ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION RESEARCH: A REVIEW OF THEORY, MEASUREMENT, AND DATA-ANALYTIC PRACTICES (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

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Principal Topic

The construct of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) conceptualizes the value creation process as firm-level behaviors and practices (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Our review summarizes how EO is conceptualized, measured, and analyzed, and advances recommendations for consistency in EO scholarship. We believe our first aim underscores our second, which is to encourage continued interest in the construct by promoting a more coherent approach to allow syntheses of EO to proceed on a stronger footing and subsequently influence entrepreneurship practice.

Method

We reviewed 326 published, peer-reviewed conceptual or empirical articles employing the EO construct, coding information about the construct label, theoretical foundations, definition, dimensionality, context, operationalization, levels of analysis, and research design.

Results and Implications

Our review shows that the theoretical foundations of the construct have evolved from diverse research streams across numerous study contexts. Recent research indicates convergence on the “EO” label; other labels include strategic posture, entrepreneurial style or management, entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, or strategic orientation. Most construct definitions reflect entrepreneurial organizational behaviors and orientations with elements of innovation, risk taking, and proactiveness. Despite these commonalities, there is wide variation in the measurement and application of EO, in particular with regard to its dimensionality. Some studies suggest innovation, risk taking, and proactiveness form a single dimension while others argue for a multidimensional conceptualization. Even those who are multidimensional proponents lack agreement about the number of dimensions, or conceptualize EO multidimensionally but operationalize it unidimensionally. Others collapse EO dimensions into larger constructs.

A number of studies operationalize EO with the Covin and Slevin (1989) strategic posture scale but our review bears out that numerous measures are employed across EO research, with haphazard and inadequate construct measurement practices evident. Further, our review finds that measurement and analysis are not always aligned with theory. It is our belief that a comprehensive, critical review of EO is overdue. The expanding body of work incorporating EO and its related dimensions supports the claim that this is an important and vibrant research area and we offer suggestions for future research to address the key issues surrounding the shortcomings identified.

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