabilities in leadership, namely cognitive conflicts, inertia, and confusion pressure on when and how to balance both transactional leadership and transformational leadership. The writer suggests that high transactional leadership and high transformational leadership will increase firm performance.

**Novelty** – This paper has several limitations such as the unavailability of data on ambidextrous leadership in Indonesia, the limited scope as this research is conducted in manufacturing industries which might have different results in other industries, and the relatively short period of data collection. Future studies should address these limitations.

**Type of Paper:** Review

**Keywords:** Ambidextrous Leadership; Ambidextrous Organisations; Transformational; Transactional; Leadership Skills.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Princes, E. (2019). Ambidextrous Leadership in Manufacture Industry in Indonesia, *J. Mgt. Mkt. Review*, 4(3) 218 – 227 [https://doi.org/10.35609/jmmr.2019.4.3\(7\)](https://doi.org/10.35609/jmmr.2019.4.3(7))

**JEL Classification:** M12, M19, O15.

## 1. Introduction

Leaders need the ability to move simultaneously between exploration and exploitation (Solís-Molina, Hernández-Espallardo & Rodríguez-Orejuela, 2018) in the dynamic environment (McClellan et. al., 2019) to have a higher positive impact on performance (Short, Moss & Lumpkin 2009).

\* Paper Info: Revised: June 19, 2019

Accepted: September 22, 2019

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So far, the relationship between these have been positive, though some limitations are reported (Fourne, Sebastian, Jansen, Justin, Rosenbusch, 2016). Previous studies on ambidexterity are mostly in the organizational context (Fourne, Sebastian, Jansen, Justin, Rosenbusch, 2016, Uotila, 2012, Kim, Bansal & Haugh, 2019), radical innovation (Blank & Naveh 2013), organizational learning (Levitt, Barbara, 2011), research and development (Swift, 2016), management systems (Burton, O'Reilly & Bidwell 2012) , and accountability (Verwaeren, Buyens & Baeten 2016) with unfortunately very limited studies of ambidexterity on leadership. The existing literature on ambidextrous leadership categorizes ambidextrous leadership into two categories: opening (exploration) and closing (exploitation) (Zacher & Wilden, 2014; Alghamdi, 2018), which we herein after refer to as tranformational leadership and transactional leadership in Indonesia. Leaders as the decision makers and are the keys to gaining competitive advantages (Solís-Molina, Hernández-Espallardo & Rodríguez-Orejuela, 2018), superior firm performance (Arzubiaga et. al., 2018) and critical thinkers (Awan, Kraslawski & Huiskonen, 2018).

Despite all of these positive facts, being ambidextrous has also created lots of problems for a stable and dynamic environment described as unnecessary risk-taking, uncertain and unpredictable outcomes (Blank & Naveh, 2013), balancing pressure and tensions (Fourne, Sebastian, Jansen, Justin, Rosenbusch, 2016), scarcity of resources (March, 1991), shifting process (Swift, 2016), cognitive issues (Zacher & Wilden, 2014), and competency and failure traps (Kim, 2013).

It is not easy to be ambidextrous, hence a leader must adopt this to gain competitive advantages by having dynamic competitive capabilities (Short, Moss & Lumpkin 2009). The examples of many companies' failures have proven that companies cannot survive in the dynamic environment unless they have the ambidextrous capabilities. This paper will discuss the relationship between transactional leadership and transformational leadership to organisation performance using Systematic Literature Review and Qualitative Study with 5 top managers from 5 manufacturing industries in different sizes and products.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Ambidextrous Models and Capabilities**

With the many studies on structured and ambidextrous organisations (Briggs et. al. 2009), there is a challenge to manage both kinds of innovation ambidextrously, by keeping a close link between the two of them rather than completely separating them (Kleinknecht et. al., 2009). The establishment of specific units in exploration of radical innovation and exploitation of established products must be separated based on the ambidextrous model (Mahmoud-jouini et. al., 2007) and must be integrated (Habtay & Holmén, 2014) to top menagement (Tushman & O'Reilly 2012) simultaneously by showing alignment and adaptability. Investors will follow such ambidextrous decision-making styles (Misra, Srivastava & Banwet, 2019) and managers must understand the demand of ambidextrous innovation strategies (Bedford, Bisbe & Sweeney, 2019).

