MEETING EXPECTATIONS – WHY SOCIAL SKILLS MATTER MORE IN STRONG RELATIONSHIPS (SUMMARY)

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MEETING EXPECTATIONS – WHY SOCIAL SKILLS MATTER MORE IN STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

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Principal Topic

Compared to other support types, emotional support is much less tangible and sensitive thereby increasing the risk of discrepancies between the intention of the support provider and how the support is perceived by the nascent entrepreneur. In this study, we are interested in how differences in entrepreneurs’ level of emotional support are dependent on the social skills of support providers. By integrating role theory, we argue that strong relationships between individuals carry with them a number of expectations of support pressuring support providers to meet these expectations. We demonstrate how this pressure stimulates the use of relevant social skills to ensure the best support possible.

Method

This study has support providers as unit of analysis and thereby changes the unit of analysis from ego (entrepreneur) to alter (support provider) compared to traditional studies of entrepreneurs’ social networks. We use data from the Danish Alter Study of Entrepreneurship (DASE) which is a dataset consisting of individuals who all know someone in the process of starting up a business (N=458). We use linear regression with provided emotional support as DV, social skills as IV and strength of the relation as moderator.

Results and Implications

We find that social skills of support providers have a positive influence on the emotional support provided to the entrepreneur (H1). Furthermore, we also show that the closer the support provider feels to the entrepreneur, the more emotional support is provided (H2). Finally, we demonstrate how social skills are more important for providing emotional support in close relationships (H3). Our study provides insights into the traditional discussion of structure and agency in entrepreneurship research by adding the perspective of the support providers. With our results, we show that social skills are not just tied to entrepreneurs, but that social skills of the people in entrepreneurs’ networks also determine the support they receive. Furthermore, we underline that this is not a universal effect, but instead one that is contingent upon the role relation between individuals and the expectations that are tied hereto.

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