

Measuring Organizational Excellence and Team Knowledge Integration Capability for Strategic Executive Management

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Disclosure of interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Data availability statement

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Abstract

Purpose- This study investigates the pivotal role of executive attention allocation in enhancing team knowledge integration capability, a vital dimension of human capital that drives organizational excellence. Grounded in the Attention-Based View and Conservation of Resources theory, the research examines how focused and strategic allocation of executive attention serves as a catalyst for developing knowledge integration within teams. It further explores the direct and mediated effects of this allocation through strategic flexibility and employees' career roles. The findings aim to shed light on how organizations can boost their responsiveness and overall performance in dynamic and fast-changing business environments by leveraging this often-overlooked but essential resource.

Design/methodology/approach- A combination of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), regression and mediation analysis was employed to test the hypothesized relationships using a valid sample of 528 responses. Validated

measurement scales were utilized to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs, and the application of rigorous analytical procedures strengthens the methodological robustness of the study.

Findings- The findings reveal that executive attention allocation exerts a significant positive influence on strategic flexibility, employees' career roles, and team knowledge integration capability. Strategic flexibility, in turn, positively affects both employees' career roles and team knowledge integration. Additionally, employees' career roles significantly contribute to enhancing team knowledge integration. Empirical evidence further supports the mediating roles of strategic flexibility and employee career roles in the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability, highlighting the multi-level mechanisms through which executive attention allocation enhances organizational knowledge processes.

Research Implications- By conceptualizing executive attention and team knowledge integration capability as critical managerial competencies and strategic resources, this study offers a comprehensive framework that bridges the domains of strategy formulation, communication, and implementation. It addresses a notable theoretical gap in existing literature concerning the procedural influence of top management attention on organizational processes and outcomes.

Practical Implications- This study underscores the practical importance of executive attention and team knowledge integration as core competencies in strategic execution. By demonstrating the mediating role of strategic flexibility and employee career role, the findings suggest that managers should align attention allocation with organizational resources and capabilities to optimize decision-making. Recognizing strategic flexibility and employee career role as a bridge between top-level attention and team-level knowledge processes offers actionable guidance for enhancing adaptability, communication, and implementation throughout the strategy lifecycle within dynamic business environments.

Originality/Value- This study integrates the Attention-Based View (ABV) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to examine how executive attention influences team knowledge integration capability, a key human capital asset for organizational excellence. It explores the mediating roles of strategic flexibility and employee career roles, bridging individual and organizational perspectives. By revealing internal signal transmission mechanisms, the study advances understanding

of how attention cascades across levels. Practically, it guides managers in leveraging attention as a strategic resource. Socially, it emphasizes employee empowerment and cultural dynamics, contributing to the literature on knowledge management, strategic execution, and organizational performance in dynamic environments.

Keywords: Performance Efficiency, Executive attention allocation, Team knowledge Integration Capability, Strategic flexibility, Conservation of Resources

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. Introduction

In the rapid technological disruption and economic transformation, organizations face unprecedented complexity. To sustain business excellence, it is essential to develop agile strategies powered by executive attention and robust team knowledge integration. Coupled with the rapid pace of technological change, the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the external environment present challenges for organizations in timely adjusting and implementing their corporate strategies (Hadiyanto, 2023). Executive attention is viewed as a critical resource that enables firm performance (Feldman, 2014; Ocasio & Joseph, 2018), and shapes key decisions, directs firms' response to external challenges, and impacts capability development (Kaplan et al, 2003, Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000).

Importantly, team knowledge integration capability, defined as the collective ability to combine, share, and apply distributed knowledge, has emerged as a crucial driver of organizational excellence and competitive advantage. (Laihonen & Huhtamäki, 2023; Zhang & Wu, 2022). Recent studies highlight that effective management practices, such as empowering leadership, open communication, and adaptive coordination, significantly amplify knowledge integration by aligning team efforts with strategic goals and fostering a shared learning culture (Chen et al., 2023; Wang & Zhu, 2022). When executive attention is effectively directed toward fostering cross-team knowledge processes, it not only enhances the organization's adaptability but also strengthens innovation, learning, and performance outcomes (Yu et al., 2022). Together, executive attentional focus and team knowledge integration form a strategic foundation for organizational resilience sustained performance excellence in volatile and fast-changing environments.

As environmental dynamism may influence the relationship between rational comprehensive decision-making, executives make decision-making with limited

availability of information and uncertainty amidst these changes (Hough & White, 2003). Maintaining strategic flexibility is essential for organizations to adapt, innovate, and sustain high performance (Li et al. 2008; Hamlin et al.2012). Executives must strategically allocate limited attention resources to process both internal and external information and transform these insights into adaptive capabilities and refined strategies (Eklund et al., 2021; Combe et al., 2012). This requires not only leveraging existing competencies but also fostering new ones, further reshaping executive roles and cross-level interdependencies (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Burgelman, 1994). Critically, employee career roles act as key conduits in this process. When role expectations are clear and salient, employees are more likely to align behaviors with organizational objectives and facilitate knowledge sharing, strategy execution, and organizational learning (Stein, 1982; Welbourne et al., 1998). Recent research highlights that empowering leadership and adaptive coordination significantly strengthen knowledge integration, amplifying organizational agility and performance outcomes (Chen et al., 2023; Wang & Zhu, 2022). Together, strategic flexibility and employee role salience serve as complementary mechanisms that enhance the efficiency of organizational management and drive sustained business excellence in complex and fast-evolving markets.