In a previous study, Uotila (2012) examines the effects of environmental turbulence and complexity on ambidexterity and found that enviromental turbulence has a curvilinear effect, with the greatest exploitation at moderate turbulence, and a positive effect of environmental complexity. This research contributes to the organizational adaptation literature by demonstrating the need for proper balance between exploration and exploitation on global versus local adaptability.

Blank and Naveh (2013) posit that when learning behaviour is high, exploration and exploitation will compliment each other, but when learning behaviour is low, exploration and exploitation will compete with each other, whereas the promotion focus will have no effect on the relationship between exploration and exploitation.

Furthermore, Fourne, Sebastian, Jansen, Justin and Rosenbusch (2016) compared and reconciliated the interaction between exploration and exploitation using a meta-analysis approach and obtained three results. First, the inertia problem that comes with organisation size can be reduced through appropriate

environmental conditions. Second, the interfirm mode can solve conflicts over daily stress routines in multiple subsystems. Third, in customer-oriented businesses, exploitation must be stronger than exploration. They conclude that the interfirm mode enables stronger ambidexterity when technology usage is high, whereas the size of the organisation enables stronger ambidexterity when technology usage is low.

Swift (2016) proposes that ambidexterity based on Research and Development (R&D) is necessary to gain sustainable competitive advantages and significant changes in R&D are positively related to organizational success and failure.

Another research conducted in South Korea by (Kim, 2013) found that the competency trap was caused by overexploitative innovations and the failure trap was a consequence of overexploratory innovations. Therefore, exploration and exploitation need to balance one another for organizational longevity. The competency trap will hamper the company in discovering new opportunities and responding to dynamic environments. Meanwhile, the failure trap will lead the company to uncertainty and endless searches of new ideas.

## 2.2 Ambidextrous Leadership

Industrial product service systems require leadership behaviors to propel new business models (Voigt, Mänz, & Wilkens, 2014), deal with uncertainties and ambiguity, and respond to unpredictable phenomena (Ballesteros & Kunreuther 2018). Change will be successful if the leadership provides strong, informed and consistent support (Briggs et. al., 2009). Thus, leaders must support economic growth by providing leadership abilities and creating the new industry formation (Frederick, Howard and Kuratko, 2010). To implement this, leadership has moved away from a leader-centric perspective to theories to better understand the leadership process (Kark & Van Dijk 2019). There are two types of leadership theories commonly used in Indonesia, namely transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership requires high supervision of subordinates and restriction of any personal involvement, whereas transformational leadership requires less supervision and closer relationships between the leaders and the subordinates (Kassotaki, 2017; Kassotaki, 2019)

Zacher and Wilden (2014) conducted three sets of tests and found that employee traits have a positive effect on daily innovative performance between the person level, whilst intellectual stimulation from leaders and transformational behavior positively predicts daily innovative performance. They conclude that daily innovative performance will be highest when both transactional and transformational behaviors are high. These results are in line with the research by Alghamdi (2018), conducted in Saudi Arabia.

## 3. Research Methodology

Prior research has shown that the ambidextrous capabilities of managing both exploitation and exploration are vital to leaders. (Berggren, 2019). With the limited research on ambidextrous leadership, particularly in Indonesia, the writer must seek alternatives to be able to understand the integration process and methods to deal with barriers. Hence, with the existence of two popular leadership styles in Indonesia, namely transactional leadership (exploitation) and transformational leadership (exploration), the writer analyses the use of these two leadership styles both separately and integratively to guarantee firm success, focusing on the manufacturing industry.

### 3.1 Data Collection and Samples

There are three steps of data collection explored in this paper:

1. Literature Review of Journals and Books:

1.1. From 134 scopus and non – scopus journals mentioning ambidextrous character, only 60 were used and from 181 journals mentioning leaderships only 6 mentioning ambidextrous leaderships were used, where all the journals with less common similarities were not used.

