

INTRAPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AS A FIELD OF INQUIRY – A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), at an organisational level, and Intrapreneurial Orientation (IO), at the employee level, has been shown to have a multitude of benefits for organisations. EO and IO are important indicators of intra-organisational entrepreneurship in organisations of varying sizes. While EO has built a large body of knowledge since the 1980s and has been widely researched, IO emerged as a concept in the early 2000s, acknowledging the importance of employee-level entrepreneurial potential. While some studies have mapped the evolution of the EO concept, as well as analysed underlying dimensions, no study to date has attempted to map the growth and focus areas of the IO concept.

The purpose of this study was therefore to analyse the growth of IO as a field of inquiry, as well as uncover focal areas of studies focusing on IO. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, employing a scoping review methodology and analysing the growth of the field of IO by means of frequency tables, and uncover focal areas in literature by means of a Word cloud analysis. Findings revealed that the majority of studies in the field of IO were conducted in the past ten years, with a substantial growth in studies from 2015 onwards. Findings also showed that IO studies most commonly investigate organisational and job performance, effects of IO, personality traits, cultural factors and leadership styles. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting existing focus areas in literature, thereby indicating unexplored and under investigated IO linkages.

INTRODUCTION

While entrepreneurship is most commonly associated with the creation of new ventures, the importance of intra-organisational entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged. The foundational nature of entrepreneurship for an existing organisation was laid by Miller (1983), who explored the traits that an entrepreneurial organisation possesses. Miller (1983) outlined these traits as usually incorporating elements of risk-taking, proactiveness and innovativeness. EO can act as a predictor of internal organisational performance, as well as acting as a driver thereof, and has been widely acknowledged to positively influence organisational performance (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Wiklund, 1999; Rauch et al, 2009). While debate in literature still exists whether EO is a uni- or multi-dimensional construct, the importance of tapping into the potential of employee-level entrepreneurial behaviours is growing. This has led to the emergence of the Intrapreneurial Orientation concept.

Intrapreneurial Orientation (IO) has therefore evolved out of the Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) concept. As the two concepts are closely related, albeit with different foci, the underlying conceptual purpose is similar. While EO views entrepreneurial behaviours at the organisational-level, IO focuses on the behaviours exhibited by the individual in an organisation.

While cursory evidence exists that IO as a field of inquiry has gained prominence, the approximate extent of the growth in the field, together with associated areas of interest, is not yet known. The purpose of this paper is therefore to analyse the growth of IO as a field of inquiry, as well as uncover focal areas of studies containing elements of IO.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the conceptual underpinnings of the Intrapreneurial Orientation (IO) concept. The IO concept has its conceptual roots in EO literature, as well as within the field of Intrapreneurship, more commonly referred to as Corporate Entrepreneurship.

Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship, much like IO, originated from the broader field of entrepreneurship and is conceptually similar in nature. Originally, it was most commonly associated with the creation of new ventures by an existing organisation, through entrepreneurial efforts of its employees (Pinchot & Pellman, 1999; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003). The concept first emerged in the 1980s and shifted towards a focus on the individual employee acting as an entrepreneur within the confines of an existing business. Intrapreneurship can broadly be defined as “the process by which individuals inside organisations pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control” (Jacobs & Kruger, 2001:2). Authors such as Antoncic and Hisrich (2003:20) expand this definition by looking at specific activities performed by employees, by stating that “intrapreneurship is an essentially activity-based or activity-oriented concept that operates at the organizational boundary and stretches (the organization) in new directions”. The outcome of intrapreneurial actions is perhaps best summarised by Antoncic (2007:311) who argues that the real value in intrapreneurship lies in the “transformation of organisations through renewal of the key ideas on which they are built”. This underpins the universal nature that entrepreneurial principles hold (Morris *et al.*, 2011). While the term intrapreneurship has only gained popularity in recent years, various synonyms were used in the past to describe the same phenomenon. These synonyms include ‘corporate entrepreneurship’, ‘internal corporate entrepreneurship’, ‘corporate venturing’ and ‘organisational transformation’ (Guth & Ginsberg, 1990; Hornsby *et al.*, 1993; Thornberry, 2001; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2004; Blundell & Lockett, 2011; Kuratko, 2017). In terms of the behaviours that characterise intrapreneurship, Antoncic and Scarlat (2005:72) best summarise these as “new business venturing, product / service innovation, process innovation, self-renewal, risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness”.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) refer to EO as a strategy-making process that has the aim of encouraging entrepreneurial actions, decisions and processes within an existing organisation, guiding the mode of entry into a market. Rauch *et al.* (2009:6) refer to EO as “the policies and practices that provide a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions”. Miller (1983) however made the important distinction that, in particular in small businesses, the orientation of the lead entrepreneur is closely linked to that of the organisation. This implies that an EO has to manifest itself in processes, policies and structures, rather than in a person. The dimensions of EO overlap closely with those of Corporate Entrepreneurship, Intrapreneurship and also entrepreneurship in

general. These dimensions most commonly include autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking (Rauch et al, 2009). A debate still exists in literature to determine whether EO is regarded as a multi-dimensional or uni-dimensional construct. Authors such as Miller (1983) argue that EO is unidimensional in nature, indicating that all dimensions of EO need to be present, and co-exist, for an organisation to be considered having an EO. However, other authors such as Lumpkin and Dess (1996) argue that EO is inherently multidimensional in nature, indicating that an EO can be present if only some of the dimensions can be detected, as well as at varying levels and can vary independently. EO has been a topic of discussion and investigation in literature since the 1980s and gave impetus to the field of IO, which utilises many of the same principles but views these from an individual perspective. The conceptual nature of IO is discussed in the next section.