The capability for team knowledge integration (TKIC) is increasingly recognized as a critical resource for sustaining business performance and competitive advantage (Chae et al., 2015; Yang, 2005). According to the knowledge-based view, firms integrate and apply knowledge through formal mechanisms like routines and directives, forming the foundation of dynamic and operational capabilities (Grant, 1996b). While past research acknowledges that knowledge configurations shape dynamic capabilities (Cepeda & Vera, 2007), few studies have systematically examined how executive attention allocation and strategic flexibility jointly enhance TKIC and firms' outcomes (Wang et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Zhang & Wu, 2022).

This study contributes to the literature by showing how, through the lens of the Attention-Based View (Ocasio, 1997), executive attentional focus directly supports TKIC development, especially when aligned with internal resources and flexible strategies (Eklund & Mannor, 2021). Additionally, we highlight the often-overlooked role of employee career roles in strengthening this linkage, underscoring how individual behaviors amplify organizational learning and agility. Most importantly, these insights

provide companies with practical guidance on optimizing resource allocation and enhancing cross-team collaboration that aligns leadership attention to driving operational excellence. These mechanisms offer firms a pathway to improve decision speed, innovation, and long-term performance resilience in complex environments. Figure 1 presents our theoretical model.

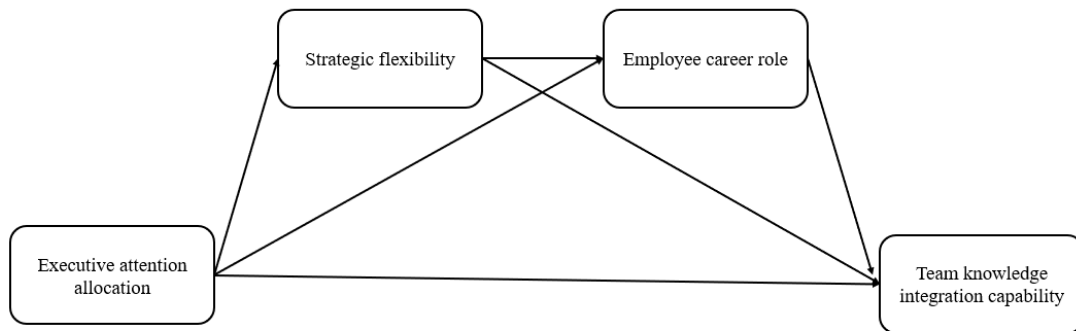


Figure 1: Theoretical model. Source(s): Author’s own work

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability

Numerous empirical investigations persuasively argue that executive attention is a vital organizational resource that significantly shapes firm performance (Feldman, 2014; Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio & Joseph, 2018). Rooted in Attention-Based View (ABV), executive attention reflects the capacity of decision-makers to identify, codify, and evaluate opportunities and threats in their environment and develop corresponding organizational responses. Ocasio’s (1997) foundational framework on attention allocation emphasizes that individuals’ selective focus on particular issues in specific contexts shapes strategic choices and organizational outcomes.

Recent studies have extended this perspective by examining how executive attention influences team knowledge integration capability (TKIC), the organization’s ability to combine, share, and apply distributed knowledge across teams (Laihonen & Huhtamäki, 2023). Integrating these streams of research, scholars suggest that the interplay between executive attention and TKIC can significantly affect an organization’s innovation, adaptability, and performance excellence, particularly under dynamic market conditions (Chen et al., 2023).

Building on the Attention-Based View (ABV), scholars argue that executive attention is not random but shaped by social, economic, and cultural structures that

guide what decision-makers notice and prioritize (March & Olsen, 1979). Ocasio (1997, 2011) identifies four interrelated organizational-level attention structures including rules of the game, players, structural positions, and resources that interact to organize and allocate a firm's attention patterns. Executives positioned within these structures use available resources and organizational rules to direct what, when, and how their organizations perceive and respond to environmental challenges to drive the organization's growth and achieve its aims. (Kaplan et al, 2003; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000; Ocasio & Joseph, 2018).

Knowledge integration capability is a vital resource that represents an organization's combinative ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge from external sources or knowledge accumulated internally through its experiences. (Kogut & Zander 1992). Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC) reflects the degree to which team communication is evaluated as efficient, collaborative, and valid (Gardner et al., 2012). It is a complex and collaborative process where participants transform existing knowledge into new insights that stimulate and complement the knowledge development of others (Carlile & Reberntisch, 2003; Carlile, 2004; Tsoukas, 2009). Within organizations, employees' perceptions and behaviors are shaped by the information available in their social and work environments (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Employees are organized into work teams to drive individual performance and high-quality outcomes (Harris, 1992). These teams are considered a vital component of organizational success in the modern economy, which is characterized by a need for rapid information exchange (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Teams serve as key interpreters of executive signals and help members perceive and respond to shifts in executive attention. By leveraging their implicit knowledge such as cognition, experience, and judgment, teams can more effectively understand executive priorities and integrate relevant information into their workflows to ensure the alignment between organizational strategy and operational execution.

