

Topics for Bachelor Theses for Management Students at the Chair of Organization & Innovation

FSS 2023

You can choose among the 16 topics described below. Preferences will be collected after the inaugural meeting.

Introduction to academic writing (inaugural meeting):

Tuesday, April 18th 2023, 14:00 – 17:00h, Room 409, L9 1-2.

TOPIC 1:

Organizational factors affecting employee unethical behavior

Related literature:

List, J. A., & Momeni, F. (2020). When corporate social responsibility backfires: Evidence from a natural field experiment. *Management Science*, 67(1): 8-21.

Abstract:

This paper uses a natural field experiment to connect corporate social responsibility (CSR) to an important but often neglected behavior: employee misconduct and shirking. Through employing more than 1,500 workers, we find that our use of CSR increases employee misbehavior—24% more employees act detrimentally toward our firm by shirking on their primary job duties when we introduce CSR. Observed data patterns across the treatments are consonant with a model of “moral licensing,” whereby the “doing good” nature of CSR induces workers to misbehave on another dimension that is harmful to the firm.

TOPIC 2:

How corporate social irresponsibility affects employees

Related literature:

Hericher, C., & Bridoux, F. (2022). Employees' emotional and behavioral reactions to corporate social irresponsibility. *Journal of Management*. Advance online publication.

Abstract:

While the body of literature on employees' reactions to their employer's corporate social responsibility (CSR) has grown rapidly over the last decade, little is known regarding employees' reactions to corporate social irresponsibility (CSiR). Applying deonance theory, we conceptualize CSiR as a moral judgment that a specific action of the organization is intentional, violates a moral standard, and causes harm. Using a multimethod, multisample design (two experiments and one field study), we provide evidence that moral emotions—specifically anger, sympathy, and, to some extent, guilt—are important mechanisms explaining employees' reactions to CSiR toward other stakeholders, which can take the form of punishing, as often discussed in organization-centric research, as well as the form of compensating the victim of the CSiR, a behavior rarely studied in the management literature.

Regarding the role of pride, a well-studied emotion in the micro-CSR literature, in explaining employees' responses to CSiR, we obtain mixed results. In addition to contributing to the micro-CSR field, we contribute to deonance theory by extending its scope to sympathy and guilt and to the literature on CSiR by offering a conceptualization and a measure of CSiR grounded in deonance theory.

TOPIC 3:

The influence of CEO characteristics on employer attractiveness: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

Appels, M. (2022). CEO sociopolitical activism as a signal of authentic leadership to prospective employees. *Journal of Management*. Advance online publication.

Abstract:

Despite evidence on the increasing centrality of moral approaches to leadership for extant employees, management research provides little guidance on whether and how prospective employees come to draw conclusions about such leadership in their employer choice. Therefore, this paper integrates authentic leadership into signaling theory to identify CEO sociopolitical activism—a public and costly expression of personal political values by a company's highest and most visible leader—as an effective signal that is interpreted by job seekers to evaluate the CEOs' degree of authentic leadership. Three experiments, including a parallel design for causal mediation inferences, and a field survey support that authentic leadership attributions mediate the positive impact of CEOs' activism on job seekers' employer attractiveness evaluations and employer choice. This mediation is attenuated when the activist CEO's espoused political values are incongruent with those of the job seeker and when the CEO engages in activism due to customer pressure rather than personal convictions. These findings primarily contribute to signaling theory and the literature on authentic leadership. For practitioners, the paper identifies a unique leadership signal that can contribute to an employer brand while cautioning about the costs this signal might impose on companies' diversity.

TOPIC 4:

The influence of abusive supervision on the indicators of sustainable careers: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

De Vos, A., Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M., & Akkermans, J. (2020). Sustainable careers: Towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117: 103196.

