

Higher levels of intrapreneurial behaviour in a team due to an imperfect fit of autonomy.

How does autonomy misfit, together with psychological safety in a team, contribute to intrapreneurial behaviour?

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Introduction

Background & context

In today's world organisations need to stay ahead of their competition. In order to do so they need to remain and gain a competitive advantage over their competition. Tushman & Nadler (1986) stressed that "organisations can gain competitive advantage only by managing effectively for today while simultaneously creating innovation for tomorrow" (p. 19). Being innovative is a key differentiator for organisation to thrive in this competitive world. A pressing problem for managers is to ensure sustained innovation (Tushman & Nadler, 1986). Employees in an organisation are increasingly required to be innovative and to contribute to the ever changing goals of the organisations. These intrapreneurs are more and more deemed as an important factor to innovation and economic growth (Elert & Stenkula, 2020; Gawke et al., 2019).

Intrapreneurs contribute to the competitive advantage of the organisation. Organisations uphold different expectations of their employees. Bowen (2016) states that employees should not be passive recipients of changing jobs and products, they need to adopt roles as *innovators* and *differentiators*. Adopting a more intrapreneurial way of working is required for employees to deal with or even initiate changing requirements and impact the strategic direction of a firm (Peters & Waterman, 1984).

Organisations benefit from higher levels of intrapreneurship. Intrapreneurship is a process of recognising and exploiting opportunities by being innovative, proactive and taking risks (de Jong et al., 2015; Gawke et al., 2019; Neessen et al., 2019). Rather than being driven from the top - like corporate entrepreneurship - intrapreneurship is a bottom-up multilevel construct (Neessen et al., 2019). Being innovative, proactive, and risk-taking describe the behavioural dimensions of intrapreneurship (de Jong et al., 2015; Neessen et al., 2019). Gawke et al. (2019) introduced three approaches to intrapreneurship: 1) entrepreneurial orientation, 2) intrapreneurial outcomes approach, and 3) behaviour-based approach. The behaviours of innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking matches the entrepreneurial orientation.

Problem statement

In an organisation not all employees will behave as intrapreneurs. Neessen et al. (2019) stated in their systematic literature review that "employee autonomy is one of various dimensions that influence the intrapreneur. On that same note de Jong et al. (2015) found that *job autonomy* is directly related to innovative and proactive behaviour. Underlying premise in the research of de Jong is that job autonomy is provided by the organisation. Although true, this is only part of the story. Although an environment provides a certain level of characteristics, it can be questionable whether this matches the needs of the employee. Autonomy, for example, can be given by an organisation, but some employees will thrive in it and other will be unhappy. A fit should exist between the characteristics desired by an employee and provided by an organisation. In this context of intrapreneurship and job autonomy we are looking specifically to *autonomy (mis)fit*.

@@ uitbreiden met standaard blik op fit, maar waarom misfit het centrale vraagstuk is in het onderzoek

Regarding the topic of job autonomy many perspectives have been researched (Jong & Ford, 2021; Simmering et al., 2003; Sørli et al., 2022; Yu & Davis, 2016). However, no prior research has been done on the topic of autonomy (mis)fit and its influences on intrapreneurial behaviour. A gap in academic literature

that this research attempts to fill. I am going to investigate and research the effects of autonomy (mis)fit on intrapreneurial behaviour.

@@ referentie zoeken naar team effect intrapreneurship

- Je mist hier het brugje dat intrapreneurship vaak een team effort is en dat het vaak nodig is in het proces om bv met verschillende mensen te werken, etc. en dan pas moet je naar psy safe gaan. Want nu is dat wat een te grote sprong opnieuw
- Innovation and process improvements have been found at teams that have high levels of psychological safety (A. Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Newman et al., 2017).
- Psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking (A. Edmondson, 1999).
- If a team feels safe, they will share more information and as such learn more than teams with lower levels of psychological safety (A. Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017).

Academic & practical relevance

In the current academic literature not much is known about the relation and effects of autonomy (mis)fit, psychological safety, and intrapreneurial behaviour. Although the elements on their own have been subject of many researches, the trilogy of these elements have not been examined. The contribution of this research as such is multifold.

Academic relevance

- Not much is known on the relationship between autonomy misfit, psychological safety and intrapreneurial behaviour
- van Vianen (2018) raised the question “Which environmental and individual factors mitigate experienced misfits?” This research aims to shed a light on the question if psychological safety moderates an experienced misfit of autonomy
- Academics: het stukje uit je mail hieronder was inzichtvoller en relevanter wat er momenteel in de tekst staat. Denk nog eens heel goed na hoe je aan de literatuur toevoegt, op wiens vragen of theorieën je toevoegt, etc. bv. als je toch met polys werkt dan zou het best kunnen dat je bijdraagt aan het idee dat misfit niet perse slecht hoeft te zijn (zoals Vogel ook) etc.

