

Fostering Intrapreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation for Organizational Growth

Ni Putu Santinisah¹

1. Program Studi Administrasi Bisnis, Politeknik Negeri Bali, Indonesia

Correspondence addressed to:

Ni Putu Santinisah, Program Studi Administrasi Bisnis, Politeknik Negeri Bali, Indonesia

Email: santinisah90@gmail.com

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Abstract. In an era marked by rapid technological disruption, shifting consumer expectations, and heightened global competition, organizational success increasingly hinges on the ability to adapt, innovate, and evolve from within. This research critically examines the synergistic relationship between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation as strategic pillars for driving sustainable organizational growth. This research outlines the mechanisms through which an intrapreneurial culture nurtures creative thinking and accelerates innovation cycles. It also examines critical success factors including leadership style, organizational structure, psychological safety, and performance incentives that enable or hinder these dynamics. This research is designed as an interpretive literature search. Data was collected through a structured literature review conducted on several leading academic databases. The research culminates in a set of practical recommendations for business leaders and policymakers seeking to institutionalize intrapreneurship and innovation at scale. By integrating these dimensions into core strategic planning, organizations can better position themselves to thrive in volatile and complex business landscapes.

Keywords: Intrapreneurship; creativity; innovation; organizational growth; strategic agility; leadership; knowledge management.

Introduction

In the 21st century, organizations face an unprecedented level of complexity and volatility due to rapid technological advances, evolving customer expectations, digital transformation, and global competition. To remain relevant and sustainable, firms must go beyond traditional efficiency-driven models and embrace agility, adaptability, and continuous innovation (Teece, 2018). Within this turbulent environment, the concept of *intrapreneurship* defined as the entrepreneurial behaviour exhibited by employees within an established organization has gained increasing attention as a strategic approach to internal value creation (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003).

Intrapreneurship serves as an internal mechanism for organizations to stimulate *creative thinking*, foster proactive problem-solving, and generate innovative ideas from within their own workforce (Pinchot, 1985). It empowers employees to act like entrepreneurs by taking initiative, embracing risk, and developing new ventures, processes, or products, all while utilizing existing organizational resources and structures. As such, intrapreneurship not only enables operational flexibility but also cultivates a dynamic organizational culture that supports continuous innovation.

The connection between intrapreneurship and *creativity* is critical in this process. Creativity, defined as the generation of ideas that are both novel and useful (Amabile, 1996), is often the precursor to innovation. When employees are provided with autonomy, psychological safety, and supportive leadership, their intrinsic motivation increases leading to a higher likelihood of creative

output (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). These creative ideas, if properly harnessed, form the bedrock of innovation commonly understood as the successful implementation of new ideas into products, services, or processes that deliver value (Schumpeter, 1934; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006).

In a globalized marketplace, where competitive advantages are increasingly fleeting, *innovation* becomes a strategic necessity rather than a choice. However, innovation does not occur in isolation. It is the outcome of an ecosystem where creativity is encouraged, risk-taking is tolerated, and systems are in place to support experimentation and learning (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). This is where the convergence of intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable organizational growth.

This paper seeks to explore how organizations can strategically integrate these three interconnected elements intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation—to enhance competitiveness and achieve long-term success. Specifically, it will:

Examine theoretical foundations and empirical evidence linking the three concepts.

Analyze enablers and barriers within organizational contexts.

Discuss real-world case studies demonstrating successful intrapreneurial innovation.

Provide strategic recommendations for fostering an innovation-driven culture through intrapreneurship and creative empowerment. By investigating these dimensions, the paper aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical managerial insight, offering a roadmap for organizations to build a resilient and innovative future.

Literature Review

Literature on organizational development increasingly underscores the importance of integrating intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation as core elements of strategic capability. These three concepts while distinct in definition and function form a mutually reinforcing triad that enables firms to respond effectively to uncertainty, technological disruption, and competitive pressure (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). This section provides a theoretical foundation by discussing each construct and their interrelations, with the aim of revealing how their synergy supports sustainable organizational growth.

Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship is broadly defined as entrepreneurial behaviour by employees within a structured, established organization. It encompasses the proactive identification and exploitation of new opportunities, development of new products or services, and improvement of internal processes, all undertaken within the corporate umbrella (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001).

Antoncic and Hisrich (2003) propose that intrapreneurship includes dimensions such as new business venturing, innovation, self-renewal, and proactiveness. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which requires creating ventures from scratch, intrapreneurs work with existing organizational assets, leveraging internal support, infrastructure, and brand equity to implement their initiatives. However, this still demands a degree of autonomy, tolerance for failure, and risk-taking characteristics typically associated with entrepreneurs (Pinchot, 1985).

