ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOR, OR BOTH? AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION CONSTRUCT (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOR, OR BOTH? AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION CONSTRUCT

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) can be defined as the “strategy-making practices, management philosophies, and firm-level behaviors that are entrepreneurial in nature” (Anderson, Covin, & Slevin, 2009: 220). While empirical investigations into the nomological network of EO have yielded valuable insights, researchers are still struggling with questions regarding the fundamental nature of EO. While much of the scholarly debate has focused on the dimensionality and measurement of EO, there is a more foundational concern that remains unresolved; specifically, whether EO is best characterized as an attitudinal construct, whether EO is best construed as behavioral in nature, or whether the EO construct is both attitudinal and behavioral. Providing empirical clarity on this research question is important for two reasons. First, the most widely used measure of EO includes both attitudinal and behavioral elements. If attitudinal and/or behavioral elements are not appropriate within the conceptual domain of EO, then this measure is introducing contamination. Second, measures of EO that focus exclusively on either attitudes or behaviors (i.e., content analysis of 10-K annual reports and other archival data that focuses solely on behaviors) may be deficient in their measurement of EO if both attitudinal and behavioral elements are necessary to adequately capture EO’s conceptual domain.

Method

The data for this study consisted of survey responses from 180 senior-managers who participated in executive education programs conducted by a large Midwestern public university. The research question was tested by bifurcating a common measure of EO (Covin & Slevin, 1989) into its attitudinal and behavioral components, and then associating these resulting measures of EO with other theoretically related constructs.

Results and Implications

Our results suggest potentially meaningful differences between attitudinal and behavioral operationalizations of EO. Specifically, while both attitudes and behaviors contribute unique insights towards our understanding of EO, behaviors represent a focal consideration when detecting the presence of EO. As such, studies assessing EO may be incomplete absent the measurement and consideration of entrepreneurial behaviors. The study findings offer pertinent implications for future research on EO and in regards to alternate operationalizations of EO.

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