1.2. Number of Previous Research Paper over time

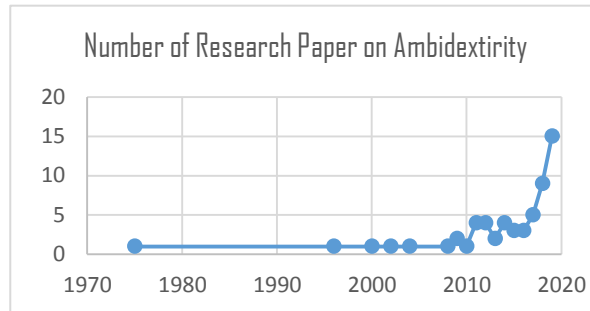


Figure 1. Number of Research Paper on Ambidexterity over time

1.1. A brief overview of relevant literature on the relationship among exploitation, exploration, ambidexterity, product, leadership and performance from 2014 – 2019.

Table 1. Key Literature Findings on the Strengths and Weaknesses of Ambidexterity

Year	Type	Results and Conclusions
2014	Journal	Ambidexterity produces innovation benefits (Jiang and Kortmann 2014)
2014	Journal	An ambidextrous leader’s role is to motivate employees, deal and solve current and future problems. (Sübe and Wilkens 2014)
2014	Journal	Combining Transparent goal orientation, sensemaking, and strategic orientation to keep on the track and to balance between exploration and exploitation. (Voigt, Mänz, and Wilkens 2014)
2014	Journal	Managers face pressures daily on how and when to be ambidextrous (Bonesso, Gerli, and Scapolan 2014).
2015	Journal	Ambidexterity mediates the group performance (Luo et al. 2015)
2017	Journal	Exploitation is related to production and exploration is related to marketing (Diaz-Fernandez, Pasamar-Reyes, and Valle-Cabrera 2017).
2018	Journal	Ambidexterity influences the performance at high absorptive capacity, while specialization at low absorptive capacity (Solís-Molina, Hernández-Espallardo, and Rodríguez-Orejuela 2018).
2018	Journal	An ambidextrous organisation is related to structured new product development through exploration at early life cycle stages of the new product development process continued with exploitation of cost efficiency and product improvement (Fain, Wagner, and Kay 2018).
2018	Journal	The transactional leadership must be taken into account during the design and implement of contract governance mechanism for social sustainability (Awan, Kraslawski, and Huiskonen 2018)
2019	Journal	Cognitive conflict will arise in the process in achieving ambidexterity (Bedford, Bisbe, and Sweeney 2019).
2019	Journal	Ambidextrous practices are needed at the sequence level by management learning and capability development (Berggren 2019).

### Ministry of Commerce Data:

From the trisemester reports of Ministry of Commerce taken from the official website, Appendix C, the researcher identifies the main problems as coordination, supervision, communication among leaders of industry, and planning (Lembaga, Kabupaten, & Skpd, 2016; Lembaga et. al., 2016; Perindustrian, 2017). This result demonstrates the need for leadership to move forward to ambidextrous leadership.

### Qualitative Method:

Table 2. Qualitative Findings on Ambidextrous Leadership

How Ambidextrous Leadership helps in leadership style.	
Resp A (big)	The production system needs transactional leadership to leave no space for mistakes and failures, and to increase efficiency. The exploration is probably much needed during the designing of new products process and marketing the products to be able to adapt to the market. Conflicts usually happen when the request for the new products do not make any sense, or the requests are impossible to be fulfilled. So we must do modifications and adjustments.
Resp B (med)	We have at least two new productions every year, ensuring innovations are maintained. During implementation, we make clear of the procedures to ensure quality control. We have many rejected products on the market, and we must make sure the number is declining
Resp C (big)	We are strict in everything. We do all things based on procedures and we must not go outside the book. As leaders, we make sure our goals met and create accomplishment. We do not innovate a lot, we keep things going smoothly and as efficient as possible.
Resp D (med)	We always try to keep balance in both leaderships, transactional and transformational. By keeping these two both in focus and integrated, we believe it will ensure the company success.
Resp E (small)	We use exploration (transformational) leadership a lot during the first two years, especially to be able to adapt to the market and produce the right stuff at the right time.