Executives as main strategic decision-makers (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) play an active role in shaping the environmental cues that guide organizational action. By allocating attention to teams, executives facilitate the alignment, absorption, and interpretation of critical information that enables teams to decode leadership priorities and integrate them with their tasks and context (Joseph & Wilson, 2018). Executive attention not only signals strategic focus but also orchestrates resource allocation across

organizational levels which fosters conditions for effective execution (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Given its importance and scarcity (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), executive attention enables teams to synthesize internal and external knowledge that enhances knowledge integration processes and supports the successful implementation of executive directives. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Executive attention allocation has a positive impact on team knowledge integration capability.

2.2 The mediating role of strategic flexibility

Strategic flexibility is widely recognized as a firm's capacity to rapidly reconfigure resources and activities in response to environmental demands, rethink strategies, and align with shifting market conditions (Wright & Snell, 1998; Escrig-Tena et al., 2011). Its antecedents such as managerial cognition, innovation capabilities, and slack resources lie within firm boundaries (Fernández-Pérez et al., 2013; Barney, 1991). The strategic flexibility process unfolds in three stages: attention, assessment, and action (Shimizu & Hitt, 2004) that facilitate the generation and selection of strategic options appropriate to evolving challenges (Combe et al., 2012)

Under a high volatile and uncertain environment, executive attention allocation plays a central role in triggering strategic flexibility by directing organizational focus toward emerging needs and opportunities (Kaplan et al., 2003; Ocasio, 1997). Through this mechanism, firms adjust and realign strategies to enhance their strategic positioning and performance outcomes (Harrigan, 1985; Carlsson, 1989). Furthermore, strategic flexibility has been repeatedly linked to competitive advantage, innovation, and financial performance (Rindova & Kotha, 2001; Kurt & Hulland, 2013; Nandakumar et al., 2014). By enabling teams to better absorb and integrate diverse knowledge flows, strategic flexibility acts as a key conduit between executive attention and TKIC and ultimately drives organizational adaptability and business excellence. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Strategic flexibility will mediate the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability.

2.3 The mediating role of employee career role

Organizational actors influence how firm attention is regulated through the distinctive competencies, mindsets, and principles they bring to their roles (March & Olsen, 1976).

While CEOs and top management are key in shaping strategic attention (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), employees also serve as critical players. Their influence depends on the discretion they hold in enacting structural roles and expressing personal skills, beliefs, and values (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987). In certain contexts, employees can significantly affect organizational decisions and initiatives.

Role theory positions roles as central to understanding employee behavior (Katz & Kahn, 1978). An individual's role expectations are shaped by both individual attributes and organizational context. Identity theory further explains how individuals filter information through an internal control system, where the salience of a role determines how likely an event or signal (such as executive attention) will trigger behavioral responses (Thoits, 1991, 1992). The more salient the role is, the more meaning, purpose, and behavioral guidance it provides, increasing the likelihood that employees will enact behaviors aligned with that role.

In this context, the allocation of executive attention to recognize employee career roles can shape employee behavior by enhancing the salience of work-related identities. Research has shown that leaders play a pivotal role in influencing employee knowledge-sharing behavior (Reslan et al., 2021), creating an environment that encourages individuals to contribute their expertise to collective tasks. By elevating the importance of career roles, executive attention facilitates the transformation of individual knowledge into shared team knowledge, strengthening the team's structural capacity to integrate knowledge through both formal mechanisms (e.g., routines, processes) and informal interactions (Grant, 1996a; Kogut & Zander, 1992). Therefore, we propose that employee career role mediates the positive relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability, amplifying how executive signals translate into collective knowledge practices.

Hypothesis 3: Employee career role will mediate the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability.

2.4 The mediating role of strategic flexibility and employee career role

Research indicates that strategic flexibility is built on flexibility within individual processes, in the interplay of processes and in actors (Sushil, 2014). The relationship between strategic flexibility and employees is through the interaction of processes with

the key actors. Executives, top management team and employees are key players in attention regulation (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Strategic flexibility empowers employees to configure and reconfigure distinct value propositions through the identification, acquisition and deployment of resources (Johnson et al. 2003). By leveraging available resources, employees can refine their career trajectories and professional development, potentially enhancing the alignment between their career roles and with the areas prioritized by executive attention.

