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The role of ambidextrous leadership in developing team-level ambidexterity: Exploring the supporting roles of reflective conversations and ambidextrous HRM

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ABSTRACT
This study highlights how constructs of importance to management in Africa – ambidextrous leadership and team learning – can extend or modify our existing management theories. Adopting an exploratory design with an interpretive philosophy, this study explores how supermarket store managers engage their subordinates in team learning sessions to enable their collective ambidexterity, facilitated by the presence of reflective conversations (RC) and ambidextrous human resource management (HRM) policies and practices. Based on our raw data, we develop a process-based model that shows how ambidextrous leadership behaviors can help develop team-level ambidexterity, including the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM practices in the process. This model thus seeks to motivate theoretically future ambidexterity research in Africa, as the theoretical ideas and themes in this study can be replicated and be broadly applied to future ambidexterity research on the continent. This model will, therefore, contribute to the theoretical development of African management literature and, accordingly, adds significant value to the mainstream ambidexterity literature.

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Introduction

This study explores the learning activities adopted by supermarket store managers and their teams to achieve a balance between their exploration and exploitation activities. In doing so, the study contributes to the theoretical development of the emerging theory of team-level ambidexterity. Theorized as a balanced focus on exploitation of existing competencies (efficiency) and exploration of new knowledge (innovation) (Huang et al., 2021; Li & Cui, 2018), ambidexterity is built largely on the March (1991) exploitation-exploration model. In this study, the author argues that previous research on team-level ambidexterity has neglected or underestimated the specific learning

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interventions underlying the development of team-level ambidexterity. Therefore, this paper explores the learning activities, their sequence, the actors involved, their effects on team-level ambidexterity, and how a leader can generate and organize such infrastructures that facilitate a team's ability to achieve a balance between their explorative and exploitative activities.

Given the significance of team-level ambidexterity in organizational functioning (Han et al., 2022), research examining ambidexterity at the team level is growing. Yet, there is a paucity of research examining the learning activities (and their sequences) involved in developing team-level ambidexterity. For instance, Kostopoulos and Bozionelos (2011) examined the interplay between psychological safety, task conflict, and team performance in developing team-level ambidexterity. Jansen et al. (2016) argued the role of socio-psychological factors – team cohesion and team efficacy – in achieving team-level ambidexterity. Kwak et al. (2020) proposed a toolkit for measuring the impact of information technology (IT) on developing team-level ambidexterity, while Li et al. (2018) explained the role of team diversity in developing team-level ambidexterity. Yet, our understanding of how to organize the learning activities involved in developing team-level ambidexterity, is, at best, limited. Although a range of human resource (HR) strategies has been proposed for developing organizational ambidexterity (Kim, 2019), there has been minimal focus on how HRM supports team-level ambidexterity (Jørgensen & Becker, 2017). Yet, aligning the HRM practices with the team context is critical (Jørgensen & Becker, 2017) and leaves us with many unanswered questions. For instance, what type of HR practices are required in developing team-level ambidexterity? How can such HR practices be aligned with the team context? What learning sequence underlies the development of team-level ambidexterity? Who determines this sequence? Although recent research conceives that a leader's dialectical thinking and collective team identification are key in creating team-level ambidexterity (Han et al., 2022), several issues fundamental to this debate remain controversial. For instance, how does the HR function interact with the team leader's ambidextrous behavior to achieve team-level ambidexterity? Although Nemanich and Vera (2009) stressed the role of transformational leadership and the values incorporated in a learning culture in attaining team-level ambidexterity, we still lack an understanding of what aspects of the team learning activities should be internalized or externalized. Also, little is known about the external factors that can influence the development of team-level ambidexterity. We view these gaps as significant omissions in the theoretical development of the team-level ambidexterity literature. Furthermore, there is significant ambiguity regarding the conceptualization of team development in the team learning literature. One gray area is a lack of consensus on the theoretical foundation of team development. However, despite such lack of agreement, the role of reflective conversations (RC) in team development has been sufficiently highlighted. Specifically, RC is a vehicle for interactive learning (Lamy & Goodfellow, 1999), diagnosis of learners' needs (Shaughnessy et al., 2014), development of professional knowledge (Aparicio Landa et al., 2020), shared meaning (Crow & Smith, 2005), creativity and community (Jackson & Willmott, 1987), which are key in developing collective ambidexterity in a team.

Focusing on top supermarkets in Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK), this study, therefore, explores how store managers' explorative and exploitative activities (linked to ambidextrous leadership behaviors) and supported by RC and ambidextrous

HRM practices can indirectly enhance the collective ambidexterity of their teams. Ambidexterity is seen as central to performance in this sector, with Amankwah-Amoah and Osabutey (2020) attributing some strategic failures found in the British supermarket Tesco's expansion in the UK and USA to unbalanced attention to explorative and exploitative activities. Amankwah-Amoah and Osabutey (2020), therefore, suggest how firms (especially supermarkets) based in emerging markets could learn from such strategic failures by such a global giant. The present study builds on the study by Amankwah-Amoah and Osabutey (2020). Using empirical evidence, this paper examines a leader's ambidextrous behavior, the learning activities involved, and the roles of ambidextrous HRM and RC as antecedents of team-level ambidexterity. Specifically, this study establishes the team learning activities adopted by supermarket teams, the learning sequence, the infrastructures, the actors, and how their roles influence attainment of ambidexterity of supermarket teams. The paper proposes a model which may benefit organizations/managers to create infrastructures that support developing ambidexterity in teams.

This study makes five major contributions. First, it highlights how constructs of importance to management in Africa (i.e., ambidextrous leadership and team learning) can extend or modify our existing management theories. For instance, the current paper is one of the rare studies to utilize empirical data to examine how managers can utilize reflective conversations during team learning sessions to help their teams attain their collective ambidexterity. Second, it will help management researchers, educators, and practitioners in Africa understand how ambidextrous leadership behaviors can help managers and their teams achieve a balance between their explorative and exploitative activities. Third, based on our raw data, we develop a process-based model that shows how team-level ambidexterity can be developed through ambidextrous leadership behavior, including the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM practices in the process. Fourth, it will motivate theoretically future ambidexterity research in Africa, as the theoretical ideas and themes in this study can be replicated and be broadly applied to future ambidexterity research on the continent; it, therefore, contributes to the theoretical development of Africa management literature. Finally, given the lack of ambidexterity research in the African context (Cunha et al., 2019; Jacobs & Maritz, 2020), this study, therefore, adds significant value to the mainstream ambidexterity literature.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. First, the literature on the role of ambidextrous leadership in developing team-level ambidexterity and the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM practices in the process, is reviewed. Next, the method is discussed and justified. Subsequently, the findings are presented and analyzed. Thereafter, the findings are discussed. Finally, the conclusion provides implications for leadership and HRM, followed by a summation of the limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