Abstract:

This paper aims to move the research field on sustainable careers forward by building conceptual clarity about what a sustainable career means and delineating what distinguishes sustainable from non-sustainable careers, thereby providing key indicators of a sustainable career. Moreover, we approach sustainable careers from a systemic and dynamic perspective and address influential factors associated with stakeholders situated in multiple contexts and evolving over time. We elaborate on core theoretical frameworks useful for enhancing our understanding of what makes careers sustainable and present three key dimensions that can help to analyze and study sustainable careers: person, context, and time. Finally, we propose a research agenda that we hope will spur scholars to examine the topic in more detail in future empirical work.

TOPIC 5:

How being a favorite vs. an underdog influences resource seeking behaviors

Related literature:

Lim, J. H., Tai, K., Bamberger, P. A., & Morrison, E. W. (2020). Soliciting resources from others: An integrative review. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1): 122-159.

Abstract:

Resource seeking, or the act of asking others for things that can help one attain one's goals, is an important behavior within organizations because of the increasingly dynamic nature of work that demands collaboration and coordination among employees. Over the past two decades, there has been growing research in the organizational sciences on four types of resource seeking behaviors: feedback seeking, information seeking, advice seeking, and help seeking. However, research on these four behaviors has existed in separate silos. We argue that there is value in recognizing that these behaviors reflect a common higher order construct (resource seeking), and in integrating the findings across the four literatures as a basis for understanding what we do and do not know about the predictors and outcomes of resource seeking at work. More specifically, we use conservation of resources (COR) theory as a framework to guide our integration across the four literatures and to both deepen and extend current understandings of why and when employees engage in resource seeking, as well as how resource seeking behaviors may lead to both individual- and collective-level outcomes. We conclude with a discussion of future research needs and how COR theory can provide a fruitful foundation for future resource seeking research.

TOPIC 6:

Gender differences in coopetition

Related literature:

Tsai, W. (2002). Social structure of "coopetition" within a multiunit organization: Coordination, competition, and intraorganizational knowledge sharing. *Organization science*, 13(2), 179-190.

Abstract:

Drawing on a social network perspective of organizational coordination, this paper investigates the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms on knowledge sharing in intraorganizational networks that consist of both collaborative and competitive ties among organizational units. Internal knowledge sharing within a multiunit organization requires formal hierarchical structure and informal lateral relations as coordination mechanisms. Using sociometric techniques, this paper analyzes how formal hierarchical structure and informal lateral relations influence knowledge sharing and how interunit competition moderates the association between such coordination mechanisms and knowledge sharing in a large, multiunit company. Results show that formal hierarchical structure, in the form of centralization, has a significant negative effect on knowledge sharing, and informal lateral relations, in the form of social interaction, have a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing among units that compete with each other for market share, but not among units that compete with each other for internal resources.

TOPIC 7:

How does the radicalness of an idea affect its diffusion?

Related literature:

Deichmann, D., Moser, C., Birkholz, J. M., Nerghes, A., Groenewegen, P., & Wang, S. (2020). Ideas with impact: How connectivity shapes idea diffusion. *Research policy*, 49(1), 103881.

Abstract:

Despite a growing body of research on idea diffusion, there is a lack of knowledge on why some ideas successfully diffuse and stand out from the crowd while others do not surface or remain unnoticed. We address this question by looking into the characteristics of an idea, specifically its connectivity in a content network. In a content network, ideas connect to other ideas through their content—the words that the ideas have in common. We hypothesize that a high connectivity of an idea in a content network is beneficial for idea diffusion because this idea will more likely be conceived as novel yet at the same time also as more useful because it appears as more familiar to the audience. Moreover, we posit that a high social connectivity of the team working on the idea further enhances the effect of high content connectivity on idea diffusion. Our study focuses on academic conference publications and the co-authorship data of a community of computer science researchers from 2006 to 2012. We find confirmation for our hypotheses and discuss the implications of these findings.

TOPIC 8:

The role of social capital in idea evaluation

Related literature:

Reitzig, M., & Sorenson, O. (2013). Biases in the selection stage of bottom-up strategy formulation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 34(7), 782-799.