Intrapreneurial Orientation

An Intrapreneurial Orientation can best be described as the mindset of an employee in terms of creative entrepreneurial behaviours, with these behaviours manifesting themselves in actions, process and culture of an organisation (Lyon *et al.*, 2000). While the roots of IO are in the EO concept, there has been a growing appreciation in practice and literature that the entrepreneurial traits of employees are just as important as those of the organisational leaders (Sinha & Srivastava, 2016). It can be summarised as an organisational focus on entrepreneurship which manifests itself in organisational practices and processes (Lyon et al., 2000). Entrepreneurial Orientation views these types of behaviours and manifestation in the organisation from a managerial and organisational perspective, while IO specifically focuses on manifestation at the individual employee level (Bolton & Lane, 2012). IO holds substantial benefits for organisations, as it mainly increases the ability of an organisation to act innovatively, while at the same time holding benefits for organisational performance (Fasnacht, 2009; Schachtebeck et al., 2019). In terms of the dimensions underpinning IO, most commonly literature finds items such as risk-taking, innovativeness, proactiveness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness to be the main drivers of IO, while at the same time agreeing with the underlying dimensions of EO (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Matsuno et al., 2002; Aarakit, 2010). However, while research agrees that these dimensions most commonly underpin IO, the extent and range of the existing body of knowledge has not been explored. Authors such as Schachtebeck et al. (2018) explored the underlying dimensions and instruments underpinning EO and IO, however the growth of the field has not been mapped to date.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach by making use of a scoping review methodology. A scoping review was preferred over a systematic review as the purpose of the study was not to determine the underlying quality or dimensions of discovered IO studies, but rather to map the range, extent and availability of available literature in the field of IO (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The scoping review was guided by a primary research question, which was set as 'To what extent has the field of IO grown since its inception?'. To answer the primary research question, a keyword search was conducted using the keywords "Intrapreneurial Orientation". The purpose

of this study was therefore to ascertain the growth of IO as a field of inquiry, as well as discover research focus areas. The keyword search was conducted in Google Scholar, as multiple studies have found Google Scholar to generate search results to a greater extent than when searching individual databases, with coverage of discovered literature ranging from 68 to 93 percent (Walters, 2007; Mayr & Walter, 2007; Meier & Conkling, 2008). In an effort to ensure as wide a coverage as possible, no date limitations were set, with the literature search covering all studies from inception to 7 April 2021. No limitations were set in terms of the type of literature discovered, with conference papers, dissertations, thesis and journal article all being considered as these all contribute to the field of Intrapreneurial Orientation. Results obtained from Google Scholar were extracted into Word format for further analysis. The first analysis consisted of a data charting exercise in order to ascertain year of publication, volume of publication in a specific year, as well as cumulative percentage of total publications. Thereafter, the text was analysed by means of a WordCloud generator in order to discover frequency of utilised words and subsequent visualisation as a Word Cloud.

FINDINGS

A keyword search with the word ‘Intrapreneurial Orientation’ was conducted in Google Scholar on 8 April 2021, following the guidelines as described in the methodology. A total of 281 publications were discovered. The data generated from Google Scholar was extracted from the search into a word document. The below table below indicates the year of publication, number of publications in each year, percentage of total publications as well as cumulative percentage. The cumulative percentage column was added in order to ascertain over which time period the field of IO gained traction in literature.

Year	Number of publications discovered	Percentage of total (N=281)	Cumulative Percentage
2021	9	3.20%	3.20%
2020	35	12.46%	15.66%
2019	53	18.86%	34.52%
2018	36	12.81%	47.33%
2017	24	8.54%	55.87%
2016	30	10.68%	66.55%
2015	20	7.12%	73.67%
2014	8	2.85%	76.51%
2013	14	4.98%	81.49%
2012	10	3.56%	85.05%
2011	5	1.78%	86.83%
2010	7	2.49%	89.32%
2009	4	1.42%	90.75%
2008	2	0.71%	91.46%
2007	2	0.71%	92.17%
2006	5	1.78%	93.95%
2005	9	3.20%	97.15%
2004	4	1.42%	98.58%

term ‘organisational performance’ also featured prominently. This highlights the benefits that both EO and IO hold for organisations, which explains a focus in studies on the performance-related benefits that IO holds for organisations. Similarly, the focus on job performance is also of no surprise as the starting point of many studies is to analyse benefits which IO holds for organisational performance, which is often intrinsically linked to job performance. The term ‘innovation’ also is very closely linked to IO, and entrepreneurship-related literature in general, as it is one of the fundamental dimensions of IO. However, a focus on innovation in the titles of studies indicates that it is a topic still under investigation in the evolving body of knowledge. The following two terms, namely ‘leadership style’ and ‘work value’ seem to indicate a focus on the effect of leadership and perceived value of the work on enhancing IO. In particular the leadership element is of interest as it fuses the areas of Industrial Psychology, work performance and entrepreneurship. Similarly, identified topics such as workplace culture and knowledge sharing seem to indicate an effort to enhance IO by means of modification of the work environment, two promising areas of research.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the range and extent of IO research. The findings of the study indicate that both an internal and external focus of research. This seems to indicate a dual foci, methods and tools to enhance IO through modification of organisation-internal elements, as well as a link to the performance outcomes of IO. The value of the study lies in identification of key areas of investigation of IO, as well as under-explored areas of research. The study is of value to academia by guiding future research areas, as well as identifying emerging areas of research in the field of IO. Managerial implications include highlighting the value IO adds for organisational performance. Future areas of research can include mapping IO research from a geographical, as well as an outcomes point of view. Future areas of research can take the form of a systematic review which investigates the merits and underlying factors in identified IO studies and synthesises the information in a more user-friendly format.

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