Practical relevance

Organisations has shown to benefit from innovation and other means of gaining competitive advantage (Elert & Stenkula, 2020; Peters & Waterman, 1984). Ensuring sustained innovation is a pressing problem for managers (Tushman & Nadler, 1986). Attracting, retaining, and growing intrapreneurs in the organisation is a vivid question for organisation. This research aims to show whether or not autonomy (mis)fit and/or psychological safety is beneficial to increase intrapreneurial behaviour of employees. Especially for organisations that are active in the field of software development, the context of this research. These insights could lead to adoption of recruitment strategies by selecting adaptable minds that can cope with misfit between levels of needs and supplies of autonomy (van Vianen, 2018; Yu & Davis, 2016). @@

- De link naar selectie is een goede. Maar organisaties kunnen hopelijk ook iets veranderen. Stel dat je effectief poly's gaat doen, dan kan je zien of te veel of te weinig autonomie goed of slecht is en/of als er een fit is in het feit dat er weinig of veel autonomie is wat dat doet met mensen. Dat is op zich wel boeiend. Stel dat bv. een te hoge fit aanbieden toch goed is, dan heeft dat niet enkel implicaties voor selectie maar ook voor organisatie design en training.

Method of research

Following a quantitative study this research will find an answer on its hypothesis. . . .

Literature research

2.1 What is intrapreneurship

“Intrapreneurship is a process whereby employee(s) recognise and exploit opportunities by being innovative, proactive and by taking risks, in order for the organisation to create new products, processes and services, initiate self-renewal or venture new businesses to enhance the competitiveness and performance of the organisation.” (Neessen et al., 2019, p. 7). In academic literature “intrapreneurship” usually refers to individual workers rather than organisations or boardroom-level decision makers (de Jong et al, 2011). This paper adopts this points of view that intrapreneurship is a bottom-up approach (de Jong et al, 2011; Neessen et al., 2019). A common label of intrapreneurship is *corporate entrepreneurship* (de Jong et al, 2011). In line with de Jong et al (2011) this paper regards corporate entrepreneurship as a top-down process that can be used by business owners and general manages to foster new ventures, innovation, and strategic renewal (de Jong et al, 2011).

Intrapreneurship is not an attitude or a behaviour that an employee has, it has to be seen as a process. Rather it “is about a set of activities of an individual or an organisation to get from point A to point B in time, with an increased competitiveness and performance of the organisation as the end goal.” (Neessen et al., 2019, p. 8). Neessen et al. (2019) created an integrative framework of intrapreneurship (fig. 1) that displays the various constructs that together constitute intrapreneurship. The framework makes a clear distinction between organisational and individual constructs. For example the support of management or how the organisation is structured influences intrapreneurship on the organisation. Attitudes and characteristics of individuals likewise influence intrapreneurship by impacting the behaviour of individuals. When individuals behave intrapreneurially it will lead to outcomes as new product / innovation, new business venturing, or self-renewal (Neessen et al., 2019).

- ☐ Let hier ook op mijn comment van eerder ivm verschillende definties en focus op die van De Jong
- ☐ Ik vind dit stuk persoonlijk relatief kort. Meestal zetten studenten er nog een stukje bij rond antecedenten oid, gewoon om een beetje een beeld te geven van de literatuur en wat er al geweten is. Dit is geen harde eis en hoeft niet perse. Als je het wel doet hoeft het ook niet super lang te zijn. Zorg dat het dan bv. eerder als een soort van intro kan leiden voor de link met PEfit en/of NS fit. Door bv. uit te leggen dat er zowel persoonlijke factoren als organisatiefactoren zijn die relevant zijn voor de ontwikkeling van IB. en dan zou ik 2.2 vooral focussen op PE fit en daar hoeft dan (buiten 1 bindzinnetje als allereerste ofzo) nog niet echt de link met intra gemaakt te worden

2.2 Introducing intrapreneurial behaviour & person-environment fit

de Jong et al (2011) describes *intrapreneurial behaviour* “as the identification and exploitation of opportunities by individual workers that (also) advance the organisation. (p. 4).” Intrapreneurial behaviour is commonly defined by the dimensions of *proactivity*, *innovativeness*, and *risk-taking* Gawke et al. (2019). Additionally Neessen et al. (2019) found *opportunity recognition and exploitation* and *networking* to be characteristic dimensions of intrapreneurial behaviour. Gawke et al. (2019) depicts this as an entrepreneurial orientation towards intrapreneurship.