Literature Review

Theorizing Team-Level Ambidexterity: The Role of Ambidextrous Leadership

Despite growing research linking individual ambidexterity with the learning literature (e.g., Papachroni & Heracleous, 2020; Vallina et al., 2019), attaining ambidexterity at the individual level is still restricted by work-group norms (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999),

and the lack of knowledge and time (March, 1991). These factors restrict a person's ability to develop both exploration and exploitation competencies (Ambos et al., 2008), or to switch their mindsets between them at short intervals (Mom et al., 2009; Simsek et al., 2009), which is a key cognitive capability for ambidextrous individuals (Parker, 2014). Remedying these situations calls for the attainment of ambidexterity at the team level; unlike the individual, teams can cope with several challenges involving the combination of conflicting demands and contradictory agendas as far as explorative and exploitative activities at work are concerned (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016).

Team-level ambidexterity also faces its own constraints. Teams in settings such as assembly lines or call centers face a severe ambidexterity dilemma regarding how much time they should spend each day exploiting the same set of basic skills and how much should be spent on developing new sets of skills to become more creative (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013). Furthermore, although work teams are required to scan their environments regularly (Maynard et al., 2015) and to switch their mindsets between exploration and exploitation as required (Jansen et al., 2016), successful teams rarely pause to re-scan their environments (Levinthal & March, 1993). This tendency not to review teams' perceptions or to re-examine their environment attentively has been termed "the success trap" (Levinthal & March, 1993, p. 106), which is due to an expectation that success will continue (Starbuck & Hedberg, 2001). Ambidextrous leadership is, therefore, needed in allocating resources and in managing the cross-fertilization between the team's explorative and exploitative activities (Luu et al., 2019; Rogan & Mors, 2014). This approach is crucial for making jobs with ambidexterity dilemmas (such as the supermarket sector studied here) more interesting, and thus more motivating for employees and teams (Luu et al., 2019). Ambidextrous leadership has also been linked with job enrichment, especially in "repetitive" jobs, as a blend of explorative and exploitative tasks increases not just the level of interest but also the meaningfulness of the work (Parker, 2014). Yet, the mainstream ambidextrous literature has focused mainly on the processes, structures and systems that facilitate ambidexterity at the firm level (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008), ignoring the crucial role of the team leaders in helping their teams to achieve synergy between explorative and exploitative activities in their work roles (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016). Although Matsuo (2017) examined the contribution of the manager's ambidextrous leadership behavior to subordinates' learning, the study focused solely on exploration activities (not exploitation *per se*). Kauppila and Tempelaar (2016) examined leadership behavior, but as a determinant of individual rather than team-level ambidexterity. Drawing upon and building on the work of Mom et al. (2007, 2009, 2015), which examines exploration and exploitation (Matsuo, 2017), the current paper examines the role of ambidextrous leadership behaviors in helping top supermarkets in Nigeria, South Africa, and the UK achieve collective ambidexterity within their teams.

From studies on exploitation and exploration (Matsuo, 2017; Mom et al., 2007, 2009, 2015, 2019), it is evident that team leaders' exploration activities involve both bottom-up and horizontal transfers of knowledge, while their exploitation activities consist of top-down knowledge transfer (Mom et al., 2007). Specifically, exploitation involves refining and expanding prevailing technologies, applying existing competencies, improving, and applying existing product and technical knowledge, while expanding on existing beliefs and choices (Mom et al., 2007, 2009, 2015). In contrast, team leaders' exploration activities involve searching for novel ideas, unique competencies, new business

strategies, new target markets, and experimenting with new techniques in production, while reviewing prevailing beliefs and choices (Mom et al., 2007, 2009, 2015). Typically undertaken by team leaders (Kassotaki, 2019) and linked with team reflexivity (Hammedi et al., 2011), exploration activities are the foundation of team-level discussions and evaluations of alternatives, and through intellectual stimulation (Kung et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020) team leaders encourage team members to reflect on their work practices (Matsuo, 2017). Through such social learning processes (Bandura, 1977), team leaders act as important role models (Matsuo, 2017) and can change their team's frame of reference (Luu et al., 2019; Mezirow, 1997) by expediting the discarding of obsolete knowledge (Matsuo, 2017) and maximizing existing competencies, while creating new ones (Li & Cui, 2018). Therefore, ambidextrous leadership behavior improves team performance, especially in work settings with high degrees of uncertainty and independence (Mom et al., 2015), such as the supermarket sector studied here.

The role of supportive leadership (Nemanich & Vera, 2009) in helping teams achieve a balance between their exploration and exploitation activities has also been linked to "paradoxical leadership" (a blend of strong managerial support with high performance expectations), which enables followers to realize ambidextrous behavior (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016, p. 1019). Kapoutsis et al. (2019) highlighted leadership skills as antecedents of team-level ambidexterity. Both the CEO's transformational leadership (e.g., Pan et al., 2021) and the CEO's ambidextrous leadership (e.g., Luo et al., 2018) are also found to influence the balance between exploratory and exploitative learning across the organization. Chang (2016) also found top management leadership skills to be responsible for creating a climate of autonomy and promoting ambidexterity within teams. Transformational leaders especially stimulate cooperation among employees through an inspiring shared vision and high-performance expectations (Ojha et al., 2018). Such a shared vision not only symbolizes the common goal of the team, but expresses a common strategic direction (Luu et al., 2019) that mirrors the developmental pathway towards the team's future (Larwood et al., 1995; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). This vision minimizes conflicting agendas while balancing exploration and exploitation activities at both firm and team levels (Luu et al., 2019). Other studies (e.g., Kassotaki, 2019; Kung et al., 2020) have found that leaders can create innovative cultures at the firm level that encourage employees to test novel ideas, while reinforcing prevailing competencies. Yet, research that links ambidextrous leadership to team-level ambidexterity is still lacking. Therefore, our first research question is:

(1) How does the ambidextrous behavior of team leaders help to achieve team-level ambidexterity?

