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“Day-to-day” entrepreneurship within organisations: The role of trait Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Organisational Support

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KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurial behaviour;
Perceived Organisational Support;
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Corporate entrepreneurship;
Organisational tenure

Summary The aim of this article is to deepen the understanding of the factors, which influence individual entrepreneurial behaviour in organisations. Using a sample of 224 employees from four organisations, we tested by means of structural equation modeling the influence of personal traits (represented by trait EI or emotional self-efficacy) and contextual factors (represented by Perceived Organisational Support – POS) on entrepreneurial behaviour. Results indicate that both personal and contextual variables correlate with individual entrepreneurial behaviour. Moreover, findings demonstrate a significant negative relationship of the joint impact of POS and organisation tenure on entrepreneurial behaviour. The present effort extends theoretical and empirical research on the effects of personal and contextual factors on corporate entrepreneurship while applications of the results are discussed.

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Introduction

Over the last decade, theoretical and empirical research has suggested that entrepreneurship, as a process, takes place in multiple sites and spaces and should not be seen solely from an economic-profit perspective (Bryat and Julien,

2000; Zampetakis and Moustakis, 2007). Individual entrepreneurship in the context of organisations involves the intentions and actions of “key players” at all levels towards value creation within the organisation (Kuratko, 2007). Entrepreneurial behaviour within organisations (or corporate entrepreneurship) is generally regarded as a vehicle of increased organisational growth and profitability (Thornberry, 2001), strategic renewal (Zahra, 1996), organisational change and customer value added services (Kuratko et al., 2005). Consequently, it is vital for large organisations

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to support entrepreneurial behaviour across all hierarchical levels in order to improve performance and increase competitive advantage (Kuratko et al., 2005; Mair, 2005).

There are two main streams of research concerning the factors, which stimulate or constrain entrepreneurial behaviour within organisations (Hornsby et al., 2002). The first stream focuses on the organisational context and processes, while the second focuses on the individual. Effective corporate entrepreneurship behaviour varies according to managerial level (Kuratko et al., 2005); however, research is restricted to traits and actions of high-skilled top organisational officials and middle managers and neglects the added value creation process at lower organisational levels, which arises from the less heroic "day-to-day" entrepreneurship "aiming at getting things done in an entrepreneurial-innovative and unusual way" (Mair, 2005, p. 51).

Organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) appears to be a useful theoretical framework for individual entrepreneurial behaviour in organisations. Within this framework, employees develop high levels of Perceived Organisational Support (POS) when the organisation cares about their well-being and values their contributions (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Consistent with Organisational support theory proposition, research reveals that employees with high levels of POS are more committed to the organisations they work for and more satisfied with their jobs (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Such employees are less likely to be absent, or resign (e.g. Eisenberger et al., 1986); are more likely to go "above and beyond" formal job duties and have higher in-role performance (e.g. Armeli et al., 1998; George and Brief, 1992; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). However, despite the acknowledged importance of POS to outcomes that are favourable to both employees and the organisation, empirical research on the potential influence of POS on entrepreneurial behaviour within organisations is scarce. Thus, one aim of the present study is to examine the effect of POS on the entrepreneurial behaviour of employees working in organisations.

However, the mechanisms by which POS exerts influence on employee attitudes and behaviours at work and moderating influences that constitute boundary conditions of the theory are in need of further investigation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Organisation tenure (Sturman, 2003), that is, the amount of time an employee has spent working for the same organisation, is a potential moderator of the relationship between POS and entrepreneurial behaviour. Recently, both academics and practitioners are interested in whether tenure inhibits or contributes to important organisational variables (such as employee job performance) and whether there is an optimum level of tenure for promoting such variables (Sturman, 2003). Furthermore, there has been surprisingly little academic and empirical research on the potential influences of organisation tenure on entrepreneurial behaviour. A systematic consideration of the potential moderating effects of tenure will contribute to a fuller understanding of the conditions under which the effects of POS on entrepreneurial behaviour are more likely to hold. Hence, a second major purpose of the present study is to focus on employees' organisation tenure as a potential moderator of the relationship between POS and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Another line of research that holds considerable promise for furthering our understanding of the entrepreneurial process in organisations is individual differences in emotion-related dispositions. Recent meta-analytic work suggests that personality variables play an important role in developing alternative models to the entrepreneurial process (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). One such potential emotion-related disposition is trait Emotional Intelligence (trait EI) or emotional self-efficacy (Petrides and Furnham, 2001). Trait EI integrates emotion-related self-perceptions (e.g. emotion perception, emotion management, empathy, impulsivity) and emotional self-efficacy assessed through self-report questionnaires. Emerging evidence suggests that trait EI provides comprehensive coverage of emotion-related self-perceptions that are directly relevant to organisational variables such as job satisfaction and performance (Wong and Law, 2002). However, there is little existing research directly exploring how individual differences in trait EI relate to entrepreneurial behaviour within organisations. The increasing academic and business interest on Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a key index of emotional self-efficacy motivated us to examine EI in the context of corporate entrepreneurship. Therefore, a third aim of this study is to examine the potential role of trait EI on individual entrepreneurial behaviour.

In summary, the article focuses on the relationship between entrepreneurial behaviour and (1) POS, (2) Trait EI and examines the extent to which employee organisation tenure moderates the linkage between POS and entrepreneurial behaviour (see Fig. 1).

We structure the article in seven sections: The following section discusses the rationale in theoretical framework and hypothesis formation; it also overviews key results from literature. The Section "Methods" overviews research methods and tactics. The Section "Results" overviews the results and the assessment of research hypotheses. The Section "Discussion" presents a discussion of results. The Section "Implication for management" presents the practical implication of research results. The Section "Study limita-

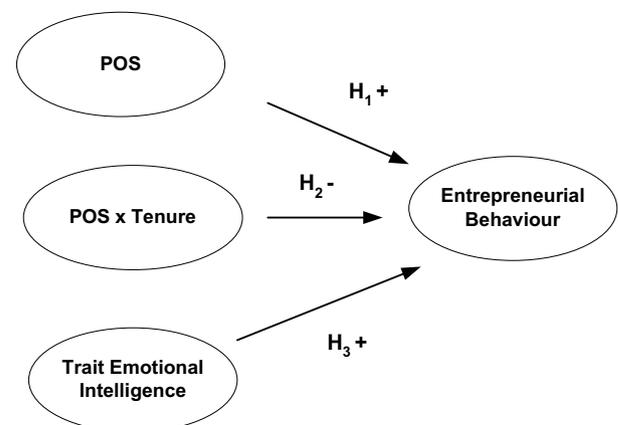


Figure 1 Representation of the hypothesised theoretical model. The "+" sign is used to place emphasis on the positive effect of POS and trait EI on individual entrepreneurial behaviour. The "-" sign is used to place emphasis on the negative effect of the *POS x tenure* interaction on entrepreneurial behaviour.

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