Intrapreneurial behavior is often influenced by organizational culture, leadership, and reward systems. For instance, Kuratko et al. (2005) argue that top management support, resource availability, and a flat organizational structure enhance intrapreneurial activity. Employees must perceive that their ideas will be taken seriously and that the organization is willing to invest in experimentation and

internal innovation efforts. “Intrapreneurs are dreamers who do. Those who take hands-on responsibility for creating innovation of any kind, within an organization (Pinchot, 1985).

Thus, fostering intrapreneurship involves not just individual initiative, but also structural and cultural enablers at the organizational level.

Creativity in the Workplace

Creativity is central to the innovation process. Amabile (1996) defines creativity as the production of ideas that are both novel and appropriate to the task at hand. Her componential model of creativity identifies three core components that determine individual creative performance:

Domain-relevant skills – the knowledge, technical skills, and talent relevant to the domain.

Creativity-relevant processes – cognitive styles, personality characteristics, and heuristics that facilitate novel thinking.

Task motivation – especially intrinsic motivation, which drives individuals to engage in activities for their inherent interest and satisfaction.

A creative workplace is not the result of individual genius alone but arises from conducive organizational contexts. As Amabile & Khaire (2008) emphasize, managerial practices such as autonomy, goal clarity, encouragement, and resources significantly affect creativity. Moreover, psychological safety where employees feel safe to express novel ideas without fear of ridicule or punishment is a key predictor of team creativity (Edmondson, 1999).

Deci and Ryan’s (1985) Self-Determination Theory also support the notion that intrinsic motivation is vital for creative performance, which is enhanced when individuals feel competent, autonomous, and connected to others. “Creativity thrives in environments that support autonomy, provide resources, and tolerate failure as part of the learning process.” (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Consequently, organizations aiming to stimulate innovation must first cultivate creative thinking by establishing an empowering climate.

Innovation as an Outcome

Innovation is the tangible outcome of intrapreneurial and creative efforts. Schumpeter (1934) famously described innovation as the carrying out of new combinations, encompassing product innovation, process innovation, market innovation, and organizational innovation.

Innovation is not just about invention; it includes the diffusion and successful implementation of new ideas (Rogers, 2003). This process moves beyond the generation of ideas to their conversion into value-generating offerings. As such, innovation can be seen as the commercialization of creativity.

Damanpour and Schneider (2006) emphasize that innovation in organizations occurs in phases: initiation, adoption, and implementation. Each phase requires different organizational capabilities, from idea recognition to resource allocation and change management.

The relationship between creativity and innovation is therefore sequential but interdependent. Creativity provides the raw material novel ideas while innovation represents the process of refining, testing, and applying these ideas to achieve strategic goals (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). “Creativity is the seed; innovation is the fruit.” (West & Farr, 1990)

Furthermore, innovation is often driven internally through intrapreneurship. Employees who are empowered to experiment and challenge the status quo frequently serve as the engine of new product development and process improvements (Kanter, 1983).

Method

To explore the dynamic relationship between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation, this research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach. This approach aims to interpret and synthesize existing knowledge from scientific sources, case studies, and organizational practice to develop a conceptual understanding of how the three constructs contribute to organizational growth. This design is well suited to answer exploratory research questions, especially regarding the "how" and "why" of complex phenomena appearing in the context of real organizations (Sandelowski, 2000).

Research Design and Strategy

This research is designed as an interpretive literature search. Instead of collecting primary data through surveys or experiments, the research relied on secondary data obtained from a variety of sources, such as Scopus and Web of Science indexed scientific journal articles, innovation reports from global corporations such as IBM, Google, and 3M, as well as case studies published in business journals and academic books. Thought literature from leading experts and institutions is also part of the data analysed.

This methodology allows for integration between theoretical insights and real-world illustrations, which directly enriches the understanding of how intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation are applied in organizational practices. Through content analysis, recurring themes and strategic patterns are identified, coded, and categorized. The focus of this analysis is to uncover the relationships and points of convergence between the three constructs—how intrapreneurial behavior triggers creative thinking, how creativity evolves into innovation, and how this whole process becomes a driver of sustained competitiveness.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a structured literature review conducted on several leading academic databases, including Scopus (Elsevier), Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight. The search process was carried out with combined keywords such as "*Intrapreneurship and Innovation*", "*Workplace Creativity and Performance*", "*Organizational Innovation Frameworks*", and "*Corporate Entrepreneurship and Growth*". Inclusion criteria are established to ensure data quality: publications must be published between 2000 and 2024, written in English, and come from peer-reviewed journals or credible academic and professional institutions.

