

Title

Employee Intrapreneurial Behavior: An exploration of opportunities and impact on employee intrapreneurship

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Abstract

Organizations are the potential source of socio-economic change. What do organizations do to create growth momentum in a nation? They become a powerful medium of economic change through innovation. To stir economic change, organizations need to empower employees, who are said to be the driving force in bringing essential innovation. Employees within the organization are the change-makers. The organization's sustenance depends on employees' ability to initiate change through innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. Employees constantly look for opportunities to yield organizational growth and gain competitive advantage. Employees are the core competence that organizations leverage when there is a pressing need to outperform their competitors. Studying employee's intrapreneurial behavior is essential to organizational survival. In this paper, we will analyze the effect of employees' intrapreneurial behavior in exploring opportunities by adding fresh perspective to the existing literature and its impact on employee intrapreneurship.

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Introduction

The present research attempts to delve into intrapreneurship, employee intrapreneurial behavior and opportunity creation through an intra-organizational perspective. Our paper addresses relevant theoretical frameworks through inter-disciplinary areas such as strategy, intrapreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship and organizational behavior. To understand employee intrapreneurial behavior in large-scale organizations and taking core capability as the basis of our research, we would rely on social exchange theory as an element of study.

Referring to the research framework of Floyd and Woolridge (1997), social network theory was used to study managers as an individual unit of analysis and use of network centrality in extracting and exchanging information. In our research, we have used social exchange theory as an element of study because we feel that employee intrapreneurial behavior would be more effective when management extends its unintended support, which makes employees feel obligated to return the favor in exchange for support.

Intrapreneurship has been viewed as a driving force behind an organization's growth and achieving competitive advantage. As per the dynamic capability view, growth has always been referred to as dynamic rather than static, as the pace of change in the internal and external business environment is disproportionate to the existing business conditions. So, what do organizations need to do? Organizations must constantly innovate to balance the pace of change and outperform their competitors. With an increasing pace of globalization as the world is becoming interconnected through a single source of supply chains, organizations are forced to rely on innovation to differentiate their product in terms of quality and services. Pinchot (1985) refers to intrapreneurship through 'intrapreneurs'. Intrapreneurs are the '*dreamers who do*'. They take hands-on responsibility for creating innovation of any kind within the organization. Intrapreneurs within the organization create a change process by bringing the resources together and churning those resources for the greater good. Norman Macrae (1979), the then editor at The Economist, wrote that employees within the organizations can be referred to as a '*confederation of entrepreneurs*'.

Intrapreneurship refers to starting an enterprise within the organization (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001). It captures emergent behavioral intention among individuals or organizations towards creating new products, services, or business ventures. Researchers have defined intrapreneurship in various ways, and it has been closely compared with corporate entrepreneurship. Intrapreneurship is voluntary behavior by employees within the organization that involves creating new products and services or gaining penetration into new markets (Moriano, 2014). Khandwalla (1977) says the human management philosophy in an organization refers to when there is an inducement to reward and a control mechanism that leads to desired employee performance based on the 'carrot and sticks' principle and secondly when there is an instinct of employees to showcase creativity by working in groups or individually, this calls for participative and cohesive building within teams.

Corporate entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are the two sides of the same coin and refer to 'undertaking entrepreneurial initiatives within the organization' to achieve organizational growth, profitability and competitive advantage (Kuratko, 1990; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003). Corporate entrepreneurship is a process 'where individuals or groups in association within the existing organization create a new enterprise, initiate strategic renewal or undertake innovation of any kind' (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999). Corporate entrepreneurship is a top-down approach with a broad set of rules or guidelines to follow, such as sunk projects with a pre-fixed budget. Intrapreneurship is a bottom-up approach driven by employees within an organization. Individuals within the organization convert resources into meaningful use (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Entrepreneurialism within the organization refers to when employees are driving new business opportunities or radically finding ways to do business differently (Seshadri & Tripathy, 2006)

What does it mean to undertake entrepreneurial initiatives within the organization? Why do organizations have to resort to growth and new business opportunities? The theoretical underpinnings lie with the Schumpeter (1934) thought of '*creative destruction*'. Another way organizations create a system of change is through incremental innovation. Organizations grow naturally through *incrementalism innovation* (Quinn, 1985). Organizations aspire to remain competitive, but many organizations cannot afford radical innovation. In that case, incremental innovation could be one of the preferred modes to stay relevant yet remain competitive by saving costs through manufacturing qualitative products and resorting to cost-leadership strategy. Literature defines incremental innovation as a technology push where organizations rely heavily on their core capability to develop products or create improved distribution channels to customers demand.

