A REGULATORY FOCUS PERSPECTIVE ON TEAMS ENGAGED IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL TASK: A REPEATED MEASURES STUDY (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

A REGULATORY FOCUS PERSPECTIVE ON TEAMS ENGAGED IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL TASK: A REPEATED MEASURES STUDY

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Principal Topic

Some team members work on team tasks in anticipation of success; others are motivated by a desire to avoid failure. This difference in orientation may result in differing levels of effort across team members. We attempt to shed light on the mechanism through which orientation influences team member effort and satisfaction. A Regulatory Focus (RF) perspective helps develop a model relating team processes and outcomes to variation in team members’ regulatory orientation. RF theory suggests that individuals differ significantly in the way they approach goals, and in the means they employ to attain those goals. RF theory has been widely applied in marketing and management research but not to team member behaviors. We currently know little about how an individual team member’s RF may interact with team processes and influence the member’s behavior; or about how a team’s processes and performance may influence a team member’s RF over time. In addition, there is a paucity of longitudinal research on teams and the application of RF to team processes in particular. This study attempts small steps in both of these directions by testing whether the relationship between feedback, effort and satisfaction is moderated by the team member’s RF. Further, we examine how the variance in RF within the team is related to team cohesion and performance outcomes. We suggest that the within team variance in RF levels will be negatively related to team satisfaction and team cohesion over time, and that performance over time has implications for the variance in RF across the team.

Method

We collected data over three months on 125 college students, divided into 25 teams. The participants engaged in a management simulation characterized by the high level of ambiguity, uncertainty, and complexity characteristic of an entrepreneurial environment.

Results and Implications

We extend research on entrepreneurial teams by relating a personality characteristic such as RF to satisfaction and effort in a team environment so as to help explain and predict the emergence of dysfunctional behaviors on teams over time. We also identify RF convergence over time, a mechanism that may contribute to team efficiency and satisfaction, while making the team more susceptible to groupthink.

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