### Case Study:

From the results of the literature review, the Ministry of Commerce Website and the Depth Interviews, the writer conducted a case study of five companies and identified the best candidate with the best approach to ambidextrous leadership. After 6 months, from January 2019 – June 2019, the writer noted the progress of these companies through the company websites, marketing plans, factory visits and trade expos in Indonesia to understand their leadership styles. Respondent D, who operates a plastic manufacturing company focusing in export commodity, is the best ambidextrous leader. In 2010, Ellies was appointed as the Marketing Director in Surya Pelangi Company and Surya Pasifik Company. She started her journey by making sure that the recent products met the expected target and quality, keeping transactional leadership to maintain quality and quantity. At the same time, she analyzed products which were necessary to be continued or discontinued based on the market response. In doing so, she traveled a lot opening new doors to the markets while taking a closer look at other competitors' products. In just one year, instead of changing the established companies, she created a new affiliation to the company under the name of Homeco, which is still making plastic products and has expanded its operations to manufacturing home living needs. She introduced the products worldwide and obtained new marketshares and while doing so, found new ideas and made sure the products met the company standards.

These three companies quickly merged and obtained other foreign brands, namely UNITEI, Fisher – Price, Hawaii, Berlinger Haus, and Wiggle to win the foreign markets. In 2014, she obtained her biggest achievement. The biggest hit of disruptive innovation had ruined her plan when she built a new company under the name of Dusdusan B2B, with a focus of corporate selling. The company's target was out of reach and did not meet the expectations. With a quick observation and taking advantage of the digital market, in February 2015 (around 2 months) she quickly transformed the company into the first e-commerce platform with the name of Dusdusan.com. Offering a completely new ideas of home business allowing everybody can be a seller, Dusdusan.com provides complete training to resellers, from the opening, product knowledge right up to the sales process. As expected, this unique idea has been highly successful and in 2018, the number of active resellers on Dusdusan.com reached more than 250,000, making it the biggest reseller platform in Indonesia.

The writer attended three trade expos within six months where this group of companies covered an area of almost 1,000 metres squared right in front of the entrance, but they did not sell products. They set a rule to keep the sales to the resellers not directly to the companies. During the expo, President Joko Widodo and the Minister of Trade have also shown their compliments in the accomplishments of this group of companies. Though this group has not been listed on the Stock Exchange, the writer believes that the steps and plans taken by Ellies Kiswoto, the Marketing Director demonstrates that it is possible to implement both transactional and transformational leadership at the same time.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Figure 1 shows the number of journals mentioning ambidextrous, ambidexterity and its antecedents increase significantly. This clearly indicates that ambidextrous has become a new solution to company's business. From Table 1 and 2, it is understood that previous research shows that being ambidextrous has a positive impact on the company. Specializing in one will lead the company to destruction (Cevikarslan, 2015). From the case study, we can see a good example of handling disruptive innovation in the manufacturing industry using ambidextrous capabilities.

## 4. Findings and Results

To answer the question of how to shift between the two leadership styles and how to achieve integration dealing with interdependencies (Mahmoud-jouini et. al. 2007), the writer synthesizes all available journals on leadership styles and develops the following facts and challenges:

Leadership Style	Facts	Challenges
Transactional Leader	Focus on the existing process and tasks to support new capabilities in status quo and not respond immediately to crises. efficiency of existing operations than new capabilities	do not promote the relational commitment and trust to exchange information with suppliers avoid taking a risk with a supplier in a dynamic environment and focus on routine activities. do not involve in new collaboration under uncertainties.
Transformational Leader	deal changes and encourage followers, generate ideals to rise above their self-interest, provide morale creative solutions for complex problems	has a strong correlation with affective commitment

Ambidextrous Leader	foster explorative and exploitative. more information exchange. more impact to the firm social sustainability provide framework for organisation learning and improvement in supply chain Firmness and flexibility	a strong pressure and expectation to be ambidextrous and to balance exploration and exploitation. cultural inertia (age and success) Cognitive conflict in firms.
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**Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings and results from the systematic literature review, the qualitative method and the case study clearly show that ambidextrous leadership is the key to gaining a competitive advantage. The dynamic environment, uncertainties and disruptive changes have altered the nature of the leadership style to a much higher level of ambidextrous leadership. The leader must be able to balance both exploration (transformational) and exploitation (transaction) without overlapping each other (Hoffmann & Worner, 2014) because having each excessively will lead to organizational failures. The writer will present 2 figures as the conclusions of all the data gathered by the writer.

