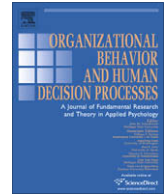




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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/obhdpThe role of self-efficacy, goal, and affect in dynamic motivational self-regulation [☆]Myeong-gu Seo ^{a,*}, Remus Ilies ^b^a Department of Management and Organization, Robert H. Smith School of Business, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-1815, USA^b The Eli Broad Graduate School of Management, Michigan State University N475 North Business Complex, East Lansing, MI 48824-1112, USA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examined the within-person relationship between self-efficacy and performance in an Internet-based stock investment simulation in which participants engaged in a series of stock trading activities trying to achieve performance goals in response to dynamic task environments (performance feedback and stock market movements). Contrary to the results of several previous studies, we found that self-efficacy was positively related to effort and performance, and goal level partially mediated the efficacy–performance relationship. We also found that participants' affective reactions to performance feedback, measured as positive affect and negative affect, uniquely contributed to their motivation and performance either directly or by indirectly influencing their self-efficacy.

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Almost three decades of extensive research from multiple theoretical perspectives has investigated the processes and consequences of motivational self-regulation, in particular, how individuals set or revise a set of goals and strive for the achievement of those goals and what is the role of their self-efficacy beliefs in this process (Bandura, 1991; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Locke & Latham, 1990a; Vancouver, 2000). Recently, scholars have begun to question whether self-efficacy, one's belief in his or her capacity to perform (Bandura, 1986), plays the same role in motivational self-regulation at different levels of analyses (e.g., Chen & Bliese, 2002; Chen et al., 2002; Vancouver, Thompson, & Williams, 2001; Yeo & Neal, 2006). In particular, there have been interesting scholarly debates between control theorists (e.g., Vancouver, 2005) and social-cognitive theorists (e.g., Bandura & Locke, 2003) regarding the relationship between self-efficacy and performance at the within-person level of analysis. The debate was sparked by a series of experimental studies conducted by Vancouver and his colleagues (Vancouver & Kendall, 2006; Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002; Vancouver et al., 2001), which showed that self-efficacy is negatively related to performance within individuals, and thus challenged the long-standing perspective among self-regulation theorists that self-efficacy is generally functional to performance as well as the body of research supporting that perspective.

The conflicting views on self-efficacy, motivation and performance, and the associated evidence in support of both perspectives, raise the question of whether the two perspectives can be integrated and the differences explained either by substantive differences in the underlying psychological processes linking these constructs or by methodological differences and artifacts. The primary objective of this study is aimed at offering an explanation for these differences.

In addition, although self-regulation theorists have discussed the role of affect-related factors (e.g., self-satisfaction) in the processes of self-regulation (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Locke & Latham, 1990a), cognitive explanations, such as self-efficacy and goal, have been predominant in understanding motivational self-regulation processes (cf., Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). Recently, scholars began to directly investigate the role of basic affective experience in the process of dynamic motivational self-regulation (e.g., Bagozzi & Pieters, 1998; Cron, Slocum, VandeWalle, & Fu, 2005; Ilies & Judge, 2005). For example, Ilies and Judge (2005) provided evidence that motivational states (goal level) vary within individuals as a function of performance feedback, and more importantly that positive and negative affect partially mediate the within-person relationship between performance feedback and goal level across time. Yet, most studies investigated the role of affect in the processes of motivational self-regulation without considering cognitive processes, such as those related to self-efficacy, that are simultaneously operating in motivational self-regulation. As a result, we know little about how affective and cognitive processes simultaneously explain motivational self-regulation. To address this gap

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* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 301 314 8787.

E-mail addresses: mseo@rhsmith.umd.edu (M. Seo), ilies@msu.edu (R. Ilies).

in the literature, our secondary objective is to further explore the role of affect in the process of motivational self-regulation that is driven by two essential cognitive properties: self-efficacy and goals. In doing so, we examine both the indirect mechanism through which individuals' positive and negative affective states influence motivation and performance by affecting self-efficacy and goal choice, and the direct mechanism that goes beyond the effects of self-efficacy and goal processes.

To accomplish our objectives, we developed and ran a stock investment simulation in which stock investors recruited from investment clubs engaged in trading activities each day for 20 business days in face of the dynamic and uncertain stock market movements. Building on Vancouver, More, and Yoder (2008), we explain how and why the efficacy–performance relationship should be positive in such a task environment, and thus attempt to reconcile the conflicting views on the efficacy–performance relationship. Below we review theory and research relevant to our investigation, and we then formulate hypotheses for the relationships between the constructs described above.

