

Project Management Office as an Enabler of Innovation: A Narrative Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study illuminates innovation and its importance in determining economic and social growth. However, obstacles and challenges hinder the successful implementation of innovation. This study aims to revolutionize the role of the project management office (PMO) as a critical enabler for promoting and managing the innovation process and deepen our knowledge of a specific concept, focusing on depth rather than breadth. By adopting the narrative literature review, the initial search identified 655 articles; however, the final dataset included 59 articles analyzed to investigate the association between PMO and innovation. The findings reveal the capabilities required for successful innovation projects, which can be classified as dynamic innovation and project capabilities. The study findings have practical implications for organizations choosing and aligning the right PMO design with their organizational, strategic, and innovation objectives.

KEYWORDS

Project Management Office, Innovation, Innovation Projects, Dynamic Innovation, Dynamic Projects

INTRODUCTION

Despite the increasing research on project management and organizational innovation, existing studies have largely addressed these domains in isolation. Few empirical and conceptual investigations have been conducted concerning the integrative role of project capabilities in enabling innovation. Therefore, this relationship remains unclear and inadequately studied, particularly in the context of the role of project management offices (PMOs) in enabling innovation, suggesting the need to understand the role of PMOs in promoting and enabling innovation for successful innovative projects.

With hypercompetition and rapid technological development, the adoption and implementation of innovation projects have increased as enablers of success and value creation. There has been a continuous increase in the adoption and support of innovation by countries worldwide, as innovation plays a significant role in driving economic and social growth and promoting prosperity and quality of life. Thus, project-based innovation has emerged as a key solution for organizational survival. Adopting change is becoming necessary to survive and succeed, and it is implemented through innovation projects and organizational change. Worldwide, countries are ranked based on the innovation metric of the Global Innovation Index, an annual ranking measuring innovation performance published by

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the World Intellectual Property Organization and the United Nations Agency (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2025).

By integrating innovation management with project management literature, understanding of innovation projects can be advanced. A recent review of innovation management and project management highlighted its increasing significance as a research domain, thus reinforcing the relevance and timeliness of this study (Zhang et al., 2025). Furthermore, a review of the current innovation project portfolio management (IPPM) identified several challenges, including prioritizing and internal resource allocation, decision making, and capability development in which PMOs may play a crucial enabling role (Lerch & Spieth, 2012). Because IPPM is shaped and impacted by an organization's strategic orientation, alignment between IPPM and organizational strategy is essential for effective strategy implementation and innovation project success (Kock & Gemünden, 2021). Studies have found that IPPM performance positively influences an organization's growth, innovativeness, and project management (Killen et al., 2008; Lerch & Spieth, 2013, 2014). The nature of innovation management and projects varies among organizations based on their contexts, industries, and objectives. However, regardless of the nature and type of innovative projects, innovation management follows the same steps.

This study adopted a narrative literature review and systematically investigated and integrated the literature of PMOs with innovation to advance understanding of the PMO as a critical enabler for promoting and managing the innovation process. Based on the literature review, the findings revealed the capabilities required for successful innovation projects, which were classified into dynamic and dynamic innovation capabilities. Davies and Brady (2016) reinforced the importance of project and dynamic capabilities in identifying and capturing innovative opportunities. The present classification was based on dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997), which require organizations to sense, seize, and reconfigure their internal and external capabilities, abilities, resources, and competencies to address emerging opportunities in rapidly changing environments.

The following section briefly introduces the concepts of innovation and the PMO. Next, the narrative review methodology is presented, followed by the findings of the narrative literature review. The findings revealed the capabilities required for successful innovation projects, which were classified into dynamic innovation capabilities and dynamic project capabilities.

CONCEPT OF INNOVATION

The United Kingdom government's definition of innovation was adopted for this study, as "the creation and application of new knowledge to improve the world. This process drives human progress" (Government UK, 2023). Innovation thrives in exchange for innovative ecosystems consisting of active parties of national and international innovative companies, educational institutes, and gubernative bodies to collaborate by forming ecosystem networks. For example, Switzerland's innovation has created an ecosystem of six nationwide sites enabling cooperation and networking (Marxt & Brunner, 2013; Switzerland Innovation, 2025; Tschanz et al., 2020)). Innovation can be discovered through the exploration phase and manifested through the exploitation phase, which requires organizations to find a balance between exploration and exploitation approaches, which results in organizational ambidexterity (Sergeeva & Ali, 2020). Designated organizations must possess innovative capabilities to build, sustain, and promote innovation.

CONCEPT OF PMO

The PMO stimulates innovation throughout the different stages of the project life cycle (Sergeeva & Ali, 2020). A PMO is an organizational entity responsible for managing project activities that eventually impact the achievement of strategic objectives and organizational success. It acts as a centralized hub with standardized project management methodologies, processes, knowledge dissemination, and best practices to contribute to successful project implementation. It

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