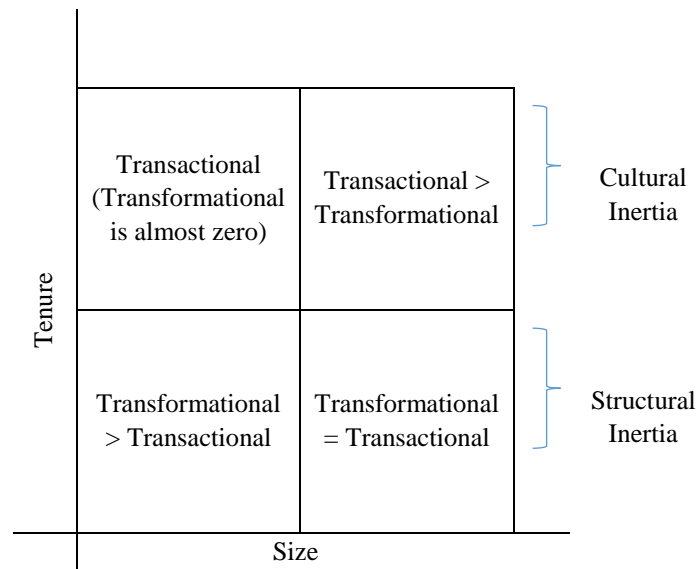


Figure 2. The tendency of Ambidextrous Leadership Usage in resistance to time and organisation size

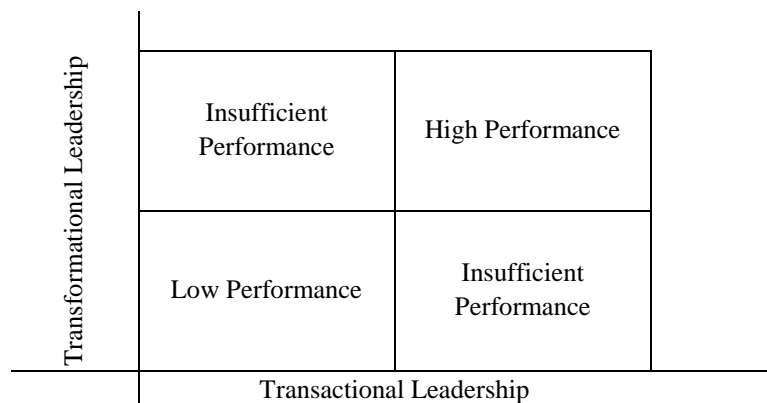


Figure 3. The Usage of Transactional and Transformational Leadership in Ambidextrous Leadership relating to Organisation Performance

Figure 2 shows the tendency of transactional and transformational leadership usage in resistance to time and organisation size. The amount of transactional and transformational usage should be equal in ideal, but this is not always the case due to daily pressure, cognitive conflict and cultural inertia. By solving these challenges, the maximum benefits of ambidextrous leadership can be obtained. Figure 3 shows that high organisation performance will be achieved when both transactional and transformational leadership are high but will be insufficient when one is too excessive and when both transactional and transformational leadership are low. This has a negative impact on short-term and long-term success.

This research contributes to the ambidextrous theory on the simultaneous usage of ambidexterity particularly in the study of leadership. Leaders are the key factors of success and competitive advantage by increasing organisational performance. Leaders must adapt to the dynamic environment and adopt an ambidextrous style of leadership. Future research should be conducted empirically to comprehensively address this issue across different industries. Further research, particularly in Indonesia, should be conducted to enrich the findings.

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