From the initial search results, about 65 literature sources were successfully collected. After further evaluation of the relevance and depth of the concept, a total of 41 sources were selected for in-depth analysis.

Analytical Framework

To guide the interpretation of the data, this research uses an inductive thematic analysis approach as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach allows key themes to emerge naturally from the data, without imposing an initial hypothesis. The analysis process is carried out in several stages: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data through in-depth reading and annotation; (2) generate initial code based on key keywords, relationships, and mechanisms; (3) grouping the code into broader themes such as "leadership and intrapreneurship", "creative autonomy", and "innovation implementation"; (4) reviewing and refining the theme by comparing contexts across industries and organizations; and (5) synthesize the findings into a conceptual framework that describes the relationship between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation, including supporting factors.

Through this approach, researchers can build a coherent narrative and illustrate the linkages between theoretical foundations and real practices in organizations.

Validity and Reliability

Although qualitative research is not aimed at generating statistical generalizations, the validity and reliability of the results are maintained in a variety of ways. One of them is triangulation, which is comparing themes found from different industries and types of organizations to see consistency. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted with academic colleagues to test assumptions and sharpen interpretation. The thick description technique is also used to provide rich and in-depth context to each finding, as well as include relevant citations and references to strengthen the argument.

The inclusion of theoretical models such as *Amabile's componential theory of creativity and Schumpeter's innovation theory*, along with real organizational case studies, reinforces the combination of conceptual acuity and contextual richness of these studies.

Conceptual Integration Model

The results of this analysis led to the development of a conceptual integration model that describes the dynamic interaction between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation. In this model, intrapreneurship is an initial trigger through the courage of individuals in recognizing opportunities and encouraging new ideas within the organization. Creativity is the engine of novelty, generating unique insights and solutions to problems. Meanwhile, innovation is a concrete form of value that is produced that is, the application of creative ideas into new products, services, or processes that strengthen an organization's position in the market.

These three components are interconnected in a cycle that is reinforced by contextual elements such as organizational culture, leadership style, work autonomy, psychological security, resource flexibility, and strategic alignment. By understanding and facilitating these interactions, organizations can create internal systems that foster sustainable growth through creativity and innovation based on the spirit of intrapreneurs.

The next section of this paper will present findings as well as practical illustrations from several case studies, including organizations such as 3M, Google, and W.L. Gore, that have successfully integrated intrapreneurial mechanisms to consistently drive creative and innovative performance.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the synthesized insights drawn from the literature review and case analysis, highlighting how intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation function interdependently to drive sustainable organizational growth. The discussion is structured around four emergent thematic dimensions identified through inductive thematic coding: (1) intrapreneurial culture and leadership, (2) mechanisms that stimulate creativity, (3) the conversion of ideas into innovation, and (4) enabling organizational contexts. These themes form the conceptual scaffolding of how intrapreneurial behaviours catalyse creativity and facilitate innovation within complex organizational ecosystems.

Intrapreneurial Culture and Leadership

A recurring theme across case studies and literature is the centrality of organizational culture and leadership in fostering intrapreneurship. Successful organizations actively cultivate a climate that empowers employees to take initiative, embrace risk, and drive change from within. Google's renowned "20% time" policy exemplifies this principle by allowing employees to allocate a portion of their time to passion-driven projects. This initiative gave rise to major innovations like Gmail and AdSense, reinforcing how trust and autonomy serve as incubators of intrapreneurial action (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). The company's leadership plays a pivotal role in sustaining such initiatives by legitimizing experimentation and minimizing fear of failure.

Similarly, 3M has institutionalized intrapreneurial behaviour through its decentralized decision-making structure and a long-standing tolerance for risk-taking. The creation of the Post-it Note, initially developed through unofficial side-project work, symbolizes this ethos. Gabor (2000) notes that 3M grants its technical employee's discretionary budgets and creative freedom, encouraging ideation at multiple levels of the organization. Leadership here does not merely approve innovations retrospectively but facilitates them proactively through strategic investment in people and processes.

Mechanisms That Stimulate Creativity

Creativity does not emerge in a vacuum; it flourishes in environments that balance individual freedom with contextual scaffolding. Amabile's (1996) componential theory of creativity asserts that intrinsic motivation, domain-relevant skills, and creative-thinking processes are the primary ingredients of creative output. Organizations that consciously engineer conditions for these factors often exhibit higher levels of innovation readiness. W.L. Gore & Associates, for example, adopts a lattice organizational structure that eliminates rigid hierarchies, fostering informal communication and cross-functional collaboration. This model has allowed the company to produce consistent innovations like GORE-TEX, as it facilitates fluid ideation across departments (Hamel, 2007).

