

Intrapreneurship in Learning Organizations: Moderating Role of Organizational Factors

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to investigate moderating effect of organizational factors in the relationship between learning organization and intrapreneurship. In line of this objective it theoretically explores the nature of intrapreneurship dimensions, the nature of learning organization dimensions, how learning organization can be linked to intrapreneurship, and how organizational factors influence the relationship between learning organization and intrapreneurship. This study would help researchers, practitioners and managers to have a better understanding on the relationship between learning organization and intrapreneurship and the role of organizational factors.

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1. Introduction and problem statement

Nowadays organizations have found the importance of intrapreneurship within organizations. The aim of intrapreneurship is to develop a new venture within organizations in order to exploit a new opportunity to promote economic value and organizational performance improvement. Studies show that intrapreneurship can be considered as a vital corporate strategy (Romero-Martínez, Fernández-Rodríguez, & Vázquez-Inchausti, 2010) and a factor key that helps organizations to sustain competitiveness and improve performance (Aktan & Bulut, 2008; Douglas & Fitzsimmons, 2009; Molina & Callahan, 2009). However, related literature lacks conclusive evidence on the role of intrapreneurship in organizations.

Developing intrapreneurship in organization is crucial as it requires an organization to grow and diversify its business, to satisfy and retain its best staff's motivation, and to exploit its underused resources in new ways. Hence, organizational models such as the learning organization model have become popular. In the learning organization model the entrepreneur is allowed to combine new items of information and determine new relations between them. Additionally, studies show that learning is a vital and necessary aspect in creating entrepreneurship behaviors because knowledge, the acquisition or alteration of business skills, habits and attitudes are involved in learning. In fact, understanding knowledge is important for entrepreneurship to be nurtured. However, the relationship between learning organization and intrapreneurship is not well established in management literature. Thus, initiatives to assist learning

organizations to create intrapreneurship are not clearly scrutinized and warrant further research.

The literature has also shown that organizational factors can support and motivate entrepreneurial behavior in organizations (Kearney, Hisrich, & Roche, 2007; Wood, Holt, Reed, & Hudgens, 2008; A. Zahra, Hayton, & Salvato, 2004). However how organizational factors can influence intrapreneurship is not well established.

In order to address the limitations of the previous studies, this paper theoretically explores the nature of intrapreneurship and its dimensions, the nature of learning organization and its dimensions, and how learning organization can be linked to intrapreneurship? Furthermore the paper will also examine how organizational factors can influence intrapreneurship?

2. The concept of Intrapreneurship

One of the most important concerns of managers is how to create new ideas in established organizations. Intrapreneurship or Corporate entrepreneurship is considered as an important and valuable tool for rejuvenating and revitalizing existing organizations (Dunlap-Hinkler, Kotabe, & Mudambi, 2010). In this way established organizations try to utilize their internal resources and prepare an environment that is more conducive to radical innovation (Schaper & Volery, 2007). As environments get more sophisticated and dynamic, firms need to gain more entrepreneurial behavior so that they could achieve new opportunities for more favorable performance (Hayton, 2005).

Intrapreneurship has been defined as "the process of uncovering and developing an opportunity to create value through innovation and seizing that

opportunity without regard to either resources or the location of the entrepreneur in a new or existing company” (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001, p. 497). Intrapreneurship is also referred to as ‘corporate entrepreneurship’. Thus, corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship is a risk taking process within an existing organization in which an enterprise based on research, development, innovation and technology is established and managed by entrepreneurs (Antoncic & Prodan, 2008).

To sum up, intrapreneurship can be conceived of as entrepreneurship in a company that already exists (Antoncic & Zorn, 2004), and the company deals only with internal resources which are in its own possession (Christensen, 2004). It is a crucial element in the process of economic growth, development and success and the lack of intrapreneurship may even be fatal to an organization (Teltumbde, 2006).

2.1 Intrapreneurship Dimensions

2.1.1 Innovativeness

Innovativeness is defined as the attempts to accept creativity, novelty, experimentation, technological leadership in both products and processes (Lyon, Lumpkin, & Dess, 2000). Additionally, it is also known as the major incentive that firms need in order to develop, grow, maintain and have high profitability (Elmqvist, Fredberg, & Ollila, 2009). According to Aktan & Bulut (2008), the existence of a rapid change in the market has brought innovation to become the heart beat of entrepreneurship, since it helps to correlate organizational outcome which manifests in sustainable competitive advantage in the innovativeness of its processes, products and services within business environment.

