

Can networking ability compensate the weakness of intelligent persons in emergency situations?

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Introduction

According to Cognitive Resources Theory (Fiedler, 1995) handling emergencies or crises situations at work adaptively is a problem for persons high in intelligence (General Mental Ability = GMA). When stress is low, the intelligence-performance relationship is positive; when stress is high, the intelligence-performance relationship is negative. According to Cognitive Resources Theory this effect derives from a general tendency to capitalize on personal strengths. Highly intelligent individuals are therefore more likely to rely on intellectual effort, which is counter-productive when the task calls for a quick response. Highly experienced individuals will rely on their experience which is adaptive.

Individuals with strong *networking ability* (Ferris et al., 2005) easily develop friendships and build strong beneficial alliances. Social networks give access to information, resources and support. Thus, in emergency situations persons with good networking abilities can resort to their network for help and support. This can improve their performance if they are able to select the right individuals to ask for help. Intelligent persons may be better at selecting adequate sources of information, choose relevant contacts in a given situation, make more benefit from the same information, and profit more from coaching.

Thus, we expect that intelligence should moderate the relationship between networking ability and adaptive performance. Among persons high in GMA, networking ability will be more positively related to successful coping with crises and emergencies than among persons low in GMA.

Hypothesis

GMA moderates the relationship between networking ability and adaptive performance. The relationship between networking ability and adaptive performance is stronger among persons high than low in GMA.

Method

Participants were currently active in the working world for at least 12 hours a week in social, administrative, and enterprising jobs.

Procedure. To avoid consistency bias across measures the study consisted of three waves of data collection. Wave one was comprised of the intelligence testing procedures. Two months later, participants were sent one self-assessment questionnaire of job performance and three parallel other-assessment questionnaires of target individuals' job performance and prepaid return envelopes. The questionnaires were to be completed by a supervisor, a peer, and a subordinate of the target-participants, or

others (clients, customers). Three months later, participants received a personality questionnaire and a self-assessment questionnaire of networking ability.

Measures.

Wave 1

- GMA: Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT)
- Controls concerning targets: Gender, Age, Work Experience.

Wave 2

- Adaptive Performance. Performance in emergency and crises situations of 85 targets was assessed by 223 individuals (64 supervisors, 122 peers, 19 subordinates, and 18 others); one target was assessed by 2.6 others.
- Controls concerning target-rater relationship: Time of collaboration, contact frequency, interrelatedness of work, personal relations, and rater position.

Wave 3

- Networking Ability. Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al., 2005)
- Big Five: NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993)

Results and Discussion

Supervisor and peer ratings correlated substantially ($r = .45, p < .005$) as well as self-other ratings of adaptive performance ($r = .35, p < .005$). As predicted by Cognitive Resources Theory adaptive performance in emergency and crisis situations was negatively related to intelligence (GMA) (cf. Table 1).

Contrary to Cognitive Resources Theory work experience was not related to adaptive performance in emergency and crisis situations (cf. Table 1). However, GMA moderated the work experience-performance relationship. The longer work experience the better was the performance of the above average intelligent individuals assessed (cf. Table 1 and Figure 1). And the longer work experience the lower was the performance of the below average intelligent individuals assessed. This is in line with previous findings reported by Schmidt, Hunter and Outerbridge (1986): GMA influences task performance, as it enhances a person's ability to learn quickly and effectively acquire job knowledge.

In line with our hypothesis GMA moderated the Networking - Performance relationship (cf. Table 1 and Figure 2). If individuals resort in emergency and crises situations to others for help and support this improves their performance if they have good networking ability and if they are able to select the appropriate others for help and advice.

References

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Table 1

Hierarchical Moderated Regressions on Adaptive Performance Ratings by Supervisors, Peers, Subordinates, and Others (N = 85 targets, 223 assessors, * $p < .05$)

Step	Predictors	Adaptive Performance
1	Targets' Gender	-.04
	Targets' Age	.03
2	Time of Collaboration	.18
	Contact Frequency	-.17
	Interrelatedness of Work	.32*
	Personal Relations	.10
	Prop. of Supervisors	-.20
3	Neuroticism	-.25*
	Extraversion	-.17
	Agreeableness	-.04
	Openness to Experience	-.08
	Conscientiousness	-.06
4	GMA - WPT	-.22*
	Work Experience	-.15
	Networking Ability	.18
5a	Interaction: GMA * Work Experience	.24*
5b	Interaction: GMA * Networking Ability	.32*

Figure 1

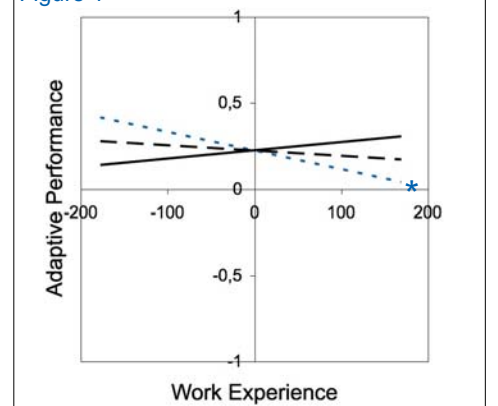
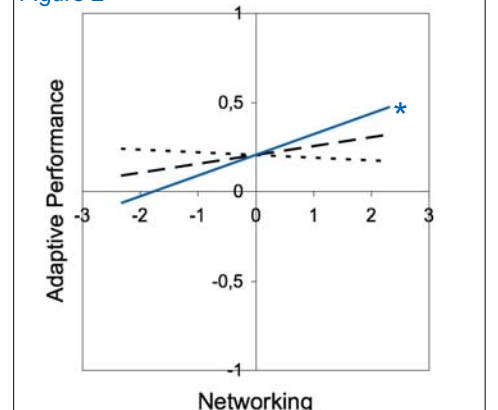


Figure 2



Legend

- GMA Mean - SD
- - - Mean
- Mean + SD
- * β sig., $p < .05$

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