The Supporting Role of Reflective Conversations

The workplace is increasingly recognized in both human resource development (HRD) (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2014) and HRM (e.g., Clarke, 2006) as a key site for learning, and the workplace learning literature has shifted its focus from formal, irregular learning, to a progressively informal, experiential learning (Garavan et al., 2002). A key insight from the workplace learning literature is the importance of reflective conversations (RC) (Matsuo & Nakahara, 2013). RC is a tool for group interaction, knowledge creation

(Chen, 2008; Nonaka, 1994), knowledge sharing (Luu et al., 2019), questioning taken-for-granted assumptions (Argote et al., 2021), and enhancing feedback seeking behavior during team learning sessions (Edmondson, 1999). In these various ways, RC serves to improve team development and performance (Matsuo & Nakahara, 2013), learner autonomy and self-directedness (Carey et al., 2017), creates enduring learning outcomes (Ryan & Ryan, 2013) and stimulate higher order thinking (Coulson & Harvey, 2013). The stages in a team's RC include analyzing the current dilemma, defining the role of individual members (Welp et al., 2018) and developing a strategic solution through cooperative behaviors during open discussions (Somech et al., 2009). RC thus aims to turn a negative experience into a positive one (Lutz et al., 2013).

RC can be classified into five levels: reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing (Bain et al., 1999). This classification has been developed to provide a framework to help our understanding of these levels (Andriyani et al., 2017). Team leaders utilize *reporting* to identify obstacles and discuss them with their team. *Responding* allows the team to air their opinions as reactions to such issues that are at stake. The team utilize *relating* to analyze previous action points as the root causes of the obstacles. *Reasoning* involves attaining future action points for dealing with such situations, should they recur. Finally, *reconstruction* involves recreating the problem with a view to attempting to tackle it with the proposed action point reached in the reasoning stage (Andriyani et al., 2017).

Despite such sophisticated theorizing in the literature, there is still a lack of empirical evidence examining the role of RC as an antecedent of team-level ambidexterity. To contribute to filling this research gap, our second research question is:

(2) How effective is RC in helping the teams achieve a balance between their explorative and exploitative activities during team learning sessions in these supermarkets?

The Role of Supportive HRM Practices

The links between HRM and ambidexterity are beginning to be unpacked (Malik et al., 2019), building on existing research on the links between HRM and innovation. Earlier studies on HRM and innovation (e.g., Schuler & Jackson, 1987) examined the role of trust, empowerment and effective job design, while later studies (e.g., Seeck & Diehl, 2017) considered antecedents such as the firm's industry, strategy, structure and culture. Other identified links between HRM and innovation include the role of appropriate HRM cultures, practices and key behaviors (Smith et al., 2012), investing in people and people management practices (Malik et al., 2019), nurturing appropriate capabilities in employees (Ahammad et al., 2015), motivating and providing opportunities to innovate (Ahammad et al., 2015), and enabling ambidextrous learning (Lichtenthaler, 2009; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Other HRM practices relevant to ambidexterity include human resources (HR) slack (Amankwah-Amoah & Adomako, 2021), high performance work systems (Foss & Larsen, 2003; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008), and augmented high-performance HR practices (Kostopoulos et al., 2015), which hinge on sophistication in training, and team-based job designs (Simsek et al., 2009). An ambidextrous-supportive HRM system (Patel et al., 2013), which is required to develop the cognitive abilities needed to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation (Huang & Kim,

2013), centers on constant training, improved employee experience, and intrinsic reward systems (Chang et al., 2009). This set of HRM practices is termed *ambidextrous HRM* (Garaus et al., 2016).

Malik et al. (2019) also found that by creating a culture of trust, openness and risk-taking, empowerment-focused HRM practices facilitated exploration of new ideas, while efficiency-focused HRM practices aided the exploitation of the organization's existing strengths. Their study also found a link between HRM practices and ambidexterity. They suggest embedding both exploration and exploitation learning modes in employees' daily tasks, while developing reward systems that recognize and encourage ambidextrous behaviors. Therefore, our third research question is:

(3) How effective is ambidextrous HRM in helping the team leaders and their teams achieve their collective ambidexterity?

Methodology

This section outlines the research activities undertaken during the data collection and analysis processes to illustrate their level of rigor (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010) and thus demonstrates the trustworthiness – credibility and transferability – of this study (Gioia et al., 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2012). This research followed an exploratory design with an interpretive philosophy. Its participants were 40 store managers from top supermarkets in Nigeria, South Africa, and the UK.

The sampling method was purposive. Purposive sampling – sampling with a distinctive purpose (Saunders et al., 2012) – is argued to be the appropriate approach when the target participants are distinct (White et al., 2018), as is the case with store managers of top supermarkets. In selecting the supermarkets, it was important to choose those that have the potential to learn, retain ideas, retrieve (i.e., reflect on) the knowledge and apply the knowledge (i.e., experiential) in similar situations in the future (Moon, 2004). These qualities are typical of high-performing organizations (Moon, 2013) and, therefore, each supermarket chosen in each country is well known as high-performing, highly viable and of an internationally comparable standard. In selecting store manager participants, the criteria were that they should be working in stores with a well-defined management hierarchy, in charge of the entire store, and leading a team. These criteria are relevant for addressing the key focus of this study: whether the team leaders' exploration and exploitation activities can enhance the collective ambidexterity of their teams. Combining the criteria for selecting supermarkets and store managers, the researcher narrowed down the choice to the UK's big four supermarkets, where 10 participants were interviewed, South Africa's biggest, from which 16 participants were interviewed, and eight Nigerian supermarkets, from which 14 participants were interviewed. Originally, 50 participants were targeted, but the data collection had to cease after the 40th participants, as data saturation was reached at this point. The selection of the South African and Nigerian supermarkets was based on the ranking by their respective Chambers of Commerce. The criteria for ranking supermarkets in these three countries are the same – store appearance, queueing time, staff availability, range of products, quality of own-label products, quality of fresh produce, value for money, and customer satisfaction scores.

Data Collection

The data collection strategy followed Liu and Rong's (2015) recommendation that each interview participant be allowed ample time to elaborate on their opinions during interviews. The data collection had five key focuses: (1) to explore the prevalence of team learning in each store, (2) to identify whether the team integrates a blend of exploration and exploitation activities during the team learning sessions, (3) to establish the role of the team leaders in the process, (4) to assess the role of team members in the process, and (5) to examine the role of supportive HR practices in helping the teams achieve a balance between their exploration and exploitation activities during the process. (See the appendix for the interview protocol and the steps involved.) The raw data were collected during store visits which happened between September 2014 and June 2015. The data were collected via 40 in-depth semi-structured interviews, with an overall duration of (approximately) 88 hours of raw data collection, signifying an average of 2 h 20 min per interview. Prior to the store visits, an average of three emails was sent to each participant to inform them of the purpose of the visit and the goal of the interview, and to also solicit their consent. Due to such exchanges, willingness to participate was high across both continents. However, participants requested assurance that the conversations would be paused as often as required to enable them to attend to their businesses' needs, and that the interviews would only occur during their businesses' off-peak sales periods. Table 1 illustrates the data collection process.

Table 1. Data collection process.