Furthermore, innovativeness as a vital component of Intrapreneurship refers to the process of introducing and applying new ideas and procedures in a group or organization in order to produce new services with added value. It is appropriate to apply new plans or programs for organization members and provide a relevant unit of adoption. In fact, innovations are made to benefit the individual, the team, organization or society in a significant way (Cardellino & Finch, 2006; Shu & Chi, 2010). The new ventures create new markets therefore, the firm will be a pioneer in the market (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999).

Finally, the innovativeness dimension shows the aspect of the strategic position of the company that refers to the firm’s willingness and ability to discuss – and leave – existing or given circumstances in order to promote room for creativity, new ideas, and experiments.

2.1.2 Proactiveness

Proactiveness as a dimension of intrapreneurship is concerned with pioneering. Its tendency is to apply initiative so as to compete aggressively with other firms (Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004). Some scholars believed that Proactiveness refers “to a company’s determination to seek promising opportunities, rather than only responding to competitors’ moves” (S. Zahra & Garvis, 2000, p. 474). According to Antoncic & Hisrich (2003, p. 18), proactiveness as a concept “...refers to the extent to which organizations attempt to lead rather than follow competitors in such key business areas as the introduction of new products or services, operating technologies, and administrative techniques”.

In general, the proactiveness dimension is influenced by the aspect of the strategic position of a company that refers to the firm’s willingness and ability to explore new developments as soon as possible and to act as a “first mover” vis-à-vis competitors. Thus, the firm does not wait for new developments and trends and then react to them (Frank, Kessler, & Fink, 2010). The consequences of such behavior may lead organizations to realize competitive advantages because they are willing to discover, create, and implement new things in their industry or company (Entebang, Harrison, & de Run, 2010).

2.1.3 Risk-Taking

Risk-taking can be considered as an important element of intrapreneurship behaviors like “borrowing heavily, committing a high percentage of resources to projects with uncertain outcomes, and entering unknown markets” (Lyon, et al., 2000, P. 1056). Through developing risk taking, a firm gets more opportunities to offer a new and successful product to its customers (Toftoy, Chatterjee, & Toftoy, 2004).

The risk-taking dimension represents the aspect of the strategic position of a company that refers to the firm’s willingness and ability to devote increased resources to projects whose outcome is difficult to predict (Frank, et al., 2010). Therefore it is essential to create an intrapreneurial atmosphere for risk-taking. Leaders, Managers and employees must have a desire to take a risk within their organizations.

2.1.4 Competitive Aggressiveness

Competitive aggressiveness is when a company challenges and competes with its competitors in order to be a noticeable and dominant company among its competitors. Based on Lumpkin & Dess (1996, p. 148), competitive aggressiveness “refers to a firm’s propensity to challenge directly and intensely with its competitors to achieve entry or improve position, that is, to outperform industry rivals in the marketplace”.

Fairoz, Hirobumi, & Tanaka (2010) argues that competitive aggressiveness mirrors the strength of the attempts of a company to gain more achievements than its industry rivals, and it also takes a combative posture and reacts to the actions made by the competitor (Fairoz, et al., 2010). Additionally, entrepreneurial

status is clearly presented by the company's tendency to compete aggressively with its industry rivals (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003). The competitive aggressiveness determines the amount of the firm's aggressive attacks on competitors.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.-1: Classification of intrapreneurship dimensions

Scholars	Concept name	Dimensions
Miller & Friesen (1983)	Innovation	New product-risk taking-proactiveness
Knight (1997)	Entrepreneurial orientation	Proactiveness – Innovativeness
Zahra, Neubaum, & Huse (2000)	Corporate entrepreneurship	Innovation, Venturing, proactiveness
Fitzsimmons, et al.(2005)	Intrapreneurship	new business venturing, innovativeness, self-renewal and proactiveness
Antoncic (2007)	Intrapreneurship	risk taking- innovativeness-proactiveness
Aktan & Bulut (2008)	Corporate entrepreneurship	risk taking- innovativeness-proactiveness-competitive aggressiveness
Wang & Zhang (2009)	Corporate entrepreneurship	innovativeness- proactiveness-strategic renewal new venturing