Motivation

Employees are an organization's assets and contribute immensely to developing core competence. Core competence refers to organization's tangible assets, such as financial, human capital, technology and intangible assets, such as goodwill, brand value, etc., that make organizations stand apart from its competitors (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990, p.91). We refer to employees here as 'executioners' who undertake experimental initiatives to challenge the status quo by being innovative, proactive and risk-taking. In the organization, they appear in the mid-lower level of the structure. These employees make their hands dirty by undertaking process renewal through achieving breakthrough innovation. Employees' entrepreneurial initiatives need to be studied within large organizations as they contribute to organizational growth and facilitate achieving competitive advantage. The motivation for this study is to understand employee-driven innovation behavior within large organizations.

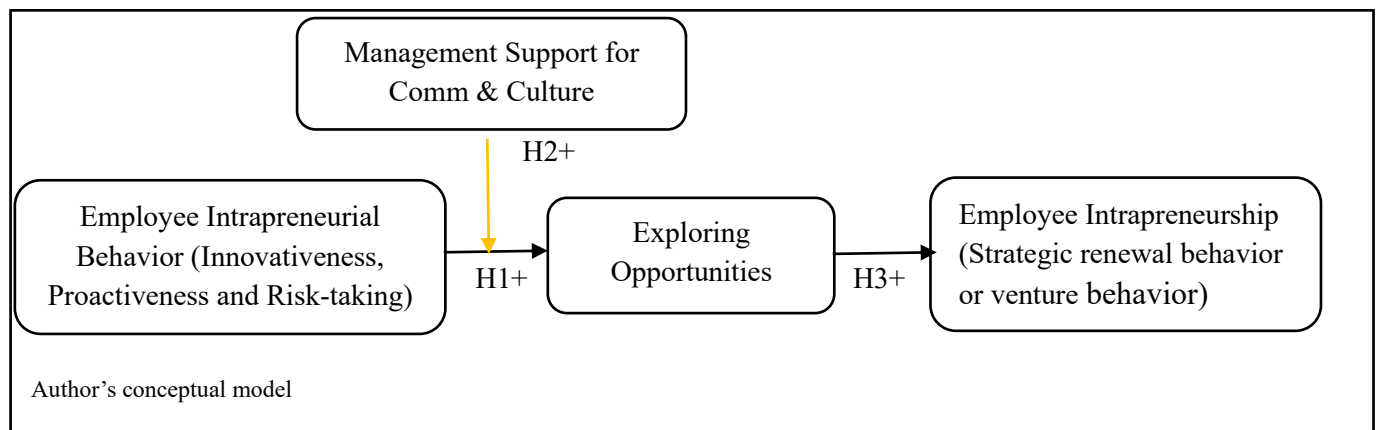
Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

The concept of social exchange implies a friendly exchange of unwritten promises where one individual receives a gift and reciprocates through a gift at a future course of event. The principal component of exchange theory lies in the principle of reciprocity and trust. It is an

unwritten agreement where one party fulfils the promise or delivers the exchange of gifts without obligation (Blau, 1964). If the transaction between two individuals' rests on a legally binding written agreement, then social exchange will not exist. The social exchange clearly states that the exchange between two parties is non-commercial and rests on reciprocity, where one party must fulfil the obligation to another through a return gift.

In organizations, the principal component of exchange between employee-organization relationships is trust and reciprocity. Organizational support becomes a medium of employee exchange through their dedication and sincerity. The adage "*as you do, so you reap*". If an organization creates a supportive environment for innovation or new ideas to develop, employees would be motivated to contribute to organizational success by rendering their services through exploring and exploiting opportunities. Organizations would reap the benefits in exchange for employee's hard work. Organizational support in the form of rewards, autonomy to work, fostering open communication, participative decision-making, and relaxing rigid organizational rules would encourage employees to contribute more to innovation. The psychological safety between the organization and employees forms the basis of driving innovation within the organization. Employees not only feel empowered to work where the organization's support exists but also feel obligated to return the value of exchange by contributing through their skill, tacit experience, hard work and sincerity. They contribute to the overall development of an organization by achieving growth, profitability and competitive advantage. This exchange's foundation lies on the principle of reciprocity and employee trust on managers.