Research shows that strategic flexibility emerges not only from flexible processes but also from the interaction between processes and key organizational actors, including executives, top management, and employees (Sushil, 2014; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Strategic flexibility empowers employees to identify, acquire, and deploy resources, enabling them to reconfigure value propositions and better align their career development with the areas prioritized by executive attention (Johnson et al., 2003). Drawing on social information processing theory, employee perceptions and behaviors are shaped by social cues from leaders. Executives can enhance shared beliefs, positively influence knowledge-sharing behaviors (Bavik et al., 2018; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Yin et al., 2020). As leaders form differentiated relationships with employees (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), employees who proactively align their career roles with executive priorities can strengthen knowledge exchange, integration, and mutual recognition.

As employees engage in resource sharing behaviors, they may contribute high-quality information and knowledge exchange. Through internal team knowledge sharing and integration which enhances the overall knowledge integration capability of the team. Thus, strategic flexibility and employee career roles jointly mediate the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability, ultimately enhancing organizational adaptability, innovation, and performance.

Hypothesis 4: Strategic flexibility and the role of employee career will mediate the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capabilities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and procedure

This study employed a questionnaire survey methodology, initially conducting a pilot study at an Energy Technology Company in China. During the preliminary phase, the questionnaire items were refined based on feedback from three managerial-level professionals: the General Manager's Assistant, the Director of Human Resources, and the Manager of the Strategic Department. A pre-survey of 30 questionnaires was conducted to ensure the participants could fully comprehend the items of survey. Subsequently, an online questionnaire survey targeting managerial personnel was launched. The first round of data collection targeting managerial employees was conducted on February 29, 2024. Responses were collected from 11 firms located in Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, Shandong, and Guangdong, covering seven industries including e-commerce, logistics, chemicals, and services. Participants were assured of confidentiality and understood that the research results would be used solely for academic purposes. A second round of data collection was conducted three days later. A total of 555 responses were collected, and after excluding questionnaires with abnormal response times or systematic answering patterns, 528 valid samples were obtained, resulting in an effective response rate of 95.14%. Descriptive statistical analysis of the sample revealed that there were 272 male participants (51.51%) and 256 female participants (48.49%), with a nearly equal gender ratio. A total of 57.01% of participants held a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 77.27% of the respondents were over 30 years old. Enterprises with the scale of 500 to 999 employees accounted for the largest proportion (44.51%), while those exceeding this size comprised 18.37%. Most participants were from private enterprises (46.02%), followed by state-owned enterprises (37.31%), with the remaining 16.67% drawn from foreign-owned firms

3.2 Measures

To ensure the reliability and validity of the scales, this study employed well-established instruments that have been rigorously validated in authoritative journals, as shown in Appendix 1. For English-language scales, the strict “translation-back translation” procedure was followed to ensure the items were appropriately adapted to the Chinese context (Brislin, 1980). All scales utilized a 5-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2.1 Executive attention allocation

We used the four items developed by Yu et al. (2022) and adopted them to our study, the scale includes such as ‘Senior executives prioritize the knowledge and information from the enterprise’, ‘Senior executives frequently interpret the enterprise’s knowledge and information’, ‘Senior executives devote significant time and effort to the enterprise’s knowledge and information’ ($\alpha=.864$)

3.2.2 Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC)

We adopted an eleven-item scale developed by Ke et al. (2007) to measure team knowledge integration capability (TKIC). It includes such as ‘Most team members maintain consistent knowledge and statements’, ‘Team members trust each other’s words’, ‘When facing challenges, team members communicate and support one another’ ($\alpha=.937$).

3.2.3 Strategic flexibility

We used the four items developed by Eletto et al. (2011). The items are ‘In our firm, we quickly dismantle current strategies and with low cost when market conditions or competence dictate’, ‘In our firm, we readily adapt our future plans in response to changing environmental conditions’ ($\alpha=.852$).

3.2.4 Employee career role

We adopted four items developed by Welbourne et al. (1998). The items are ‘Obtaining personal career goals’, ‘Developing skills needed for his/her future career’, ‘Making progress in his/her career’, and ‘Seeking out career opportunities’ ($\alpha=.842$).

3.2.5 Control variables

We ensure that the respondents were managerial personnel from domestic enterprises and controlled demographic variables including gender, age, educational background, years of service in the current enterprise, and enterprise size, as they may potentially influence the results (Qin, 2022).

4. Results

4.1 The results of exploratory factor analysis

The items and factor loadings are shown as Table 1. The resulting alpha value was well above the acceptable threshold of .70 suggested by Babbie (1992). It shows that the factor loadings for all items exceeded the recommended level of .50 (Hair et al., 2006). Composite reliability values ranged from .84 to .93. The average variances extracted were in the range between .5 and .59, which exceeded the recommended level of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1: Factor loading of exploratory factor analysis (N1=528)