2.2 The significance of intrapreneurship

One of the most important concerns of managers is how to create new ideas in the established organizations. Intrapreneurship or corporate entrepreneurship is significantly noticed as an important and valuable instrument for making existing companies healthy and powerful (Dunlap-Hinkler, et al., 2010). Thus, the new established organizations attempt to use and develop their internal resources and provide an environment that is more appropriate for rapid and radical innovation (Schaper & Volery, 2007).

Firms in the first days of their establishment engage entrepreneurship in order to strengthen and increase their performance, and by applying strategic renewal and create new venture opportunities (Schaper & Volery, 2007; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990).

Several reasons for developing corporate entrepreneurship in an organization as Schaper & Volery (2007, p. 405) mentioned are:

- “To grow and diversify the business
- To satisfy and retain bright and motivated staff.
- To exploit underused resources in new ways.
- To get rid of non-core activities”

Recent evidences proposed intrapreneurship acts as a mediator to link the effects of entrepreneurship's antecedent to organizational

performance (Rutherford & Holt, 2007). According to Yiu & Lau (2008), intrapreneurship plays a unique role and acts as the mechanism that links its antecedent effects on the organizational performance.

3. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on proposed conceptual framework (figure1), Watkins and Marsik' model of learning organization proposed that factors such as create continuous learning, promote dialogue and inquiry, encourage collaboration and team learning, establish systems to capture and share learning, empower people toward a collective vision, connect the organization to its environment and leadership are vital to today's organizations to be competitive (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). In addition, as this study focus on internal traits of organizations, resource based view (RBV) can also be considered as a theoretical foundation to construct the argument regarding proposed relationship in the study. According to the RBV, organizations' competitive advantages and higher performance are generally mostly related to their resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Barney & Clark, 2007). Therefore intangible assets such as organizational structure, organizational culture, management support, reward systems, resource availability enable organizations to improve their efficiency and effectiveness (Barney & Clark, 2007).

