DOES AN INNOVATION-SUPPORTIVE CULTURE ALWAYS SUPPORT INNOVATION? (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

DOES AN INNOVATION-SUPPORTIVE CULTURE ALWAYS SUPPORT INNOVATION?

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Principal Topic

Prior research has examined the antecedents of innovation in order to understand how organizations may better foster innovation. Much of this research has focused on the relationship between organizational culture and innovativeness (Detert, 2000; Gerlach, 2003), and has generally argued that supportive cultures are positively related to innovation (Chandler, Keller, & Lyon, 2000). However, while the intuitive direct implications of culture on innovation have long been a subject of interest in prior research (Chandler, Keller, & Lyon, 2000), some major questions regarding the implications of this relationship remain unexplored. Specifically, does an innovation-supportive organizational culture always lead to the desired innovation? Or, conversely is it possible that an innovative-supportive culture may perhaps even depress innovation? To examine these questions, this study sets out to test the nature of the relationship between innovation-supportive culture and innovation to determine if the best representation is linear or curvilinear. In this case, we test the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between innovation-supportive culture and innovation.

Method

We examine our hypothesized curvilinear relationship with a stratified random sample of 753 small and medium-sized firms from the National Small Business Poll on Innovation. We tested our arguments using a multi-method approach consisting of OLS and Hierarchical regression. In examining our hypothesized relationships with this sample data, we control for a variety of endogenous and exogenous factors, including environmental dynamism, industry, firm size, and firm’s propensity to employ technological advances.

Results and Implications

The results of this study suggest that the relationship between innovation-supportive culture and innovation may be more complex than the linear representation currently assumed in the current literature. In particular, motivation factors influence the process and create instances in which extreme levels of innovation-supportive culture may actually deter innovation. From this perspective, innovation-supportive cultures may perhaps act as a monitoring devise that may constrain employees’ abilities to perform innovation activities and ultimately produce innovation. In this case, managers may be unknowingly contributing to the lack of innovation in the firm. The recognition of this curvilinear relationship offers new avenues for future research, including examining the conditions and the processes that lead to this non-linear relationship.

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