			Estimate	AVE	CR
Employee career role 4	<---	F1	0.731		
Employee career role 3	<---	F1	0.765	0.572	0.8422
Employee career role 2	<---	F1	0.728		
Employee career role 1	<---	F1	0.799		
Strategic flexibility1	<---	F2	0.750		
Strategic flexibility 2	<---	F2	0.766	0.5907	0.8523
Strategic flexibility 3	<---	F2	0.775		
Strategic flexibility 4	<---	F2	0.783		
Executive attention allocation 4	<---	F3	0.758		
Executive attention allocation 3	<---	F3	0.792	0.5772	0.8451
Executive attention allocation 2	<---	F3	0.745		
Executive attention allocation 1	<---	F3	0.743		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC11)	<---	F4	0.760		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC10)	<---	F4	0.766		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC9)	<---	F4	0.717		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC8)	<---	F4	0.735		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC7)	<---	F4	0.783		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC6)	<---	F4	0.749	0.5735	0.9366
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC5)	<---	F4	0.742		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC4)	<---	F4	0.766		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC3)	<---	F4	0.791		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC2)	<---	F4	0.754		
Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC1)	<---	F4	0.764		

Source(s): Author's own work

4.2 Discriminant Validity Test

Given that the sample size exceeded ten times the number of measurement items, the parameter estimation error was expected to be minimal (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is illustrated in Table 2, the four-factor model provided an excellent fit to the data ($X^2 = 309.355$, $df = 224$, $CFI = 0.987$, $RMSEA = 0.042$).

Table 2: Results of confirmatory factor analysis (N=528). Source(s): Author's own work

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
One-factor model	2613.844	230	11.365	0.603	0.639	0.640	0.140
Two-factor model	1478.449	229	6.456	0.791	0.842	0.843	0.102

Three-factor model	849.423	227	3.742	0.895	0.906	0.906	0.072
Four-factor model	309.355	224	1.381	0.985	0.987	0.987	0.027

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was performed while controlling for the manipulated variables. As all correlation coefficients were below 0.7, multicollinearity was not considered a concern. As illustrated in table3, there is significant correlations between executive attention allocation, strategic flexibility, employee career role, and team knowledge management integration.

Table 3. Correlation analysis results of variables

Variable	Gender	Age	Education	Length of service	Company Size	Executive attention allocation	Strategic flexibility	Employee Career role	TKIC
Gender	-								
Age	-0.031								
Education	-0.012	0.047							
Length of service	-0.001	-0.062	-0.032						
Company size	-0.046	0.053	-0.017	0.069					
Executive attention allocation	-0.048	0.112**	-0.032	-0.058	-0.012				
Strategic flexibility	-0.054	0.06	0.018	-0.070	-0.053	0.396***			
Employee career role	-0.052	0.033	0.033	-0.083*	-0.018	0.509***	0.416***		
Team Knowledge Integration Capability	-0.42	0.084*	0.098**	-0.123	0.062	0.378***	0.352***	0.396***	

Note: n=528; *p<0.05; **p<0.01, ***p<0.001,
Source(s): Author's own work

4.4 Regression Analysis

The relevant regression models along with their coefficients and fit statistics are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression analysis results of variables

Variables		Strategic flexibility	Employee career role		Team Knowledge Integration Capability (TKIC)			
		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
Control	Gender	- 0.037	-0.027	- 0.018	- 0.016	- 0.008	- 0.009	- 0.004
	Age	0.011	-0.013	- 0.016	0.025	0.023	0.029	0.026
	Education	0.025	0.051	0.045	0.106***	0.100**	0.093**	0.091**
	Length of service	- 0.043	- 0.051	- 0.040	- 0.102**	- 0.091**	- 0.088**	- 0.083**

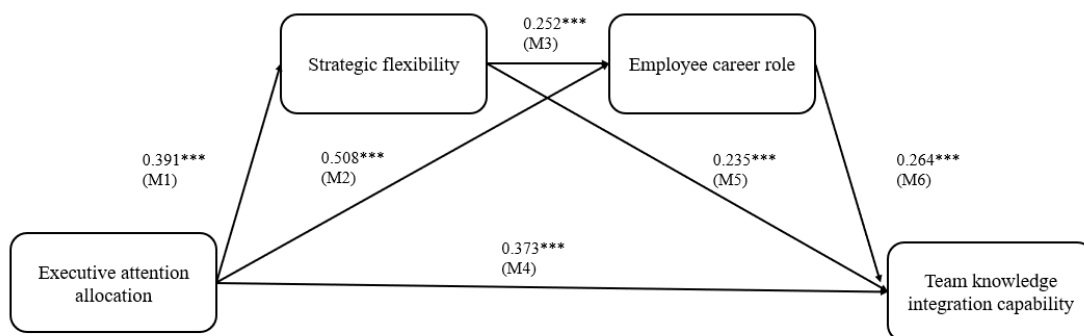
	Company size	- 0.048	- 0.008	0.004	0.073*	0.084**	0.075*	0.084**
Independent	Executive attention allocation	0.391***	0.508***	0.410***	0.373***	0.281***	0.239***	0.194***
Mediation	Strategic flexibility			0.252***		0.235***		0.182***
	Employee career role						0.264***	0.212***
R ²		0.164	0.266	0.319	0.171	0.217	0.222	0.236
Adjusted R ²		0.154	0.258	0.310	0.162	0.207	0.212	0.248
ΔR ²		0.164	0.266	0.319	0.171	0.217	0.222	0.248
F		16.957***	31.407***	34.755***	17.912***	20.608***	21.217***	21.346***

Notes: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001; N = 528. Unstandardised coefficients are reported.