Employee Intrapreneurial Behavior

Employees within the organization are the core assets. The resource-based view implies that a firm source for competitive advantage arises from resources and capabilities that are rare, valuable and costly to imitate (Barney, 1991). Penrose (1959) says that resources within the organization are managed strategically and can create a fertile ground for practicing creativity and innovation. Organizations benefit from employee involvement through knowledge, skill, tacit experience and education (Parker, 2011). There are instances when employees become disenchanted and leave the organization due to their rigid structures (Kanter, 1984). In order to

make employees more entrepreneurial, organizations foster a culture of innovation by developing an appropriate entrepreneurial framework. Employees intrapreneurial behavior is focused on the individual level rather than organization level. It emphasizes proactive behavior of employees towards pursuance of innovation activities by mid-level and lower-level employees committed to bottom-up entrepreneurial activities. Employees are constantly situated within the organization, and, according to the person-environment fit theory, their behavior is influenced not only by individual factors but also by their organizational environment (Xie & Zheng, 2023).

Intrapreneurial behavior is voluntary behavior employees exhibit when driving new business activities such as product development, superior services, or market penetration. The concept of intrapreneurial behavior rests on employees' innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior. The innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior of firm has been studied at length where firm's disposition to undertake new initiatives were measured (Covin & Slevin, 1986). Employee intrapreneurial behavior can be understood through Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation. IEO is a scale developed to understand employee's innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior while undertaking new business development initiatives (Boltan & Lane, 2012). From an employee perspective, it is imperative that they need to be innovative or creative to think out of the box in exploiting untapped opportunities. Similarly, they must be proactive and undertake personal initiative in driving new business opportunities appropriate to the organizational context. The risk-taking behavior of employees needs to be more agile to undertake risk associated with developing prototypes or upgrading existing processes through improved work practices. There are many ways intrapreneurial behavior can be encouraged within the organization. Management support, rewards, autonomy, and organizational structure also play an important role in promoting employee entrepreneurial behavior. Organizational structure, such as formalization of work processes such as horizontal participation and resource sparring by organization and trust in managers affect employee innovation behavior within the organization (Rigtering and Wietzel, 2013).

H1: Employee Intrapreneurial behavior will positively and significantly affect exploration of opportunities

H1a: Employee innovativeness would positively affect exploration of opportunities

H1b: Employee proactiveness would positively affect exploration of opportunities

H1c: Employee risk-taking behavior would positively affect exploration of opportunities

Internal Organizational Support factors

Hornsby et al, 2002 surveyed fortune 1000 firms to measure the presence of management support, work discretion, reward, time availability and organizational boundaries as an essential mechanism to practice corporate entrepreneurship. Management support is considered as one of the most important organizational factors that influence intrapreneurship (Elenkov & Manev 2005). Management support refers to the willingness of managers to facilitate and encourage intrapreneurship including the championing of innovative ideas and providing the

resources that employees need to take intrapreneurial actions. It also refers to the extent to which senior management is supportive of carrying out new business initiatives and provides resources to carry out activities other than the core activity. Work discretion refers to allowing employees to work independently on new projects. For example, 3M has a culture where it provides 15% free time to work on new projects. Similarly, Google provides 20% of its employee's free time to work on new projects. Work discretion or autonomy is a value-added factor in developing bootlegging behavior among employees within the organization. Bootlegging behavior is referred to as employees secretly working on new business ideas without the organization's knowledge. Reward is always perceived as an effective medium in translating intrapreneurial intentions into actions. Behavioral theorists have proved that reinforcement is an effective mechanism in driving employee behavior. The reward could be in the form of incentive, promotion, bonus, stock options or kind. Organizational boundaries necessarily set the rules and procedures for driving new business initiatives. Routine affairs within the organization give scope for new business initiatives due to expertise gained through process improvement and tacit knowledge acquired through the process.

H2: Management Support will moderate the relationship between employee intrapreneurial behavior and exploration of opportunities. Higher the management support higher would-be innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior of employees and higher would-be exploration of opportunities.