Steps	Activities
Step 1	Establish the focus and scope of the research.
Step 2	Develop the research questions.
Step 3	Decide the individual supermarkets to include in the research.
Step 4	Decide the appropriate research instruments and protocols, e.g., the appropriate qualitative data gathering techniques: in this case, the semi-structured interviews.
Step 5	Determine the "suitable" participants: a vertical and horizontal slice of the participants to establish whether each prospective participant is a store manager, and not an owner manager.
Step 6	Data collection period – UK Supermarkets (September 2014 – December 2014)
Step 7	Data collection period – Nigerian Supermarkets (January 2015 – March 2015)
Step 8	Data collection period – South African Supermarkets (March 2015 – June 2015)
Step 9	Data analysis (See below for the steps involved)
Step 10	Dissemination: report and article development

Data Analysis

The Eisenhardt Method

The Eisenhardt method emphasizes the role of theoretical argument in building theories that hook the reader's attention in qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989a, 2021). Given the theoretical argument required to explain how ambidextrous leadership behavior can help to develop team-level ambidexterity (and the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM in the process), insights from the "Eisenhardt Method" were too pertinent to overlook. This study also draws upon Yin's (1984) work on cases (and replication logic) and Strauss and Corbin's (2008) groundbreaking methods of theoretical sampling and saturation, as well as the iterative method of continuous comparison of data and theory.

Justifications for Adopting the "Eisenhardt Method"

The "Eisenhardt Method" was adopted for the following reasons. First, there is a lack of prior theory and/or empirical evidence that examines the link between ambidextrous leadership behavior and team-level ambidexterity (Eisenhardt, 2021). Second, by linking ambidextrous leadership behavior to team-level ambidexterity, our research explores an uncharted theory in a well-researched literature (Eisenhardt, 2021), which Eisenhardt (1989b) viewed as a "cool" yet under-studied phenomenon. Third, given the lack of prior empirical evidence (especially in Africa) that examines our research questions, our findings are very likely to produce abundant opportunities for theory building (Eisenhardt, 2021). To help us answer our research questions, our study also extends into the broad learning literature which links learning experience with learning outcome (Eisenhardt, 2021). Bingham and Eisenhardt (2011) term this approach looking inside the black box of a process. Specifically, our interview questions investigate how team learning sessions in the supermarkets can generate collective ambidexterity of the teams.

Furthermore, our research questions explore a unique setting (Eisenhardt, 2021): top supermarkets in Nigeria, South Africa, and the UK. Using theoretical sampling (i.e., a careful case selection of high-performing, highly viable and internationally comparable supermarkets), this method has the capacity not only to eliminate supermarkets that are not of theoretical interest (i.e., lacking these requisite qualities), but also to enhance generalizability (Eisenhardt, 2021). Consistent with Bingham and Eisenhardt's (2011) study on Singapore, the United States, and Finland, selecting such cases with the same focal phenomena and from three culturally distinct countries can enhance generalizability (i.e., transferability) of the emergent theory across settings (Eisenhardt, 2021).

Moreover, our samples share some characteristics (e.g., store appearance, queueing time, staff availability, range of products, quality of own-label products, quality of fresh produce, value for money, and customer score) that have previously predicted successful outcomes from prior research (Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011). Given such similarities, our study not only presents novel theoretical opportunities that enhance theory building (Eisenhardt, 2021), but has the potential to refine an existing empirical focus (Eisenhardt, 2021; Hallen & Eisenhardt, 2012; Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020).

To achieve qualitative rigor in inductive research (Gioia et al., 2013), the goal (of the analysis) should be to attain a fit between the data collected and the dominant theory (Eisenhardt, 2021). To achieve such a *fit*, this study followed recommendations on repetition of logic (Yin, 1984) and continuous comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 2008), facilitated by an iterative organization, grouping, and regrouping of the raw data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while generating more abstract conceptualization (Walsh et al., 2015). With robust theoretical arguments, such an unrelenting and creative iterative process not only provides a high level of fit between the theory and cases, remarkably well (Eisenhardt, 1989a, 2021), but it demonstrates why particular developing relationships between constructs are likely to hold (Eisenhardt, 2021). Finally, when similar sets of data from multiple cases are combined in qualitative research (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011), the theoretical arguments must be based on data and logic (Eisenhardt, 2021). To meet these requirements, the data analysis process drew on Alo (2020) and Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggestions regarding the six-stage process of qualitative data analysis.

The Six-Stage Data Analysis Process: Procedures and Steps Adopted

Data Familiarization

To become familiar with the raw data, the researcher commenced the data analysis process by, first, listening to the recorded audio interviews several times. This first stage was followed by data transcription of all the audio files into written files. To ensure an exhaustive transcription of the data, the researcher had to crosscheck all the written texts (i.e., the transcripts) against their corresponding oral interviews (i.e., the recorded audio) data. Although no substantial differences were found, a few amendments (of the interview quotes) were made, for ease of display (Alo, 2020).

Generating the Initial Codes

Having transcribed all the interview data, the next stage was the coding of the interview transcripts. Based on the similarities in meaning of the data, the coding process involved categorization and segmentation of the transcribed data into various units of more meaningful and unified categories, and assigning conceptual tags to each group of data, for ease of identification, which thus enhanced their validity. The coding process continued until sufficient unique categories had emerged to distinguish among the various groups of data (Eisenhardt, 1989a; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). This exhaustive coding process also enhanced validity by facilitating an alignment between the themes and their corresponding raw interview data (Goulding, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Despite coding each category of data separately, confusion still occurred in a few instances, requiring the raw interview data to be revisited for amendments and recoding, and thereafter to be realigned with their corresponding themes.

Searching for Themes

The third stage of the data analysis process involved creating a more meaningful and memorable expression of the data sets. Based on the corresponding theories, the researcher wrote three distinctive statements (i.e., the three main themes; see the data analysis section) to show how ambidextrous leadership behaviors of the team leaders influence the development of team-level ambidexterity, through RC, during team learning sessions, facilitated by the presence of ambidextrous HRM. Based on their similarities in meanings and coupled with their relationships with the corresponding themes and the key issues addressed in this study (Alo, 2020), these data sets were assigned to themes.

Reviewing the Themes

At this stage, a team of three very experienced qualitative researchers was involved in expert checks. Acting as critical friends (Kember et al., 1997) and research auditors (Filho & Rettig, 2016), the team held several peer debriefing meetings with the researcher. Following each meeting, the team sent constructive feedback to the researcher, and, on a few instances, it was required that the researcher recode and regroup a few data units, until consensus was reached between the researcher and the team of well-trained qualitative researchers.