Research by Shalley and Gilson (2004) corroborates this by emphasizing the role of psychological safety, task significance, and resource availability in stimulating creativity among teams. When employees feel secure in expressing novel ideas without risk of ridicule or reprimand, they are more likely to engage in divergent thinking and experimentation—both of which are precursors to innovation. Therefore, the organizational mechanisms that stimulate creativity are deeply intertwined with emotional and structural enablers.

From Creativity to Innovation: The Implementation Gap

Although creativity fuels the ideation phase, innovation depends on the successful execution and scaling of these ideas. Bridging the implementation gap requires robust intrapreneurial structures that support both conceptualization and commercialization. Amazon Web Services (AWS) provides a compelling case research in this regard. Initially a side concept proposed by an internal team, AWS was transformed into a billion-dollar business unit through leadership endorsement, resource allocation, and a structured innovation pipeline. Amazon's willingness to fund and incubate the idea within a risk-tolerant framework enabled it to transition from creative concept to market-leading innovation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

This case demonstrates the critical importance of innovation governance. Without clear pathways for selection, development, and scaling, even the most promising creative ideas may languish. Organizations must therefore invest in strategic processes that enable the incubation and institutionalization of new ideas. Such governance structures act as bridges, aligning intrapreneurial energy with organizational infrastructure and market opportunity.

Organizational Enablers of the Innovation Cycle

The dynamic interplay between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation is mediated by several key organizational enablers. Thematic synthesis from literature and case analyses revealed five consistent enablers that shape and sustain the innovation cycle.

First, organizational culture emerges as a foundational element. A values-driven culture that promotes experimentation, learning from failure, and autonomy significantly enhances the capacity for both creative ideation and intrapreneurial action (Schein, 2010). Second, leadership style particularly transformational and empowering leadership correlates positively with both innovation outcomes and employee engagement in intrapreneurial behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Third, psychological safety is essential. According to Edmondson (1999), the ability to take interpersonal risks within teams fosters open dialogue, which is a prerequisite for generating and refining creative ideas. Fourth, resource flexibility including adaptable budgets, time allowances, and staffing options enables experimentation and rapid prototyping of ideas. Finally, strategic alignment ensures that innovation efforts are not isolated but integrated into broader organizational goals. This alignment enhances legitimacy, improves resource support, and increases the likelihood of successful implementation.

Collectively, these enablers form a supportive ecosystem in which intrapreneurship triggers creativity, creativity acts as the engine of novelty, and innovation delivers measurable value. Organizations that understand and optimize these interdependencies are better positioned to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly dynamic environments.

Conclusion

This research has explored the intricate and synergistic relationship between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation, emphasizing their collective role in enabling sustainable organizational growth. Drawing from an interpretive analysis of secondary data including scholarly literature and exemplary case studies from companies like Google, 3M, Amazon, and W. L. Gore the research has demonstrated how intrapreneurial behaviour serves as a catalyst for creative thinking, which in turn drives innovation. The thematic analysis highlighted four critical areas: the cultivation of intrapreneurial culture and leadership, mechanisms that stimulate creativity, the conversion of ideas into innovation, and the organizational enablers that support these processes.

A central insight from this research is that intrapreneurship is not merely an individual trait but a systemic capability, rooted in cultural norms, leadership approaches, and organizational architecture. Leaders who encourage autonomy, tolerate failure, and provide strategic direction foster an internal ecosystem conducive to experimentation and ideation. Creativity, when adequately supported by psychological safety and cross-functional collaboration, becomes a generative force within the organization. However, without formal innovation governance structures, the leap from idea to execution often falters. Successful companies overcome this “implementation gap” by establishing innovation pipelines, resource flexibility, and strategic alignment mechanisms.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the research contributes to the growing body of research on organizational innovation by presenting a conceptual integration model that connects intrapreneurial behaviour, creative processes, and innovation outcomes. This model builds upon Amabile's (1996) componential theory and Schumpeterian innovation principles, while integrating real-world practices observed in leading organizations. Practically, the research offers a roadmap for executives, managers, and policymakers seeking to design innovation-oriented cultures. Organizations should prioritize developing leadership capabilities that empower employees, create environments of psychological safety, and establish robust frameworks to translate ideas into impactful innovations.

Future research could expand on this model by incorporating empirical data from different industry sectors or regional contexts to test the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into how intrapreneurial and creative capabilities evolve over time and how they interact with changing external environments.

In conclusion, the interplay between intrapreneurship, creativity, and innovation is not incidental it is essential. Organizations that intentionally foster this triad are more likely to adapt, grow, and lead in competitive, fast-paced markets. By embedding intrapreneurial thinking at the core of

organizational strategy and culture, companies can unlock the full potential of their people and transform creative ideas into enduring value.

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