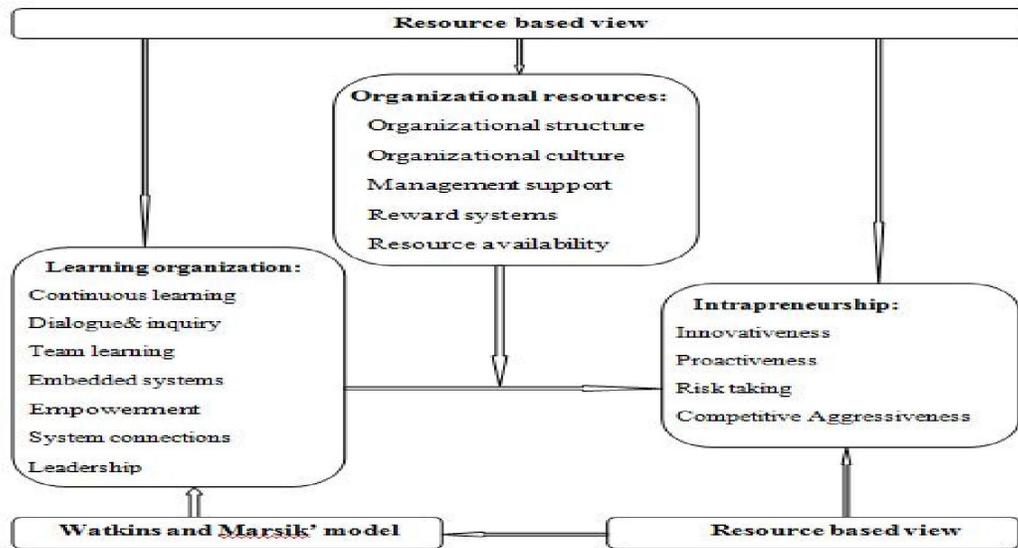


Figure 1: A conceptual framework

3.1 The Concept and Characteristics of a Learning Organization

The world around us and the environment in which different organizations are working is becoming progressively complicated day after day. In order to survive, organizations need to adapt themselves to the new changes and developments. The learning organization is considered as a major privilege in this competitive world (Zare, Jajarmizadeh, & Abbasi, 2010). Organizations cannot survive and improve themselves based solely on previous knowledge. They need to learn and strive in order to overcome the chaotic and changing conditions (Hannah & Lester, 2009). According to Watkins and Marsick (1993), if the organizations want to change into learning organizations, they should use compelling forces such as , change the nature of work, change in the ways people are able to learn , and so forth. Therefore, in a learning organization, learning must be captured and embedded in systems so that it can be saved in the memory of the organization. In this especial type of organization managers always seek to find ways and methods to keep what is learned and how it can be shared among employees.

To improve their performance, organizations need to focus on continuous learning and use of knowledge, which can serve as a successful key factor in developing individual, team, and organizational learning that results in the improvement and innovation in of the performance in organizations (Harrim, 2008; Watkins & Marsick, 1996; Weldy, 2009). In order for organizations to achieve these ends, they need to have the qualities of the learning organization. The learning organization can be viewed as a system, i.e. seeing parts in relation to the whole, (Bui & Baruch, 2010) that

offers concepts serving to create an organizational culture which is capable of adapting itself to change and continually learn on multiple levels in order to promote the organization by creating desired prospects (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996). Additionally, learning organizations comprise embedded systems to capture and share knowledge so that the organization may continue to progress and develop competitively (Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002; Gonzalez, 2010).

Learning organizations constantly encourage, support, accelerate, and reward individual learning through an organizational system that promotes continuous self-development and employability (Marquardt, 2002). Building learning organizations calls for a basic shift in how we think and interact (Gonzalez, 2010). Indeed, learning organizations are living organisms, not machines. Much like human beings, they need a sense of integrity and a basic purpose (Marquardt, 2002). According to Saw, Wilda & Harte (2010, p. 9) “most learning organizations:

- Are adaptive to the external environment.
- Promote creativity and innovation.
- Have the skills and motivation to continually enhance capability to learn, change and adapt
- Have an organizational climate that nurtures learning to develop collective as well as individual learning.
- Have infrastructure, development and management processes that encourage interactions across boundaries.
- Consider every person to be a source of knowledge
- Use tools and techniques which aid individual and group learning.
- Use results from learning for continual improvement”

3.2 How to develop intrapreneurship in learning organizations

The organization promoting entrepreneurship has the capability to create, learn and affect on the environment" (Garcia, Llorens-Montes, & Verd À-Jover, 2006). Gibb (1997) believed that learning is a fundamental aspect in entrepreneurship behaviors, because it aims to acquire knowledge, business skills, attitude and habits. Many companies know that learning organization can provide force and energy for such efforts. Such firms have been able to gain advantage by recent learned knowledge for their strategic advantage (Lumpkin, 2005). Organizational learning culture seems to affect innovations in a rather strong, positive and direct way (Shu & Chi, 2010; Skerlavaj, Song, & Lee, 2010).

As learning organization manages to sense and correct errors, recognizes and selects opportunities, and increases capacities to achieve organizational goals, it seems to have a positive effect on entrepreneurship (Hult, Ketchen, & Nichols, 2003). Because of their characteristics, learning organizations can encourage their employees to act as intrapreneurs by taking ownership of a product from concept to market, keeping a group of intrapreneurs separate from the rest of the firm and rewarding innovations (Jones, George, & Hill, 2003).

Furthermore, through continuous learning, team learning and shared vision, learning organizations can convert tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge. This is crucial to create entrepreneurial behaviors. Learning organizations permits the entrepreneurs to combine new items of information and determine new relations between them.

Empirically speaking, Hurley and Hult (1998) studied the effect of learning on innovativeness, entrepreneurship and found a meaningful relationship (Hult, et al., 2003). In a study reviewed by Franco & Haase (2009), van Gelderen et al., (2005) reported that there is a significant relationship between learning behavior and contextual factors that affect entrepreneurial performance improvement.