Source(s): Author's own work

As shown in Figure 2, the models facilitated an investigation of the mediation effects. Models M1, M2, and M4 demonstrated that executive attention allocation has a significant positive effect on strategic flexibility (M1, B=0.391, p<0.001), a significant positive effects on both employee career role and team knowledge integration capability (M2, B=0.508, p<0.001; M4, B=0.373, p<0.001), providing further support for H1. Models M3 and M5 illustrates that strategic flexibility has a significant positive effect on employee career role and team knowledge integration capability (M3, B=0.252, p<0.001; M5, B=0.235, p<0.001); M6 indicates that employee career role has a significant positive effect on team knowledge integration (B=0.264, p<0.001). The detailed formula and its corresponding explanation are presented in Appendix 2.

Figure 2: The regression analysis result



Notes: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001; N = 528. Unstandardised coefficients are reported.

4.5 Source(s): Author's own work Mediation Analysis

The results of mediation analysis are summarised in Table 5, supported H3 and H4 by confirming the mediation effect of strategic flexibility and employee career role in the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration

capability, as the 95% confidence intervals did not include zero. The result of Path 1 supports H2 which indicates the mediation effect of strategic flexibility (X (Executive attention allocation) → M₁ (Strategic flexibility) → Y (TKIC) (β = 0.0725, 95% CI = .0320, .1164)). The results of Path 2 supports H3 which indicates employee career role mediate the relationship between executive attention allocation and team knowledge integration capability (X (Executive attention allocation) → M₂ (Employee career role) → Y (TKIC) (β = 0.0908, 95% CI = .0045, .1462)). Path 4 indicates that both strategic flexibility and employee career role mediates this relationship (β = 0.0224, 95% CI = .0104, .0392), thereby supporting H4.

Table 5: The result of bootstrap confidence interval for the mediating effect

Path	Effect	S.E	95% LLCI	95% ULCI
Total effect	0.3533	0.0377	0.2792	0.4274
Total direct effect	0.1799	0.0429	0.0955	0.2642
Total indirect effect	0.1857	0.0323	0.1265	0.2527
Path 1: X → M ₁ → Y	0.0725	0.0212	0.0320	0.1164
Path 2: X → M ₂ → Y	0.0908	0.0254	0.0457	0.1462
Path 3: X → M ₁ → M ₂ → Y	0.0224	0.0073	0.0104	0.0392

Source(s): Authors' own work

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the Attention-Based View (ABV). ABV posits that what decision-makers attend to shapes organizational behavior and outcomes (Ocasio, 1997), executive attention consequently shapes corporate-level choices and modifications to business strategies, responsibilities, and assessment mechanisms. The capability of team knowledge integration can be enhanced if the team can synthesize and analyze internal information that deviate from executive strategic view and leverage these resources to shape new capabilities (Burgelman, 1994). In dynamic and uncertain environments, strategic attention becomes a key driver of adaptability and executive attention acts as a critical cognitive resource shaping strategic and human resource configurations that enable effective knowledge integration.

These findings are also aligned with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Strategic flexibility and employee career role enactment function as resource-enhancing mechanisms. The observed mediating effects suggest that

executive attention not only operates as a resource itself but also enables the accumulation and reinforcement of other organizational resources, consistent with COR's principle of resource gain cycles (Halbesleben et al., 2014). It corresponds to the previous research linking strategic flexibility to the development of dynamic capabilities (Rindova & Kotha, 2001) and supports evidence that formal change approaches enhance organizational dynamic capabilities and in return of knowledge integration (van Reijssen et al., 2015). Strategic flexibility influences employees' career role enactment by articulating the role expectation and enhancing role meanings which strengthens behavioral guidance (Thoits, 1991; 1992) and alignment with organizational objectives (Stein, 1982).

Employees are considered crucial in acquiring and exchanging information to effectively communicate among the teams and implement strategies aligned with executive attention. Identity theory posits a process whereby individuals utilize an internal control system to filter information and previous studies show that leaders strongly influence employee' knowledge-sharing behavior (Reslan et al., 2021). The allocation of executive attention to employee career role will affect work behavior by increasing the role salience to enhance the transformation of individual knowledge into team-level structural knowledge, further facilitating knowledge integration through formal or informal means. Thus, strategic flexibility empowers employees to reconfigure resources for distinct value propositions (Johnson et al. 2003). Together these factors encourage competency exploration and adaptation, thereby enhancing team knowledge integration capability.

6. Theoretical Implications

Executive attention and team knowledge integration are central to strategy formulation and execution. Existing research often links strategic flexibility to competitive advantage and financial performance. (Nandakumar et al. 2014; Zhang, 2005). Our findings show that strategic flexibility positively mediates the relationship between executive attention and knowledge integration capabilities. Moreover, strategic flexibility and employee career roles are linearly related, addressing managerial influence on organizational strategic flexibility (Shalender & Yadav, 2019).

