



Exploring micro-foundation within professional network: evidence from healthcare CEOs

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Introduction

Professional networking refers to a set of interpersonal interactions based on reciprocal ties, through which individuals exchange resources that support career and work success (Gibson et al., 2014). Recent research on this topic has increasingly focused on **CEOs' informal networks**, exploring how organizational and institutional factors can enable or constrain their development (Cross et al., 2001).

02

Aim of the study

This study aims to explore the **micro-foundations of Italian healthcare CEOs** who hold strategic positions within **informal networks**, considering how these underlying capabilities may support **knowledge sharing, cross-institutional coordination**, and **innovation** through interpersonal relationships.



Methods – Context of the study

The **Italian National Health Service** is a publicly funded, regionally managed system founded on universality, equality, and equity, ensuring all citizens access to healthcare regardless of social or individual conditions.



03

Methods

We conducted semi-structured interviews with **Healthcare CEOs** affiliated with **FIASO**, a key federation in the Italian healthcare system. This approach enabled us to explore the micro-foundations of professional networks in a highly institutionalized context.

Interviews focused on:

- **Network structure**
- **Interaction dynamics**
- **Individual motivations**
- **Key skills for network success**

Each interview lasted 30', allowing for an in-depth understanding of personal and professional experiences.

04

Results

N. Respondents: **10 Italian healthcare CEOs**



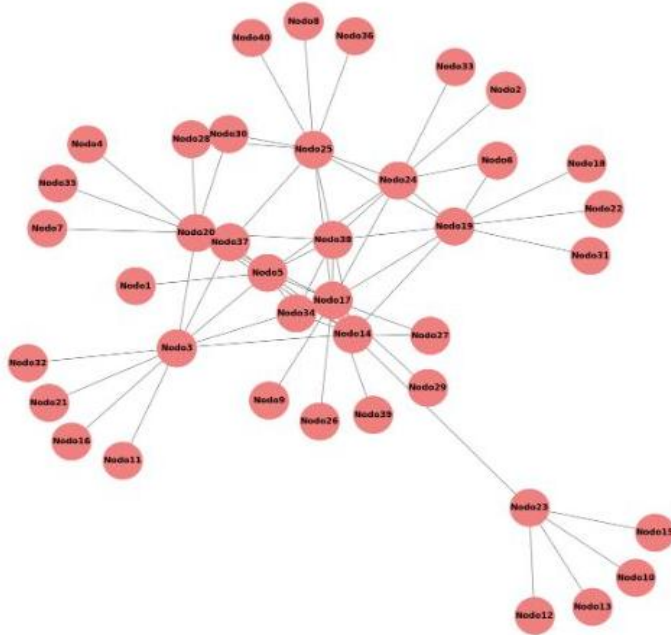
2 women



8 men

Average age of respondents: **57 years old**

4.1 Centrality into the network

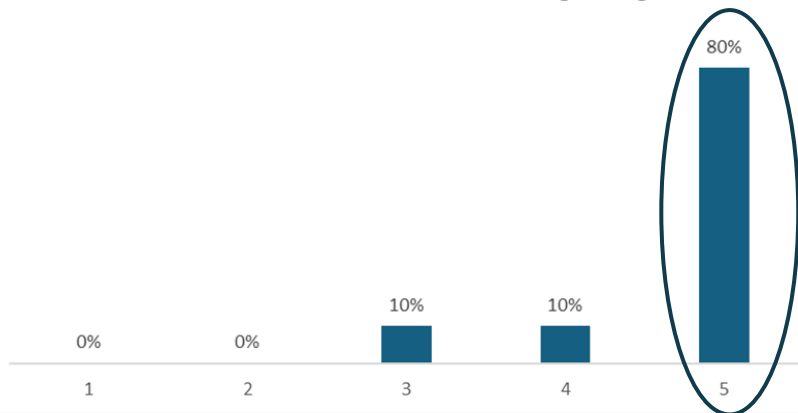


- **Node 5** (Toscana, CEO for 12 years): MD with specialized in anesthesia, hygiene and public health. MSc in management.
- **Node 14** (Sicilia, CEO for 5 years): Nuclear engineer, specialized in clinical engineering, and healthcare management, MSc in administrative innovation.
- **Node 17** (Liguria, CEO for 14 years): MD specialized in hygiene and hospital organization. MSc in management.
- **Node 38** (Campania, 8 years): MD, MSc in healthcare management and leadership.

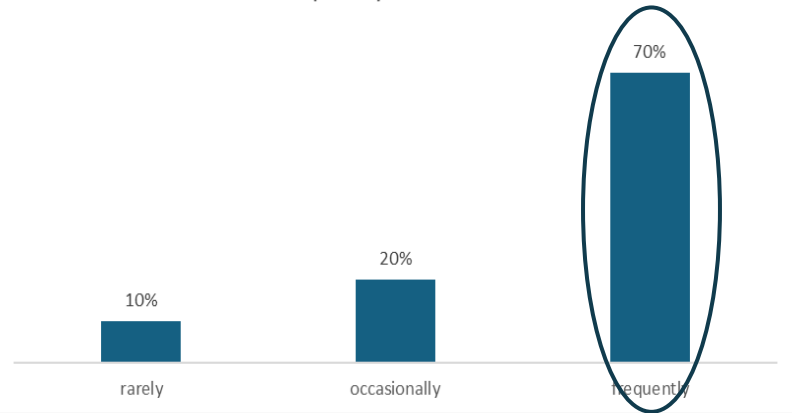
4.2

Networks relevance for CEOs

Professional network relevance grading



Frequency of contacts



Pivotal CEOs Behavioral traits



4.4 Role of training

Training's role for networks development



Conclusions

- ✓ **Behavioral skills** soft skills (leadership, communication, collaboration) are considered essential for healthcare CEOs to effectively lead and maintain central roles within professional networks.
- ✓ **Training is crucial** not only for acquiring skills but also for fostering experience exchange and strengthening professional relationships.
- ✓ **Sharing ideas and believe in networks** the creation of informal networks is based on CEOs opinion about their usefulness and specific behavioral and technical skills. Looking at the future of healthcare these conditions should be replicated in a larger number of CEOs.

05 Limitation and future research

- ✓ The study is based on a **limited sample** and does **not consider the influence of formal organizational structures and institutional contexts** on the creation of professional networks.
- ✓ Future research should involve a **larger sample** and also analyze **external factors** such as regional and national healthcare policies.
- ✓ Future studies will be aimed at looking at the hospitals' performance achieved thanks to the informal networks

A cluster of colorful geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons in shades of pink, teal, and blue, positioned above the "THANK YOU" text.

THANK YOU



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