In general, the ability of acquisition of handling systems, gradual development and organizational learning together are the key capability for all entrepreneurs. Thus, entrepreneurship will be achieved through culture that gives support to both individual and organizational learning and helps to articulate the tacit knowledge (Rowley, 2000). A learning organization as a system develops double loop learning in the way that learning affects and modifies organizational goals (Argyris, 1990) and facilitates participative and innovative growth with and between individuals and organizations in commercial, technological and social aspects (Lessem, 1992). To sum up, in light of the previous discussion, it can be

maintained that for organizations to foster intrapreneurship, they have to try to become learning organizations. Generally speaking, learning organizations can develop intrapreneurship in following ways:

1. *Increasing personal mastery*

Personal mastery is vital for intrapreneurship. Therefore, employees with a high degree of capability and personal mastery continue on a learning mode, learn faster, are more creative and initiative and they learn how to learn, how to perceive and work with uncertain environments. In addition, they are deeply interested to understand and see reality (Senge, 1990). According to Senge (1990), a learning organization can support and develop personal mastery in two ways. First, the personal mastery will be reinforced with the perception that personal growth and development is truly valued in the organization. Second, the individuals respond and react to what is offered to them. This situation provides an "on the job training" that is vital and necessary to develop personal mastery (Senge, 1990).

2. *Facilitate Self directed learning*

A core aspect of entrepreneur behaviors is learning. Learning is important to discover opportunities (Corbett, 2007). In a learning organization employees can learn how to learn individually. They are responsible both to be learners and to encourage and support the learning of those around them (Marquardt, 2002).

3. *Increased adaptability*

Learning organizations promise to increasingly adapt themselves when dealing with environmental changes and increase their levels of innovation related to work processes, products, and technological applications and development (Marquardt, 2002; Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

4. *Increasing employees' commitment*

To develop an entrepreneurial culture, organization must focus to employees' organizational commitment. Organizational commitment by which employees adopt aims, goals and values of the organization (Atak & Erturgut, 2010) can increase as a result of learning organization.

5. *Company's competitiveness*

An ever-changing working situation, competitors, and business conditions lacking in certainty is widespread in the business world and they demand of the organizations to change and adapt themselves to new situations rather than to be stable or have an alternative to deal with new business

environments (Hor, Huang, Shih, Lee, & Stanley Lee, 2010). A learning organization can furnish its employees with relevant and efficient knowledge to cope with the new situations to remain competitive in the business world.

6. Increasing organizational knowledge

Learning organizations help to gain, evaluate, store, and distribute knowledge within the organization and provide opportunities and capabilities for employees to deal with complex and urgent Problems (Garvin, 2000; Marquardt, 2002). Learning organization is appropriate systems so as to save and distribute explicit knowledge in which that knowledge is new, significant and focused (Rowley, 2000). To create entrepreneurial behaviors organizations need to create new knowledge through accessing tacit knowledge and share it with members of organization, For gaining and creating knowledge within organizations, they need to make tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). A learning organization converts tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge through discussion, dialogue, team learning and experiences shared in organization. In addition learning organizations inform their employees regarding the kind of knowledge required, their values and memory systems, and their resources for keeping knowledge. In a learning organization employees know how to develop relationships or connect with knowledge centres as well as access data from all over the world (Marquardt, 2002).

7. Increasing Innovation behaviors

Innovation as the most important dimension of intrapreneurship can be achieved through learning orientation. Many scholars emphasize the significance of such an orientation to enhancing innovation capability. Maintaining levels of innovation and remaining competitive is one of the important benefits of learning organization (Vargas-Hernández, Administrativas, Norte, Edificio, & Noruzi, 2010). A learning organization can enhance its innovation capability in three ways, that is by using modern technology in innovations, keeping the new opportunities of market demands, with innovation capability that is greater than its competitors (Calantone, et al., 2002).

8. Increasing professional growth

Learning organizations try hard to provide more in order to balance the employees' personal and the needs of the professional growth by creating new opportunities and resources and persuade them to use new skills and capabilities innovatively (Marquardt, 2002; Senge, 1990; Van Deusen & Mueller, 1999).

9. Improving the levels of learning

Learning in learning organizations is continuous and strategically tied to future organization needs. In addition a learning organization can generate flexible construction to increase learning for all employees (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Furthermore, learning organizations link learning with business initiatives and organizational changes (Watkins & Marsick, 1993) and also support processes and structures such as double-loop learning and deutero learning. Therefore the creation of entrepreneurial knowledge and behaviours should be better organized, managed and achieved within a learning organisation.