Exploration of Opportunities

The National Manufacturing Innovation Survey report (2022) published by Dept. of Science and Technology, Govt. of India states that out of 25% of Indian firms reporting innovation, the share of business process innovation is around 18.18%, and product innovations are around 14.28%. The survey states that firms that have pursued innovation have benefitted with an 83% increase in turnover, 80% opened new market opportunities, 77% responded to market pressures, and 71% responded to cost pressure. Under exploration of opportunities, we are interested in understanding employees' actions in gaining and scouting for information. As per the strategic entrepreneurship views, individuals are involved in opportunity-seeking behavior, which is mainly referred to as knowledge-seeking behavior or advantage-seeking behavior, such as taking proactive steps in filling up market gaps through launching new products or services or catering to untapped markets. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) mentioned that entrepreneurship is all about discovering, exploring, and exploiting opportunities. In our research framework, we are interested in understanding how employees contribute to product and process improvement through exploring opportunities. Intrapreneurial behavior exhibited by employees is essential to explore opportunities leading to intrapreneurship.

Exploring opportunities refers to extracting information from members within the organization through horizontal knowledge flow or top-down knowledge flows. Our research objective is to understand intra-organization employees' behavior in exploring opportunities through exchange of information on basis of trust and bonding. Reilly and Tushman (2007) studied organizational capability as ambidextrous using dynamic capability as a theoretical lens.

Organizations need to constantly adapt to external environmental changes; how do they do that? In order to keep pace with the changing dynamics of global demand, organizations need to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to respond to the rapidly changing environment (Teece et al., 2007). Organizations exploit opportunities by using their core competencies and gaining competitive advantage, whereas in the case of exploring opportunities, they look for new information to access new markets or technologies. Reilly and Tushman (2007) emphasize that senior leadership within the organization enables the firm to adapt and reconfigure its resources by bringing the strategy, structure, people, and culture needed to explore and exploit opportunities. The author has argued that an organization's internal process and senior management can explore and exploit by using their core knowledge embedded in the processes, routines, and structures. There is no need to spin out to pursue ambidextrous opportunities, as mentioned by Christensen (1997).

In order to achieve organizational adaptation through improved performance or increased profitability, organizations resort to improving processes through incremental innovation. Sometimes, incremental innovation, which is deeply embedded in the process, gives scope for radical innovation. Incremental innovation refers to a technology push to deliver qualitative products to existing customers. In contrast, radical innovation refers to adopting new technology to serve customers with new products, significantly replacing existing business methods. The question is: can an organization follow incremental and radical innovation by being ambidextrous? Organizations nowadays are ambidextrous as they need to compete globally. Abernathy (1978) says that for organizations to be productive, they must be efficient and, at the same time, become innovative. For example, in the case of the automobile industry, organizations are involved in R&D through product design and at the same time, project execution through applying process improvement techniques. Process management techniques involve interlinked efforts mapping, improving and adhering to organizational processes (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Practicing quality improvement techniques such as Six Sigma, TQM, and ISO9000 have given organizations an edge over others. Adopting these programmes made organizations so successful that by 1992, around 100 organizations had adopted such programmes (Nohria, 1996). Some companies that have adopted these kinds of programs were GE, Honeywell, and 3M. Indian industries have become highly self-sufficient and gained profitability and competitive advantage by resorting to quality improvement programmes. Example: Tata Motors follows the ASPIRE programme to foster product quality and design excellence. Process management improves organizational efficiency by reducing the variation in the internal processes, bringing processes together to create an impact. This rigidity sometimes opens the gateway to explore new opportunities. Incremental innovation may accommodate architectural innovation (Benner & Tushman, 2003).

Organizational forms could be an essential predictor to determine how ambidextrous organizations are? Ambidextrous organizations can occur in a tight structure where pre-fixed routinization of tasks and defined culture is held across units and sub-units. Exploratory units are normally held small and decentralized, whereas in the case of exploitation units, they are large and centralized. However, to become ambidextrous, senior management can develop processes to establish new, forward-looking models where experimentation can be given the