Redefinition and Renaming of Themes

As suggested by the three critical friends, the names of each regrouped and refined theme needed to be well defined and clarified. Therefore, the fifth step in the thematic data analysis process involved redefining and renaming the themes. This approach not only helped the study to maximize the identified themes (Alo, 2020); it also enhances the readers' understanding of the significant relationship between the various constructs involved in the study and strengthens the validity of the study.

Report Writing

To further enhance the credibility and transferability of the results, good report writing is key to further interpreting the results (Alo, 2020). With a thorough report writing effort, coupled with meticulous scrutiny by the three critical friends, the report writing has further clarified the important relationship between the raw data and the corresponding literature. This approach involved a thorough examination of the data to clarify further and strengthen the link between the interview responses and the corresponding extant literature, as Liu and Rong (2015) recommended making a strong comparison and connection between the findings and the dominant theory.

Findings

The interview data suggest that team leaders follow a relatively linear process in terms of the way they engage their teams in exploitation or exploration. First, the team leader explores and reflects on the business environment (often in response to a specific problem which has arisen). Second, they engage their teams to explore and question taken-for-granted assumptions using RC, which leads to the development of new strategic approaches to exploit existing opportunities. Third, if the gap between the team's capability and the demands of exploitation and exploration remains, team leaders meet with their supervisors to explore other alternatives. Finally, as a last resort, team leaders draw upon supportive HRM practices to try to close the gap by nurturing the appropriate capabilities in their team. In coding the interview transcripts, the researcher observed the extent to which the teams engaged in social learning (Bandura, 1977) in rather holistic ways, where, acting as important role models (Matsuo, 2017), team leaders lead their teams to share knowledge (i.e., through collective experience, *cf.* Nonaka, 1994) and to plan and control resources to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation. To help make sense of the data, three themes relating to the different responses from participants were termed *the role of ambidextrous leadership, the mediating roles of team learning and RC, and the supporting role of ambidextrous HRM practices*.

The Role of Ambidextrous Leadership

Participants frequently described scanning their business environment, reflecting upon the challenges and opportunities (detected) facing their stores, and involving staff in discussions about these situations. The quotes below show that these team leaders utilize

their exploration activities as the foundation for team-level discussions and evaluations of alternatives, and through intellectual stimulation these leaders encourage team members to reflect on their work practices. This approach epitomizes ambidextrous leadership:

> … I visit similar stores to learn from them … in turn I convert the result of such visits into a plan which I share with my top management and staff … (Nigerian participant 4)

> … I often identify where and when necessary actions such as expansion or relocation are needed, or areas that will bring development to the staff or satisfaction to the customers … I usually share such ideas with the staff during my Monday morning briefings with staff … I also brief the top management on areas that need improvement. (South African participant 17)

> … the moment I discovered that there are many Asians in the area that is covered by my store I discussed with my team how we should change the store to suit the needs of this special group of customers … (UK participant 6)

The above quotes confirm that the team leaders are involved in both exploration (i.e., bottom-up and horizontal) and exploitation (i.e., top down) activities of knowledge transfer (Mom et al., 2015). For instance, after scanning their environments, team leaders will first meet with their staff to try to apply their existing competencies (Kassotaki, 2019; Luu et al., 2019). If this approach is not sufficient, team leaders will consult their top management in search of novel ideas, unique competencies, new business strategies, new target markets, and how to experiment with new techniques in production, while reviewing prevailing beliefs and choices (Mom et al., 2015). However, the author is not trying to give the impression that all types of leadership can achieve team level ambidexterity. But, as the next set of quotes illustrates, transformational leadership utilizes RC to facilitate collective learning experiences and inspires teams to question some taken-for-granted assumptions during such learning sessions while evaluating a range of alternatives, thus producing novel solutions to crucial problems at work:

> … For instance, if I notice that a particular section isn't performing up to the required level, we would be made to look at the lines where their profits are always reducing and … take those lines out and … open up on the lines they are doing very well. So, by getting rid of their losses they increase their profit and chances of expansion (i.e., inspirational motivation). (UK participant 7)

> … the moment I discovered that there are many Asians in the area that is covered by my store I discussed with my team how we should change the store to suit the needs of this special group of customers … (i.e., idealized influence). (UK participant 6)

Another common theme running through what participants said is how ambidextrous leadership can maximize their team's capability towards goal accomplishment (Page et al., 2021), thus helping the team to achieve a balance between their exploitative and explorative activities. See also as further illustrated below:

> … I normally rotate the role-player by assigning a different role-player to the same task, and under a close watch. (Nigerian participant 9)

> … I try to identify who is best at what, so as to drive their capabilities (i.e., individualized consideration). (UK participant 9)

As confirmed by what participants said, ambidextrous leadership identifies, rewards, and nurtures the hidden talents in their teams (Kapoutsis et al., 2019). This approach fosters

team members' self-efficacy (i.e., individuals believe in their capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments) (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Through vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1977), ambidextrous leadership can collectively help the team to achieve a balance between the demands of their exploitative and explorative behavior:

> … If any member of staff develops a novel solution to any crucial problem, they are rewarded accordingly … For instance, a female member of staff recently developed an action plan to be implemented in wastage management programme, and it was tried, and it worked. Consequently, she has now successfully passed through the management development programme and has been signed off to head her own store as a store manager (i.e., intellectual stimulation). (UK participant 1)

> … as we keep opening new stores, my role as the team leader includes identifying talented staff … the idea is that such talented staff can be developed and promoted to become the manager of one of those new stores … (i.e., inspirational motivation). (South African participant 8)

The above quotes demonstrate how ambidextrous leadership utilize their transformational leadership skills to guide their teams around obstacles. We have shown how these leaders provide a supportive learning environment that facilitates a collective learning experience for their teams during team learning sessions. Our participants have also shown how they inspire, challenge and motivate their subordinates to try something new and to make additional discretionary effort to help achieve team objectives. Such efforts not only maximize the team's creativity and their problem-solving skills, but also help to achieve a balance between their explorative and exploitative activities. The quotes from the next theme reveal how ambidextrous leadership engage their teams in experiential learning via RC to help their teams achieve a balance between the demands of exploitation and exploration.

