

## Navigating Top Management Team Characteristics for Ambidexterity in Small and Medium-Sized African Businesses: The Key to Unlocking Success

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**Abstract :** The study aimed to identify the top management team attributes for ambidexterity in small and medium-sized enterprises by utilizing the upper echelons theory. The conventional opinion holds that an organization's ability to pursue both exploitative and explorative innovation methods at the same time is reflected in its ambidexterity. Top-level managers are critical to this matrix because they forecast and explain strategic choices that guarantee success by improving organizational performance. Since the focus of the study was on the unique characteristics of TMTs that can facilitate ambidexterity, the primary goal was to comprehend how TMTs in SMEs can better manage ambidexterity. The study used document analysis to collect information on ambidexterity and TMT traits. Finding, choosing, assessing, and synthesizing data from peer-reviewed publications allowed for the review and evaluation of papers. The fact that SMEs will perform better if they can achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, exploitation is the main priority for most SMEs. The results showed that some of the noteworthy TMT traits that support ambidexterity in SMEs are age diversity, shared responsibility, leadership impact, psychological safety, and self-confidence. It has been shown that most SMEs confront significant obstacles in recruiting people, including formalizing their management and assembling executive teams with seniority. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often held by families or people who neglect to keep their personal lives apart from the firm, which eliminates the opportunity for management and staff to take the initiative. This helps to explain why exploitative strategies, which preserve present success, are used rather than explorative strategies, which open new economic opportunities and dimensions. It is evident that psychological safety deteriorates, and creativity is hindered in the process. The study makes the case that TMTs who are motivated to become ambidextrous can exist. According to the report, small- and medium-sized business owners should value the opinions of all parties involved and provide their managers and regular staff the freedom to think creatively and in a safe environment. TMTs who experience psychological safety are more likely to be inventive, creative, and productive. A team's collective perception that it is acceptable to take chances, voice opinions and concerns, ask questions, and own up to mistakes without fear of unfavorable outcomes is known as team psychological safety. Thus, traits like age diversity, leadership influence, learning agility, psychological safety, and self-assurance are critical to the success of SMEs. As a solution to ensuring ambidexterity is attained, the study suggests a clear separation of ownership and control, the adoption of technology to stimulate creativity, team spirit and excitement, shared accountability, and good management of diversity. Among the suggestions for the SME's success are resource allocation and important collaborations.

**Keywords :** navigating, ambidexterity, top management team, small and medium enterprises

**Conference Title :** ICBCM 2024 : International Conference on Business and Commerce Management

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** March 11-12, 2024