Abstract:

We propose that the failure to adopt an idea or innovation can arise from an in-group bias among employees within an organizational subunit that leads the subunit's members to undervalue systematically ideas associated with members of the organization outside their subunit. Such biases in internal selection processes can stymie organizational adaptation and therefore depress the performance of the firm. Analyzing data on innovation proposals inside a large, multinational consumer goods firm, we find that evaluators are biased in favor of ideas submitted by individuals that work in the same division and facility as they do, particularly when they belong to small or high-status subunits.

TOPIC 9:

Team climate and creativity: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

Hirst, G., Van Knippenberg, D., Zhou, Q., Zhu, C. J., & Tsai, P. C. F. (2018). Exploitation and exploration climates' influence on performance and creativity: Diminishing returns as function of self-efficacy. *Journal of Management*, 44(3), 870-891.

Abstract:

In response to calls for multilevel research examining individual and meso-level processes to understand how exploitation and exploration dynamics play out in teams, we propose that individual in-role performance (cf. exploitation) and creativity (cf. exploration) are associated with team exploitation and exploration climate respectively, and this influence is moderated by domain specific performance and creative self-efficacy respectively. Studying 317 engineers in 70 teams across three national regions, we theorize and find domain-specific evidence that when individual self-efficacy is high, team climate has diminishing performance (exploitation climate × performance self-efficacy) and creative (exploration climate × creative self-efficacy) benefits. By simultaneously studying creativity and performance, our study helps understand the differences and communalities in the drivers of those outcomes in identifying both the domain-specific character of these influences and the similarity in how these influences play out.

TOPIC 10:

Determinants of employee innovative behavior: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

Yuan, F., & Woodman, R. W. (2010). Innovative behavior in the workplace: The role of performance and image outcome expectations. *Academy of management journal*, 53(2), 323-342.

Abstract:

Why do employees engage in innovative behavior at their workplaces? We examine how employees' innovative behavior is explained by expectations for such behavior to affect job performance (expected positive performance outcomes) and image inside their organizations (expected image risks and expected image gains). We found significant effects of all three outcome expectations on innovative behavior. These outcome expectations, as intermediate psychological processes, were shaped by contextual and individual difference factors, including perceived organization support for innovation, supervisor relationship quality, job requirement for innovativeness, employee reputation as innovative, and individual dissatisfaction with the status quo.

TOPIC 11:

Employee idiosyncratic deals (i-deals): A critical review of individual-level outcomes and agenda for future research

Related literature:

Las Heras, M., Rofcanin, Y., Matthijs Bal, P., & Stollberger, J. (2017). How do flexibility i-deals relate to work performance? Exploring the roles of family performance and organizational context. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 38(8), 1280-1294.

Abstract:

Drawing on the work-home resources model and conservation of resources theory, in this study, we explore how flexibility idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) relate to employees' work performance through their family performance. In line with the work-home resources model, we introduce 2 contextual conditions to explain when our proposed associations may unfold. One is a facilitator: perceived organizational support; and the other is a stressor: perceived hindering work demands. The results of a matched sample of employees and their supervisors working in 2 companies in El Salvador support our hypotheses. Our findings show that the benefits of flexibility i-deals to the work domain (i.e., work

performance) extend only through the family domain (i.e., family performance). Our findings also emphasize that flexibility i-deals do not unfold in a dyadic vacuum: For employees who perceive organizational support to be higher, the association between flexibility i-deals and family performance is stronger, whereas for employees who perceive hindering work demands to be lower, the association between family performance and employee work performance is also stronger. We contribute to i-deals research by (a) exploring a relevant mechanism through which flexibility i-deals influence work performance, (b) integrating the role of social context to emphasize the social aspects of i-deals, and (c) enriching the i-deals literature by introducing a resource perspective.

TOPIC 12:

Determinants of team learning: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative science quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383.

