JOB CHARACTERISTICS THEORY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NOVICE AND REPEAT ENTREPRENEURS (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic

In the area of entrepreneurial behavior, recent findings show that job characteristics of entrepreneurs and non-founding top executives of small and mid-sized businesses significantly differ. While interesting, no research to date illustrates if there are differences among entrepreneurs who have started just one venture – novice entrepreneurs – or have previously started more than one venture – repeat entrepreneurs.

Prior start-up experience is a distinguishing factor between novice and repeat entrepreneurs. This experience has been shown to be a factor in how novice and repeat entrepreneurs recognize opportunities. It may also be a factor in how novice and repeat entrepreneurs perceive their work in terms of job characteristics and how these job characteristics influence individual-level outcomes. The organizational literature shows that different levels of job characteristics influence individual-level outcomes differently.

To date, the majority of empirical findings have failed to show differences in individual-level outcomes between novice and repeat entrepreneurs. Considering this failure, Job Characteristics Theory may explain how job characteristics influence novice and repeat entrepreneurs differently even if the outcome may be of similar magnitude. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine how job characteristics influence a fundamental measure of success for the individual entrepreneur - job satisfaction – for novice and repeat entrepreneurs.

Methods

Data were collected from 192 novice and 229 repeat entrepreneurs. The Job Characteristics Inventory and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire were used to assess job characteristics and job satisfaction. Regression analysis was the principal method of data analysis. The Chow test was used to test for differences between the regression lines.

Results and Implications

Even though no significant mean difference was found for job satisfaction, the results show that job characteristics explain substantially more unique job satisfaction variance for novice entrepreneurs. The results show significant differences in how job characteristics regressed on job satisfaction, i.e., autonomy had a stronger association with job satisfaction for repeat entrepreneurs whereas feedback had a stronger association with job satisfaction for novice entrepreneurs. In combination these results provide strong support for the basic argument of Job Characteristics Theory: different kinds of work with inherently different levels of job characteristics influence job satisfaction differently. Specifically for entrepreneurship, the results show there are significant and important differences between novice and repeat entrepreneurs.

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