3.2 The Role of Organizational Factors to create intrapreneurship in learning organizations

Generally, the role of organizational factors in creating entrepreneurial behaviors and organizational performance improvement are significant. As intrapreneurship takes place within organizations, the role of organizational variables is crucial. Studies show that organizational factors help to create intrapreneurship in learning organizations (Ireland, Covin, & Kuratko, 2009; Wood, et al., 2008; A. Zahra, et al., 2004). Some of these factors are as follows:

3.2.1 Organizational Structure

Organizational structure such as distribution of authority, stream of organizational relationship, hierarchies, the span of control of managers and communication (Daft, 2009) can facilitate channeling, alliance, accountability, stipulate the level of formality and power distribution and complexity prescription (Bower, 1986). Organizational structure can be mechanistic or organic. An organic organizational structure, promotes flexibility, adaptability, consensus, and open interaction within organization that in turn facilitate and support intrapreneurship dimensions (Daft, 2009; Jogaratnam & Tse, 2006; Russell & Russell, 1992). According to Russell & Russell (1992) an effective entrepreneurial strategy influences on the environmental uncertainty, degree of decentralization, and innovation norms significantly..

3.2.2 Organizational Culture

The Resource Based View considers organizational culture is a critical resource which can provide the organizational culture that includes a series of well integrated and valuable opinions, beliefs, values and behaviours that have important roles to the success of an organization (Kumar, 2008). According to Zahra, et al (2004), to improve intrapreneurship behaviours within organizations, organizational culture is vital. Therefore for organizations to be successful they should create entrepreneurial behaviours, they

must focus on appropriate and positive values and norms.

3.2.3 Management Support

The managers' role in creating and directing entrepreneurial behaviors are crucial. Basically managers can provide facilities and mobilize organizational resource to achieve high level of organizational performance. Managers can represent different styles which involve a fast adaptation and acceptance of employee's valuable opinions, championing ideas, people's acknowledgement to do and complete forward ideas, providing necessary resource, or introducing intrapreneurship in different aspects like manners, procedures, and processes in the firms (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001).

3.2.4 Reward and Recognition

To create entrepreneurial behaviors in organizations, managers and leaders should consider the role of rewards and recognitions. Utilization of suitable rewards such as money, promotions and so on motivate employees to take responsibility in absorbing the risks related to entrepreneurial behaviors (Kearney, et al., 2007).

3.2.5 Resource Availability

Organizational resource can be categorized in two types; tangible assets and intangible assets (Grant, 1991). Tangible assets like physical capital and intangible assets like human and social capitals are foundations for all types of activities within organizations. Human capital has an important role to the creation of entrepreneurial orientation. Higher levels of human capital increase the likelihood that entrepreneurial opportunities, which emerge from changing environmental factors, will be 'discovered' by these firms. Thus, ventures with higher levels of human capital should be able to find new ways to increase customer benefits by engineering more efficient production processes and/or by innovating (Holcomb, 2007). Additionally, human capital consists of a supply of knowledge and skill abilities that individuals can, develop with the passage of time, store within and transmit between themselves. Due to these characteristics of human capital, it has an important role on entrepreneurial outcomes (Wright, Hmieleski, Siegel, & Ensley, 2007). Furthermore, high social capital can provide entrepreneurs to access information, cooperation and trust from others increasingly (Baron & Markman, 2003). Thus the availability of the resources is a basic factor to affect intrapreneurship. Organizations with rich resources may have a greater tendency and ability to engage in intrapreneurship activities in comparison to organizations with light resource (Ireland, et al., 2009).

4. Conclusion

Organizational factors such as organizational structure, organizational culture, management support, reward systems and resource availability could be regarded as important moderators in the relationship between learning organization and intrapreneurship. Studies show that these factors influence to development of intrapreneurship (Ireland, et al., 2009; A. Zahra, et al., 2004) and organizational performance (Wood, et al., 2008; S. Zahra & Garvis, 2000). Based on the proposed model and above discussions it will be logical that the organizational factors can moderate the relationship between the learning organization dimensions and intrapreneurship.

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