Abstract:

This paper presents a model of team learning and tests it in a multimethod field study. It introduces the construct of team psychological safety—a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking—and models the effects of team psychological safety and team efficacy together on learning and performance in organizational work teams. Results of a study of 51 work teams in a manufacturing company, measuring antecedent, process, and outcome variables, show that team psychological safety is associated with learning behavior, but team efficacy is not, when controlling for team psychological safety. As predicted, learning behavior mediates between team psychological safety and team performance. The results support an integrative perspective in which both team structures, such as context support and team leader coaching, and shared beliefs shape team outcomes.

TOPIC 13:

Leadership and employees' voice behavior: A critical review of the literature

Related literature:

Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open?. *Academy of management journal*, 50(4), 869-884.

Abstract:

We investigate the relationships between two types of change-oriented leadership (transformational leadership and managerial openness) and subordinate improvement-oriented voice in a two-phase study. Findings from 3,149 employees and 223 managers in a restaurant chain indicate that openness is more consistently related to voice, given controls for numerous individual differences in subordinates' personality, satisfaction, and job demography. This relationship is shown to be mediated by subordinate perceptions of psychological safety, illustrating the importance of leaders in subordinate assessments of the risks of speaking up. Also, leadership behaviors have the strongest impact on the voice behavior of the best-performing employees.

TOPIC 14:

No "see you later" - How do temporary teams differ from non-temporary teams in terms of trust and cohesion?

Related literature:

Valentine, M. (2018). When Equity Seems Unfair: The Role of Justice Enforceability in Temporary Team Coordination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(6), 2081–2105.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.1101>

Abstract:

Temporary teams can accomplish tightly coupled complex work even without the shared experience that enables coordination in longstanding teams. To advance understanding of this process, I conducted an inductive study of temporary teams in four hospital emergency departments (EDs), and found that the teams in two EDs coordinated effectively, but the teams in the other two EDs did not. To theorize an explanation, I draw on the organizational justice literature and introduce the idea of justice enforceability, defined as the perception that authorities can act fairly, given the potential for other people to cheat. The team members' perceptions of justice enforceability were focused on whether the distribution of work within and between teams was fair or could be cheated. When team members perceived that justice was enforceable, they were willing to engage in the extra-role behaviors that wove together their individual responsibilities. But when they perceived that cheating was possible, they avoided the extra-role behaviors that would have made them suckers for working hard while others cheated. Justice enforceability thus resolves a common tension in temporary teams, namely that the potential for uneven effort can undermine team coordination. In these ED teams, members only trusted that authorities could act fairly when the distribution of work was exactly equal; then team members felt they were all "in it together," and each put in the work to coordinate as a team.

TOPIC 15:

Can shared leadership be planned? A critical discussion

Related literature:

Carson, J. B., Tesluk, P. E., & Marrone, J. A. (2007). Shared Leadership in Teams: An Investigation of Antecedent Conditions and Performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(5), 1217–1234.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.20159921>

Abstract:

Shared leadership refers to a team property whereby leadership is distributed among team members rather than focused on a single designated leader. We examined antecedent conditions that lead to the development of shared leadership and the influence of shared leadership on team performance in a sample of 59 consulting teams. Both the internal team environment, consisting of shared purpose, social support, and voice, and external coaching were important predictors of shared leadership emergence. In turn, shared leadership was found to predict team performance as rated by clients. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for team leadership and effectiveness.

The impact of leadership rotation in work teams on team member motivation and performance

Related literature:

Ballinger, G. A., & Schoorman, F. D. (2007). Individual Reactions to Leadership Succession in Workgroups. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), 118–136.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2007.23463887>

Abstract:

We integrate theories of cognitive appraisal, relational leadership, and trust to develop a model of how individual affective reactions to leadership succession influence work attitudes and behaviors. We predict that the quality of the relationship with the prior leader will influence an affective reaction to that leader's departure. This affective reaction will influence the group member's initial trust in the new leader, task communication with the new leader, organizational citizenship behaviors, motivation to perform, job satisfaction, and turnover.