The Mediating Roles of Reflective Conversations (RC)

The next set of quotes shows that participants quite often – daily, weekly, or monthly – engage in reflective learning and experiential learning following their regular (re)scanning of their business environment. This approach confirms how frequently ambidextrous leaders involve staff in reflection, in discussions, and in testing new business strategies while reviewing existing principles:

> We do the reflections … to know what we have to do each day to keep the business moving forward. (UK participant 6)

> I collaborate with my staff to perform weekly reflections on the performance of the business, every Monday. (Nigerian participant 8)

> … I reflect with my staff on the performance of the business, which we normally do during our monthly meetings … (South African participant 5)

Regular reflection is crucial for avoiding the success trap (Levinthal & March, 1993). Furthermore, as indicated by these quotes, RC facilitates group interaction, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing (Luu et al., 2019), and questioning some taken-for-granted assumptions (Argote et al., 2021):

> … we currently have a problem of shrinkage [sudden and unexplained disappearance of goods from the shelves], so that makes us to engage on daily reflections to make sure we know exactly what is missing … (UK participant 1)

> We use the reflection to evaluate our monthly performance, to plan ahead for the coming month with the aim of adjusting where loopholes could be identified and finding ways for improvement … (Nigerian participant 9)

Such collective learning experience echoes Bandura's (1977) theorizing on the social learning process, where, acting as important role models (Matsuo, 2017), ambidextrous leaders can change their team's frame of reference (Luu et al., 2019).

The Supporting Role of Ambidextrous HRM Practices

Another common theme running across the data was the sophistication of their training, and where participants reveal how HRM is an important factor in shaping appropriate cultures, practices, and key behaviors. Indeed, a closer analysis of what participants' statements say (about HR) highlights the need for identifying and investing in people and people management practices, as well as collaboration between HR, team leaders and line managers:

> Our company's HR translates the result of such reflection into training and developmental activities, such as cashiers' trainings and development, and sometimes adopting mystery shoppers [individuals paid to act the role of shoppers and report on their experiences and the performances of staff]. The reports of the mystery shoppers always mean there should be retraining of the cahiers involved until they get it right, for quality control. (South African participant 12)

> … someone may move out from the check out to the café, to petrol, etc. … such staff concerned is developed on the new role to acquire all the legal and mandatory trainings that go with the new role, especially with high-risk roles like petrol. (UK participant 9)

> The company also provides cashiers' trainings for the cashiers and trainings on merchandising techniques to other staff, on regular basis. (Nigerian participant 8)

These comments illustrate the role of efficiency-focused HRM practices in exploiting an organization's existing strengths (Malik et al., 2019). Investing in efficiency-focused HR practices has also been linked to nurturing those cognitive abilities needed to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation (Huang & Kim, 2013). Such importance of efficiency-focused HR is further illustrated in the next set of quotes:

> … HR then uses such feedback as an input for training and developmental planning … examples of such training and developmental activities that follow include written tests, seminars, workshops, e-trainings, use of DVDs and on-the-job learning. (South African participant 8)

> … our team do e-learning every four weekly on the shop floor … it covers various areas of our operations, such as alcohol training, health and safety training, etc. (UK participant 4)

> … at times the company hires external training consultants to provide what we call "structured work-through" … This involves bringing in neutral training providers to bring in new ideas that will spice up what we learn from our internal HRD officers … (South African participant 16)

Although the data show variation in their application of HRM practices, having supportive HRM systems is one common theme of participants' responses (Patel et al., 2013) – also known as ambidextrous HRM (Garaus et al., 2016) – evidenced, for example, through the sophistication of their use of training (Simsek et al., 2009). These findings are summarized in Table 2. The table was developed directly (i.e., as seen in the data) by the researcher.

Discussion

This study has unpacked the learning activities adopted by supermarket store managers and their teams to achieve a balance between their exploration and exploitation activities, and thus contributes to the theoretical development of the emerging theory of team-level ambidexterity. Specifically, the study has enhanced our understanding of the specific learning interventions underlying the attainment of ambidexterity at the team level, their sequence, and the roles of ambidextrous leadership behaviors, RC and ambidextrous HRM practices in the process. Previous studies have ignored the learning processes wherein ambidextrous leadership, RC and ambidextrous HRM act as antecedents of team-level ambidexterity (Jørgensen & Becker, 2017; Li, 2016). The present study provides novel insights into such learning interventions deliberately undertaken by ambidextrous team leaders to facilitate team-level ambidexterity. Consistent with previous research that the effectiveness of workplace learning is assessed in terms of the necessary behavioral changes in teams (Garavan et al., 2002; Edmondson, 2002), we found that the team leader, as an important role model (cf. Matsuo, 2017) and learning facilitator, is crucial for changing the team's frame of reference (Luu et al., 2019). For instance, team leaders frequently scan (explore) their business environment, reflect upon the challenges and opportunities (detected) facing their stores, and involve staff in discussions (i.e., through RC) about these situations. Through their exploration and exploitation activities (such as job rotation), the team leader also identifies, rewards, and nurtures the hidden talents in their teams (Kapoutsis et al., 2019), and inspires and encourages employees to take up new and higher job roles. Participants also revealed that they collaborate with HR in identifying and investing in people and people management practices. This proves the role of efficiency-focused HRM practices in exploiting an organization's existing strengths (Malik et al., 2019). These findings characterize ambidextrous leadership, RC and ambidextrous HRM as antecedents of team-level ambidexterity. We can infer from participants' responses a logical sequence of how team-level ambidexterity might be developed. This process is illustrated in Figure 1. Based on our raw data, Figure 1 shows our process-based model for enhancing team-level ambidexterity through ambidextrous leadership, and the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM practices in the process.

First, the team leaders scan the business environment to identify errors, untapped opportunities and embedded challenges. A regular, attentive review of the entire environment helps to adjust to a changing context (Argote et al., 2021), and to avoid "strategic drift" (Kolb, 2019, p. 344) or "faulty assumptions syndrome" (Straringham, 2012, p. 165), which are signs of weak or inappropriate strategic leadership (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021).

The next stage is where the team leader attempts to make sense of what was discovered at stage one, and by matching the team's prevailing strength with the discovered

Table 2. Linking ambidextrous leadership to team-level ambidexterity: the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM in the process.