By leveraging the attributes of attention and knowledge integration capabilities as critical competencies and resources, it provides a comprehensive perspective spanning from strategy formulation to strategy communication and implementation (Demir et al.,

2023), addressing the theoretical gap in current research regarding the procedural impact of top management attention (Wang et al., 2022). At the same time, previous research notes that mainstream knowledge management approaches primarily focus on organizational level and underexplore the integration of individual and organizational perspective (Laihonen & Huhtamäki, 2023). Managerial attention should be grounded in the enterprise's resources and capabilities, emphasizing the optimal utilization of existing resource and potential strengths in decision-making. This approach enhances the strategic flexibility of adjustments while preventing resource waste.

The Chinese context further amplifies the significance of these findings. In China's hierarchical and collectivist organizational culture, top-down communication and centralized decision-making often dominate (Hofstede, 2001), executive attention plays an especially pivotal role in signaling priorities and shaping subordinate behavior. Consistent with this view, Mao and Zhang (2025) find that leaders' cognitive reflexivity improves follower performance by enabling knowledge exchange and participative decision processes. Moreover, the emphasis on relational harmony and deference to authority may strengthen the transmission of strategic intent from leadership to teams, thereby enhancing knowledge sharing and integration processes. These culturally embedded dynamics suggest that the mechanisms linking attention, flexibility, and knowledge capability may be particularly pronounced in shaping organizational outcomes.

7. Practical Implications

Building on the findings that executive attention allocation positively influences strategic flexibility, employees' career roles, and team knowledge integration capability and that strategic flexibility further reinforces employee roles and team-level knowledge integration. Our study offers several implications for managerial practice in contemporary organizations.

First, senior executives should recognize attention allocation as a critical managerial lever for enabling strategic flexibility while shaping how employees enact their roles. Merit-based project leadership appointments provide a practical mechanism through which executives can operationalize strategic flexibility without undermining hierarchical coordination. By allocating leadership responsibility based on competence, managers clarify employee career roles and signal strategic priorities to enable individuals to contribute their knowledge at the team level. This alignment facilitates team knowledge integration capability by translating top-down strategic intent into coordinated action and adaptive reconfiguration.

Second, employees play a crucial role as purveyors of knowledge assets and implementers of organizational strategies. Managerial attention should account for employees' role identity and adaptive behaviors. As executive attentions shifts in response to environmental or strategic change, timely and relevant information and knowledge across organizational levels become essential to maintain alignment. Employing mechanisms to empower and recognize employee contribution enable organizations to mobilize individual strengths in support of strategic adjustments. This alignment reinforces collective coordination and knowledge integration (Ocasio, 1997).

Finally, effective knowledge integration depends not only on formal structures but also on social processes of role enactment. DeRue and Ashford (2010) indicate that leadership emerges through reciprocal processes of role claiming and granting. By formally granting employees opportunities to assume task-relevant roles, managers can legitimize knowledge contribution and encourage proactive and adaptive behavior that support effective knowledge integration aligned with organizational strategic priorities and change.

8. Conclusion

This study integrates the attention-based view and resource conservation theory to form a comprehensive logical framework for implementing executive management attention, thereby expanding the theoretical application contexts. Empirical research grounded in the attention-based view validates the influence of executive management attention allocation on strategic flexibility and employee career role, demonstrating the process by which managerial attention extends from individual level to the organizational level. It confirms that an employee's role expectations are influenced by both their personal attributes and the context in which they exist. Executives can enhance employee knowledge sharing by encouraging their beliefs and shared perceptions (Yin et al., 2020; Bavik et al., 2018).

Strategic flexibility significantly impacts employees' career role which suggests organizational strategic adjustments frequently involve reallocating resources, compelling employees to revise the expectation of their career role and further to acquire more resources to mitigate potential losses from organizational changes. The results provide insights on improving the capability of team knowledge integration. Knowledge integration is a complex process that requires participants to transform their existing knowledge into new knowledge. Executive attention influences strategic flexibility and enhances the recognition of employee's role to fosters their adaptability during strategic adjustments. It stimulates the knowledge transformation and

integration in a collaborative and mutually influential process (Carlile & Rebentisch 2003; Carlile, 2004; Tsoukas 2009).

Our study explicitly considers attention structure and the processes that place sustained focus on explaining how executive attention within a organizational context can be integrated between the players and further affects the capability of team knowledge integration process. Future research could consider more influencing factors based on corporate characteristics and their organization structure to construct a more comprehensive mechanism to refine knowledge management research.