thrust to explore and exploit simultaneously within the given organizational context. Organizations such as Nalco Limited, a government-owned largest integrated aluminium plant, undertake various Research and development activities. They explore opportunities through in-house R&D trials to produce grain-refined EC grade Al wire rods and high thermal conductivity Al-Si alloy at Cast House of Smelter (42nd Annual Report, 2022-23, p.34). Exploring innovations are radical innovations designed to meet the changing needs of the customers or markets (Danneels, 2002). Typically, exploratory innovation goes with new designs, creating new markets and developing new distribution channels (Abernathy & Clark, 1985). Exploratory innovations require developing new knowledge quite distinct from the existing. In a study conducted by Jansen et al., (2006) of 283 firms showed that centralization of decision-making negatively affects exploratory innovation, whereas it positively affects exploitive. Centralized decision-making limits the free flow of ideas and creates a regulated workflow; therefore, trying or exploring new opportunities is handicapped. Another important finding from the study revealed that the formalization of tasks is not as negative as expected in exploratory innovation; it supported exploiting innovation as rules and procedures help the unit run efficiently. Environmental dynamism and informal connectedness are major facilitators of exploratory and exploitative innovation.

Employee Intrapreneurship

The concept of employee intrapreneurship rests on the outcome of employee intrapreneurial behavior through the exploration of opportunities. Employee intrapreneurship refers to the agentic and anticipatory behavior performed by employees, resulting in strategic renewal or venture behavior (Gawke & Gorgievski, 2019). Strategic renewal behavior refers to employees proactively working in the space of organization transformation through the renewal of ideas or proactively undertaking efforts in making significant process improvements that lead to improved quality of products or services, reduction in cost, zero wastage, and reduction production cycle time. At the same time, venture behavior refers to employees undertaking risk in commercializing ideas by creating new ventures within the organization as semi-business units or autonomous business units.

As per the previous literature, the boundary conditions or approaches to interpret employee intrapreneurship has been referred under entrepreneurial orientation approach such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior of employees in pursuing new product or process opportunities (De jong et al., 2015). Secondly, it has been looked from an employee intrapreneurial outcome approach such as working on project development projects, undertaking intrapreneurial pursuits through idea creation and implementation of ideas. The third approach has been restricted to the employee behavior approach. Employee behavior in intrapreneurship refers to undertaking agentic and anticipatory behaviors resulting in to strategic renewal behavior or venture behavior as an entrepreneurial outcome (Gawke et al., 2019; Nessen et al., 2019). Here agentic behavior refers to the risk-taking ability of employees in refining existing processes or experimenting in developing new capabilities through adoption of new technology or resorting to improved processes or scouting for new product information. Proactive behavior refers to self-initiated actions before being asked or formally mentioned in the job description. It is going out of the way to create new processes or tap new

information relevant to the product or process development. Employee intrapreneurship is the net result of individual's commitment to contribute towards organizational entrepreneurship. Looking at the dispersed view, employees are the change makers and are capable enough to create change within and across the organization and create avenue for profitability and growth.

We feel that employees, with their individual entrepreneurial orientation and with the top management support, are capable enough to stir positive change by exploring opportunities and contribute to employee intrapreneurship i.e. strategic renewal behavior or venture behavior. Exploring opportunities is connected with finding new sources of information that are relevant for an organization to pursue new business opportunities such as new product development or process development. Employees who are involved in exploring opportunities will engage in strategic renewal behavior as well as venture behavior. Exploring opportunities is not the end of the innovation conundrum rather once the potential source of information or ideas are generated, employees would like to make use of this potential information by bringing change within the organization through process improvements or may create a new department within the organization such as new product department where potential ideas are commercialized. We hypothesize

H3: Exploring opportunities will have a positive impact on employee intrapreneurship that is on strategic renewal behavior and venture behavior

H3a: Exploring opportunities will have a positive impact on strategic renewal behavior

H3b: Exploring Opportunities will have a positive impact on venture behavior

In our research, we have operationalized our definition concerning employee intrapreneurial behavior: "*Employee Intrapreneurial Behavior is a process whereby employee (s) identify opportunities by being innovative, proactive and undertaking risk that would result in to employee intrapreneurship i.e. self-renewal or venture behavior*" (Nesseen et al., 2018).

Methodology

We are collecting data from large-scale industries with turnover >500 crore and investment in Plant and machinery >250 crore, and employees of more than 250 in an organization. When we say large-scale industries in an emerging economy context like India, we refer to heavy and capital-intensive industries such as automobiles, processes, electronics and engineering. Data collection is being done through structured questionnaires by meeting industry representatives and seeking their views. Formal approval will be taken from HR, so that distribution of questionnaire and solicitation from employees towards participation in survey could be obtained. We would rely on purposive sampling as we intend to gather response from employees involved in product and process innovations. Employees working in the R&D cell and from the Productions & Operations division. We are following the GEM Protocol and have kept strict inclusion criteria. We would collect employees' responses to those who have initiated and implemented innovation projects for over 3 years. Our target sample is employees working as managers, first-level managers or supervisors, junior managers and non-managerial employees. We would be excluding top management teams (TMTs) as they are more involved in decision-making and strategy-making. We would be collecting samples from three sectors

where the pace of innovation is found to be high, especially in automotive, electronics and process-based industries involved in the manufacturing of industrial goods.