Theoretical Framework & Research Question	Mechanism Adopted	Learning Intervention	Practical Relevance	Outcome
Theoretical Framework: *Ambidextrous Leadership* ***Research Question:*** 1	Participants frequently scan (i.e., explore) their business environment, reflecting upon the challenges and opportunities (detected) facing their stores, and involving staff in discussions about these challenges.	Participants utilize the result of their scanning of the business environment as the foundation for team-level discussions and evaluation of alternatives.	Through intellectual stimulation team leaders encourage team members to reflect on their work practices and devise better ways to exploit their existing strengths.	Following the scanning of the environment, participants will first meet with their staff to try and apply their existing competencies (i.e., exploitation); if this is not sufficient, participants will consult their supervisors or senior managers in search of novel ideas, unique competencies, new business strategies, new target markets, how to experiment with new techniques in production (exploration), while reviewing prevailing beliefs and choices (Mom et al., 2015).
Theoretical Framework: *Reflective Conversation (RC) during Team Learning* ***Research Question:*** 2	In response to any challenges and opportunities detected as they scan their business environments frequently, participants engage in reflective learning and experiential learning quite often – daily, weekly, or monthly.	Ambidextrous leadership involve staff in regular reflection, in discussions, and in testing new business strategies while reviewing existing principles.	1. Regular reflection is crucial for avoiding the success trap (Levinthal & March, 1993). 2. Through RC, group interaction facilitates knowledge creation, knowledge sharing (Luu et al., 2019). 3. RC also provides opportunities for questioning some taken for granted assumptions (Argote et al., 2021).	Such collective learning experience echoes Bandura's (1977) theorizing on the social learning process, where, acting as important role models (Matsuo, 2017), ambidextrous leadership can change their team's frame of reference (Luu et al., 2019).
Theoretical Framework: *Ambidextrous HRM Practices* ***Research Question:*** 3	Sophistications in trainings, and where participants reveal how ambidextrous HRM is an important factor in shaping appropriate cultures, practices, and key behaviors.	A high level of collaboration between HR and team leaders helps in identifying skill gaps and tailoring investment in people and people management practices, such that an organization's existing strengths is exploited and other alternatives explored through efficiency focused HRM practices (Malik et al., 2019).	Investing in efficiency focused HR practices has been linked to nurturing those cognitive abilities needed to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation (Huang & Kim, 2013).	Supportive HRM systems (Patel et al., 2013) – aka ambidextrous HRM (Garaus et al., 2016) – is key in shaping appropriate cultures, practices, and key behaviors needed to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation (Huang & Kim, 2013).

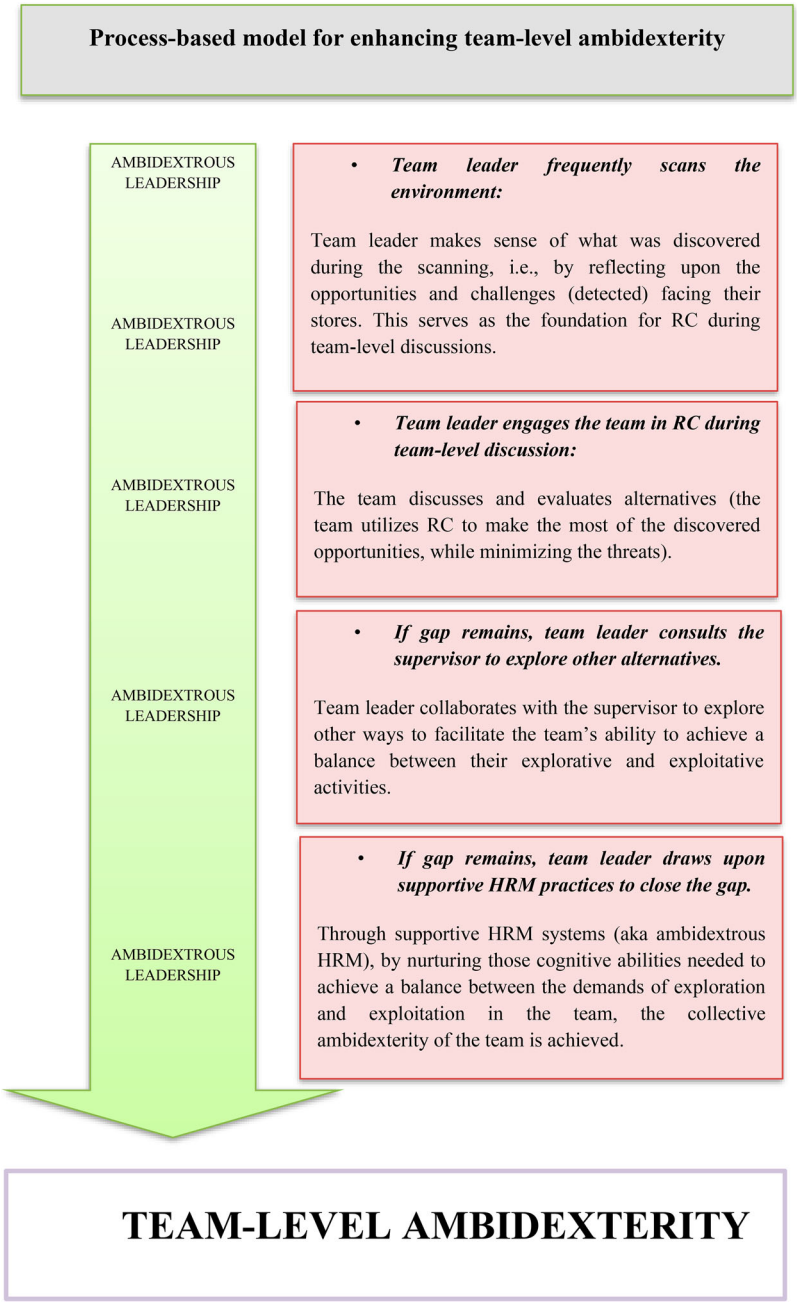

Figure 1. Process-based model for enhancing team-level ambidexterity.

opportunities. This second stage is what Barnett (1992, p. 77) refers to as "the action" stage, where the team leader embarks on personal reflection through reasoning, and with the aim of making knowledge claims and developing personal knowledge to be shared with the team during RC. This approach is linked to progressing through stages

of meaning-making (O'Neill & Viljoen, 2021), as participants revealed that they translate the results of such reflection into a plan they share with their team.

The third stage is the RC itself, where, as an important role model (Matsuo, 2017), the team leader oversees the group interaction process for knowledge creation, knowledge sharing (Luu et al., 2019), and for questioning some taken-for-granted assumptions (Argote et al., 2021). This stage also links to Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea of the learning community, and reflects Andriyani et al.'s (2017) theorizing on reporting, responding, relating, reasoning and reconstructing. Kolb (1984) theorized this stage as the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Similar to Kolb, Luu et al. (2019) argue that this stage presents an opportunity for the team leader to change the team's frame of reference, thus improving team development and performance (Lacerenza et al., 2018), which enhances their ability to achieve a balance between the demands of exploitation and exploration.

At the fourth stage, if found (during RC) that the team's existing strengths are insufficient to achieve a balance between the demands of exploration and exploitation, participants would consult their supervisors to explore other alternatives.

Finally, and as a last resort, the supervisors draw upon supportive HRM practices to try and close the gap, by nurturing the appropriate capabilities in the team (Smith et al., 2012). For instance, participants revealed that their HR utilize sophisticated training approaches such as *Mystery Shoppers* (for quality control), "structured work-through", *written tests, seminars, workshops, e-training, use of DVDs and on the job learning* to help achieve a balance between their exploitative and explorative activities.