Appendix 1: Results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for measurement model

Construct and item		Internal	Factor Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
		reliability Cronbach alpha			
<i>Executive attention allocation (Yu et al., 2022)</i>		0.864		0.845	0.577
Item 1	Senior executives prioritize the knowledge and information from the enterprise.		0.743		
Item 2	Senior executives frequently interpret the enterprise's knowledge and information.		0.745		
Item 3	Senior executives devote significant time and effort to the enterprise's knowledge and information.		0.792		
Item 4	Senior management, guided by the company's strategy, placed a high level of emphasis on key departments and devoted significant effort to them.		0.758		
<i>Team knowledge integration capability (TKIC) (Ke et al., 2007)</i>		0.937		0.937	0.574
Item 1	Most team members maintain consistent knowledge and statements.		0.764		
Item 2	Team members trust each other's words		0.754		
Item 3	When facing challenges, team members communicate and support one another.		0.791		
Item 4	Team members trust each other's ability to express and integrate knowledge.		0.766		
Item 5	Project members can easily understand the professional terms used by others.		0.742		
Item 6	For the project-related issues described by team members, others can quickly understand them.		0.749		
Item 7	Regarding the tools involved in the project (such as software, processes, procedures, etc.), everyone is very familiar with them.		0.783		
Item 8	Members communicate through phone calls, emails, chat software, etc.		0.735		

Item 9	Project members talk in informal settings such as the company cafeteria, lounge, and corridors.	0.717		
Item 10	For the particularly crucial decisions of the project, members can reach a consensus.	0.766		
Item 11	Team members have a lot of communication and cooperation in their work	0.760		
<i>Strategic flexibility (Eletto et al., 2011)</i>		0.852	0.852	0.591
Item 1	In our firm, we quickly dismantle current strategies and with low cost when market conditions or competence dictate.	0.750		
Item 2	In our firm, we readily adapt our future plans in response to changing environmental conditions.	0.766		
Item 3	In our firm we use production machinery or providing services technologies that allow a large amount of operations quickly and without large costs of task change.	0.775		
Item 4	In our firm we have capacity to offer new products or services (enlarge variety) easily and quickly (with low costs)with the consequent changes in production task.	0.783		
Item 4		0.750		
<i>Employee career role (Welbourne et al., 1998)</i>		0.842	0.842	0.572
Item 1	Obtaining personal career goals	0.799		
Item 2	Developing skills needed for his/her future career	0.728		
Item 3	Making progress in his/her career	0.765		
Item 4	Seeking out career opportunities	0.731		
Source(s): Authors' own work				

Appendix 2: Formula Explanation of the SPSS PROCESS v4.0 (MODEL 6)

$$M1 = i_1 + a_1 X + e_1 \tag{1}$$

$$M2 = i_2 + a_2 X + d_{21} M1 + e_2 \tag{2}$$

$$Y = i_3 + c' X + b_2 M1 + b_3 M2 + e_3 \tag{3}$$

Based on these, further calculate the path coefficient of the indirect effect (IE):

$$\text{Path 1: } X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y: IE_1 = a_1 \times b_2 \tag{4}$$

$$\text{Path 2: } X \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y: IE_2 = a_2 \times b_3 \tag{5}$$

$$\text{Path 3: } X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y: IE_3 = a_1 \times d_{21} \times b_3 \tag{6}$$

$$\text{Total IE} = c' + IE_1 + IE_2 + IE_3 \tag{7}$$

Table 1 Explanation of Path Coefficient Meaning

Coefficient	Path Meaning	Theoretical Meaning
a1	X → M1	Effect of the independent variable on the first mediator
a2	X → M2	Direct effect of the independent variable on the second mediator
d21	M1 → M2	Effect of the first mediator on the second mediator (key to sequential mediation)
b2	M1 → Y	Effect of mediator M1 on the dependent variable
b3	M2 → Y	Effect of mediator M2 on the dependent variable
c'	X → Y (direct effect)	Direct effect of X on Y controlling for both mediators

Table 2 Explanation of Key Parameters

Parameter	Setting	Meaning (Use)	Theoretical Basis
Model	6	Specifies the serial mediation model with two mediators (X → M1 → M2 → Y), used to test multi-stage transmission mechanisms.	Hayes and Little (2018) indicates that Model 6 is appropriate when two mediators are causally ordered, enabling examination of serial mediation effects.
Boot	5000	Performs 5000 bootstrap resamples to construct confidence intervals for indirect effects.	Bootstrap does not assume normality and is suitable for the skewed distribution of indirect effects; 5000 resamples are recommended by Hayes for robust estimation.
Confidence intervals (CI)	95%	Uses a 95% confidence interval to determine whether mediation is significant; if the CI	Bootstrap CI avoids the normality assumption underlying Sobel tests and provides more accurate significance testing (Hayes & Little, 2018). 95% CI

		excludes zero, the effect is significant.	corresponds to the widely adopted $\alpha = 0.05$ standard.
Total	1	Requests output of the total effect of X on Y (c path), to distinguish between direct and indirect effects.	The total effect helps evaluate the contribution of indirect effects to the overall causal relationship ((Hayes & Little, 2018)).
Normal	0	Disables the Sobel test to avoid relying on normality-based indirect effect testing.	Indirect effects are typically skewed; Sobel tests can misestimate significance under non-normality (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).
Fixed Seed	Fixed value (e.g., 12345)	Controls the random seed to ensure reproducibility of bootstrap results.	Setting a fixed seed improves transparency and replicability in empirical research (Hayes & Little, 2018).

Source(s): Authors' own work

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