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SUMMARY

ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION IN A NONPROFIT CONTEXT: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

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Principal Topic

The nature and role of entrepreneurship in for-profit companies is fairly well-established. Empirically, the firm's entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has been associated with various measures of performance, as well as with a number of antecedent variables. In addition, evidence exists of a relationship between EO and the market orientation (MO) of for-profit firms. At the same time, research on the nature and role of entrepreneurship in general, and EO in particular, within non-profit organizations (NPOs) remains limited. At the most basic level, the theoretical basis for entrepreneurship in a non-profit has not been adequately established. Operationally, the forms that entrepreneurship can take, and the implications of different levels of entrepreneurship are unclear in a non-profit context. The purpose of the current study was to explore the extent to which relationships identified in for-profit company research are applicable in a non-profit context. EO is measured and associated with a number of antecedent variables, as well as market orientation and performance.

Method

Based on the literature, hypotheses were generated and an instrument was designed to assess the key constructs. The questionnaire was mailed to the population of social service 501(c) 3 non-profit organizations in a three-county region within Central New York. Performance data was generated separately from recently available IRS 990 taxation forms. Exploratory factor analysis and regression provided insights regarding the interactions of variables in the research model. Results of the analysis partially support the hypotheses.

Results and Implications

The findings indicate that EO is associated with managerial style, board structure, and the nature of control in non-profits, and is correlated with MO (clients) but not MO (donors). While organizational performance was not associated with EO, it was associated with MO. These results suggest that EO is a relevant construct in a non-profit context, and that the climate of such organizations affects levels of entrepreneurship. Inherent differences between the non-profit and for-profit sectors find entrepreneurship posing unique challenges when applied in NPOs. Yet, the systems and structures of these organizations can be designed in ways that facilitate entrepreneurship. Suggestions are made for theory development and ongoing empirical research.

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