A team's capacity to learn collectively and utilize such collective knowledge to achieve a balance between its exploitative and explorative activities demonstrates not only the effectiveness of team learning (Crick et al., 2013, p. 2255), but also the team leader's ambidextrous behavior. Developing such an ability depends not only on members' collective engagement in the learning process through collaborative enquiry (i.e., through RC) (Luu et al., 2019), but also leadership capability. Yet, how HR can develop such ambidextrous leadership behavior in team leaders to prepare them as frontrunners of team learning in organizations still lacks the deserved scholarly attention. Developing team leaders through sophisticated training, e.g., mentoring, simulation exercises and role-playing (Kimura, 2015), could be crucial for preparing them for such a role. A careful selection and retention of team leaders who have the capacity to handle paradoxical situations (Hay & Blenkinsopp, 2019; Junni et al., 2015) and adequate compensation of leaders with practical wisdom (Kapoutsis et al., 2019, p. 638) is also crucial for attaining team-level ambidexterity. Moreover, high-commitment HRM practices (McClean & Collins, 2011) with an adequate compensation system that encourages and rewards ambidextrous leadership behaviors (Yoon & Chae, 2012) is crucial for developing ambidextrous leadership (Prieto-Pastor & Martin-Perez, 2015). Furthermore, embedding both exploration and exploitation learning modes in employees' daily tasks, while adopting reward systems that recognize and encourage ambidextrous behaviors is also suggested (Malik et al., 2019). Such an adequate compensation system that rewards and encourages ambidextrous behavior is also key for nurturing ambidextrous behavior in the team, as it makes the team feel positive about its additional discretionary effort (Ahammad et al., 2015). Through vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1977), such a high-commitment HRM system could potentially be crucial for nurturing team-level ambidexterity.

Conclusion and Implications

Extant team-level ambidexterity literature has ignored the learning activities, their sequence, the actors involved, their effects on team-level ambidexterity, and how a leader can generate and organize such infrastructures that facilitate a team's ability to achieve a balance between their explorative and exploitative activities. This study has addressed these gaps. Specifically, the study examined ambidextrous leadership as an antecedent of team-level ambidexterity, and the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM. Based on the raw data, we developed a process-based model to enhance team-level ambidexterity through ambidextrous leadership behaviors, which shows the supporting roles of RC and ambidextrous HRM in the process. The study provides a fresh understanding of how (acting as an important role model) a team leader can change the team's frame of reference and boost their ability to achieve a balance between their exploitative and explorative activities. This study found that team leaders scan their business environment regularly to identify both untapped opportunities and hidden threats. Following such consistent environmental scanning, team leaders will, first, try to make sense of the result of the scanning through personal reflection, before engaging the team in RC to try to exploit the team's strengths to make the most of the discovered opportunities while minimizing the threats. If required, team leaders will consult their supervisors to explore other options and, if gap remains, the team leader draws upon supportive HRM practices to try and close the gap. These behaviors typify ambidextrous leadership. While the ambidexterity literature links ambidextrous leadership behaviors to stimulating ambidexterity in individuals, there is a lack of empirical data that examines the role of the ambidextrous behavior of team leaders in achieving team-level ambidexterity. This study contributes to filling this research gap. It also extends our understanding of the effectiveness of ambidextrous HRM and RC in helping team leaders achieve a balance between their teams' explorative and exploitative activities in these supermarkets. The practical implications of ambidexterity research in Africa could include the use of RC during team learning sessions to help teams achieve their collective ambidexterity. It also implies that team leaders should adopt ambidextrous leadership behavior, while effectively collaborating with the human resource (HR) department/function to help facilitate the process. This also has implications for how HR can build an organizational climate for team learning in African organizations. This fits well with the increased interest in team learning as the heart of the mainstream organizational learning literature and provides a much-needed boost for the development of management research and practice within Africa.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Studies

This study adopts an exploratory design with an interpretive philosophy. Given the weaknesses of solely positivist or interpretivist research, further studies should adopt a mixed method approach to help enhance the validity and reliability of this study. Such studies should also examine team level ambidexterity in non-supermarket settings in Africa. This focus will offer the much-needed data to compare ambidexterity across diverse organizational settings in Africa. The data for this study were collected in 2015 and, though still valid, further studies on ambidexterity in Africa should utilize more recent data.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix

Interview protocol and questions.

Interview protocol
Familiarize oneself with the participant.
Outline the purpose of the research, including aims and objectives.
Discuss the potential research outcomes and ethical issues and obtain consent.
Outline the interview structure and process.
Interview questions by topic

Managers' Ambidextrous Behavior: The Mediating Roles of Reflective Learning and Experiential Learning

- Do you reflect on your own or with your staff on the performance of the business?
- If yes, how often do you do this?
- Are there any circumstance/situations that would normally make you to reflect?
- If yes, can you describe such circumstance/situation?
- How can you describe the activities that are included in your reflection?
- What do you normally do with the result of such reflection?
- Because of such reflection are there any actions/activities that would normally follow?
- If yes, can you give me an example of such actions or activities that follow?
- Do you anticipate the future needs of your business?
- If yes, how often do you do that?
- What do you normally do with the result of such forecasting?
- Because of such forecasting are there any actions/activities that would normally follow?
- If yes, can you give me an example of such actions or activities that follow?

The Role of Supportive HRM Practices:

- Is there any common plan for pursuing management training and development in your entire organization?
- If yes, can you explain this approach?
- Do you have any approach for pursuing staff training and development?
- If yes, can you explain this approach?
- Are there particular incidents that can trigger staff/management training and development in your organization?
- If yes, can you give some examples of such episodes?
- Do you think that such training and development programmes/events are relevant to your team?
- If yes, how important do you think that such training and development events have been to your team performance?

- Do you learn collectively as a team?
- If yes, how often do you do this
- What can you say about the type of team learning experiences that you would normally undergo with your staff?
- Do you think that such team learning experience impact on your team performance?
- If yes, what can you say about how it impacts your subsequent performance?

About you: The Role of Leadership:

- Have you ever noticed any individual or your team struggling to perform their job role?
- If yes, can you give some examples of the type of difficulties they would normally experience?
- What do you normally do or say to an individual/team having such difficulties?
- Do you think that such your action/response has ever remedied the situation?
- If yes, can you attribute any improvements you have observed in their subsequent performance to the type of response you provided in those difficult situations of the past?
- Have you ever noticed ingenuity or creativity in your staff/team performance?
- If yes, what do you normally do in response to such ingenuity?