Sample selection

We are collecting samples from Nalco Limited, a Government-owned undertaking, the largest Integrated Bauxite-Alumina-Aluminium Complex in Asia, having its corporate office in the Eastern province of India, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), a 'Navratna' company under the Schedule 'A' category of CPSEs, was founded on 7th January 1981, having its registered office in Bhubaneswar. It is one of the Country's largest bauxite, alumina, aluminium and power complex. Currently, the Indian government owns 51.28% of NALCO's equity capital. The Company has been operating its captive Panchpatmali Bauxite Mines for the pit head Alumina refinery at Damanjodi, in the District of Koraput in Odisha and Aluminium Smelter & Captive Power Plant at Angul.

The Company has a 68.25 lakh TPA Bauxite Mine and 21.00 lakh TPA (normative capacity) Alumina Refinery located at Damanjodi in the Koraput district of Odisha, and 4.60 lakh TPA Aluminium Smelter and 1200MW Captive Power Plant located at Angul, Odisha. The Company has regional sales offices in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai and 7 operating stockyards at various locations in the Country to facilitate domestic consumers.

Measures

Employee Intrapreneurial Behavior – we characterize employee intrapreneurial behavior as individual entrepreneurial orientation such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behavior. We have taken IEO scale developed by Boltan & Lane, 2012. Questionnaires are designed on a Likert scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree.

Management Support for Communication and Culture for Innovation (MSCCI)- we define management support for communication and culture for innovation as top management support towards facilitating entrepreneurial ideas to emerge from employees, creating an entrepreneurial atmosphere for communication vertical and horizontal as well as providing reward such as promotion. We adopted the scale developed by Hornsby et al., 2002. We got this variable after running factor analysis and construct reliability Cronbach's alpha 0.802. Questionnaire are designed on a Likert scale ranging 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree.

Exploring Opportunities- By exploring opportunities we mean scouting for new information that would be relevant for product or process innovation. We adopted the scale developed by Mom et al, 2000. Questionnaires are designed on a Likert scale ranging from 1- to a very small extent to 5- to a very large extent.

Employee Intrapreneurship- Employee intrapreneurship refers to agentic and anticipatory behavior undertaken by employees that results in to strategic renewal behavior or venture behavior. We have adopted the scale developed by Gawke et al., 2019. Questionnaires are designed on a Likert scale ranging from 1- Never to 5- Always.

Control variables. We have taken age, gender, educational experience, job experience, organizational tenure as control variables.

Data Analysis

To test our hypothesis, we would be using Smart PLS developed by Hair et al., 2011. We would use smart PLS as it is considered an effective tool for testing theory (Chin, 1998; Moriano et al., 2011). Smart PLS would be an effective tool where the effect of all independent variables can be studied on dependent variable.

Results

We are in the process of gathering data from Nalco Limited. Data collection process is ongoing. **We would compile, analyze and showcase our data and result at the conference.**

Discussion

We believe that employees within the organization are agents of change. They are the source of positive change within an organization by driving successful innovation and achieving organizational growth and profitability. We are gathering and consolidating our findings and assume that employee intrapreneurial behavior within an organization would be an essential element for exploring and exploiting opportunities within an organization. These efforts would be more beneficial and would have a multiplier effect when they receive management support from the top management. We also claim that exploring opportunities by employees within an organization would positively impact strategic renewal behavior and venture behavior of employees. Our research will create a positive impact by highlighting the effect of social exchange, where organizations effort through management support would reciprocate with greater efforts from employees by showcasing intrapreneurial behavior that would be essential to drive exploring opportunities. Our research would support findings made by Dess et al. (2003) that social exchanges between managers and employees play an important role in the intrapreneurial process and, in a more general sense, reaffirms the key role of managers within CE as suggested by, e.g., Hornsby et al., (2002).

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