HOW CONFIGURATIONS OF NOVELTY, TEAM STRUCTURE, AND THE DECISION-MAKING STYLE INFLUENCE TEAM COLLABORATION QUALITY (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

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Principal Topic

Team breakups are a principal reason for new firm failure. One construct central to recent thinking on well-collaborating teams is Hoegl and Gemuenden's (2001) teamwork quality (TWQ) construct. TWQ has been shown to be a key success factor of innovative teams (e.g. Hoegl et al., 2003; Hoegl & Parboteeah, 2007), yet we know little about what determines positive teamwork quality especially in the nascent venture context.

This study scrutinizes antecedents and environmental as well as structural effects on TWQ. Specifically, this paper studies the decision making style “preference for embracing vs. overcoming contingencies” (cf. Brettel et al., 2012) as one main predictor of TWQ. Further, two main conditions, i.e. the number of defined roles (cf. Dayan and Di Benedetto, 2009) and novelty to the market (cf. Hoegl et al., 2003), are analyzed as contextual moderators.

Methods

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a survey among 261 nascent entrepreneurs. For our empirical analysis we draw on established and validated constructs for the two latent variables, TWQ and preference for embracing vs. overcoming contingencies (bi-polar). To test the relationships between the above mentioned variables we used linear regression analyses and run different post-hoc robustness checks (Heckman modeling and 2SLS) to further validate our results.

Results and Implications

We find that the positive relationship between the preference to embrace contingencies and TWQ is stronger the fewer roles within a team are defined. Strikingly, as founding teams define more roles their preference for embracing contingencies has adverse effects on the TWQ. In turn, our findings uncover that in a founding team where many roles are defined sticking to the plan has positive effects on TWQ. However, well-functioning teams that are sticking to predefined plans and their established roles at the same time might run the risk of pursuing artifacts that never substantiate. Second, our results show that the preference to embrace contingencies is crucial for TWQ when novelty to market is high. In contrast, aiming to stick to predefined plans has negative effects on TWQ if the market innovativeness is high.

Overall, our study highlights team configurations that decrease chances of team conflicts and may reduce chances for team disbandment and venture failure.

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