Self-efficacy, performance, and task environment

Sociocognitive theory suggests that self-efficacy beliefs operate in concert with goal systems to enhance motivation and performance by increasing effort or persistence (Bandura, 1997, 2001). For example, Locke and Latham (1990b) suggested a high-performance cycle in which self-efficacy leads to the adoption of more difficult goals, and both self-efficacy and goals positively contribute to motivation and performance. In addition, an overwhelmingly large accumulation of evidence from diverse empirical settings and methodological strategies has supported the theory that self-efficacy is positively related to motivation and performance (see, Bandura & Locke, 2003, for a review). For example, there are a number of large-scale meta-analyses that examined this relationship, and the results were predominantly positive (e.g., Sadri & Robertson, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). As a result, it has been a generally accepted view among scholars that self-efficacy is positively related to motivation and performance (Vancouver et al., 2001).

Recently, scholars began to consider the relationship between self-efficacy and performance at two different levels of analysis (e.g., Chen & Bliese, 2002; Chen et al., 2002), and several studies examining this relationship at the within-individual level have provided evidence that contradicts the dominant view that the relationship is positive (e.g., Vancouver & Kendall, 2006; Vancouver et al., 2001, 2002, 2008; Yeo & Neal, 2006). In particular, based on control theory (Powers, 1973), Vancouver and his colleagues (2001, 2002, 2006) predicted that self-efficacy may have complex, mutually opposing effects on performance at the within-person level of analysis. On the one hand, consistent with sociocognitive theory, high self-efficacy can motivate individuals to set or adopt higher levels of goals over time, and as a result, may positively contribute to performance (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990a). On the other hand, however, they argued that self-efficacy would be negatively related to performance. They reasoned that if goal level is held constant, high levels of self-efficacy may create optimism or overconfidence regarding the discrepancies between current and desired states, which in turn, lead to lowering the levels of resources allocated to a given task and thus to lower levels of performance (Vancouver & Kendall, 2006).

Consistent with these predictions, Vancouver et al. (2001) demonstrated in two studies adopting a computerized analytic task (the Mastermind game) a weak negative relationship between self-efficacy and performance at the within-person level of analysis in two different conditions. They also found that personal goals

were positively influenced by self-efficacy but negatively related to subsequent performance, contrary to the predictions of sociocognitive theory. In two additional studies using the same task, Vancouver et al. (2002) experimentally manipulated self-efficacy and found the same negative within-person relationship between self-efficacy and performance. They further showed that self-efficacy increased overconfidence and the chances of committing logical errors, which might explain the negative relationship.

Bandura and Locke (2003) argued that these results are likely to be methodological artifacts based on an overly simple performance task (Mastermind), rather than general findings applicable to other dynamic, real-life, and/or learning contexts. However, Yeo and Neal (2006) examined the within-person relationship between self-efficacy and performance in an air traffic control task that allowed growth in both performance and self-efficacy (learning) over time and found that the relationship was negative. Moreover, Vancouver and Kendall (2006) investigated the relationship in a real-life, learning context where a group of undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory course repeatedly reported their self-efficacy, goal, planned study time, and actual study time corresponding to each of the five exams given to them during the course. They found not only that self-efficacy was negatively related to exam performance within individuals, but also that the negative relationship occurred via its negative effect on resource allocation (planned and actual study time).

Vancouver and colleagues have proposed a conceptual argument that explains why self-efficacy predicts motivation (or performance) positively in some situations and negatively in others; and this explanation is best summarized by Vancouver et al. (2008). These authors argue that distinguishing goal-planning processes from goal choice processes plays a crucial role in the determining the direction of the within-individual effect of self-efficacy on performance. That is, when participants are planning for accepted goals, their self-efficacy beliefs relate negatively to performance because high self-efficacy involves a higher expectancy of reaching the goal and thus leads to less resources (i.e., effort and persistence) allocated to the task, thus lower motivation. Under the goal choice process, when participants actively select the goals they are motivated to accomplish, higher self-efficacy leads to higher goals which, in turn lead to higher motivation – therefore the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation will be positive. This argument can be extended to explain the within-individual relationship between self-efficacy and performance, of course for most situations (tasks) where motivation (i.e., effort and persistence) does predict performance.

Indeed, the goal-planning process seems to have been at work in the studies that supported a negative within-individual relationship between self-efficacy and motivation or performance. For example, although the relationship was examined in some studies (e.g., Vancouver et al., 2002; Yeo & Neal, 2006) without explicitly considering and measuring intra-individual variations in personal goals, the other studies that did allow goal adjustment (i.e., Vancouver & Kendall, 2006; Vancouver et al., 2001) showed that intra-individual goals were unrelated or negatively related to performance. This result suggests that goal adjustments in these studies may not have represented meaningful changes in one's personal goal level, but instead may have merely reflected his or her past performance (e.g., Vancouver et al., 2001). Vancouver and Kendall (2006), for example, observed little within-individual variation in personal goals (what grade were respondents aiming for on the upcoming test), which suggests that participants strived for an overall goal (performance in the course) and the little adjustment they made did not reflect participants' motivational state with respect to the subsequent performance episode. On the other hand, Vancouver et al. (2001), in their second study, did find support for a positive relationship between self-efficacy and performance only in the difficult goal

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