As intrapreneurship is a bottom-up approach it can only be achieved if employees display intrapreneurial behaviour. Predicting if an individual will engage in certain human behaviour is a core tenet of the person-

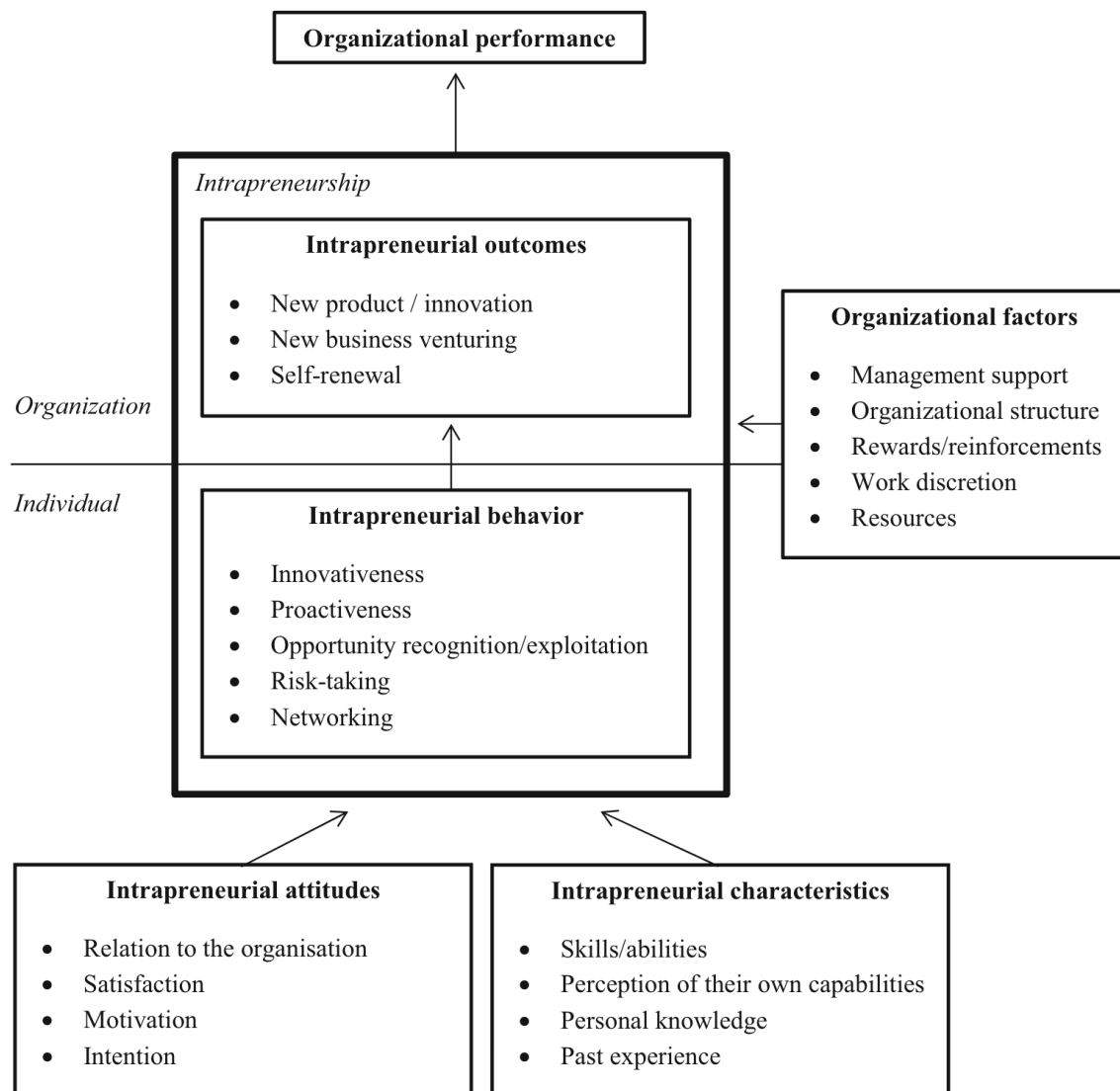


Figure 1: Framework of intrapreneurship by Neessen et al. (2019)

environment fit theory (van Vianen, 2018). It researches, and emphasises, the compatibility between workers and their work environment (**kristof1996?**). The theory of person-environment fit suggests that individual attitudes, behaviours, and other outcomes result not from the person or environment separately, but from the relationship between the two (**edwards1996?**).

- Als je effectief start vanuit PE fit ipv meteen naar NS fit over te gaan dan zou ik hier vooral focussen op wat uitleg geven op wat PE fit exact is, wat fit en misfit is en wat alle verschillende soorten fit zijn. Dat ontbreekt nu allemaal nog wat. Alternatief laat je dit stuk gewoon integraal weg en ga je meteen door naar 2.3
 - Indien je dit stuk wel laat staan zal je wel gaan moeten verantwoorden waarom je in je scriptie uiteindelijk focust op NS fit ipv op alle andere concepten die mogelijk zijn binnen de fit context
- A needs-supplies fit displays the alignment of the employees needs, desires, or preferences and the supply provided by the job the perform (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005)
- The needs-supplies will help us in determining if the NS fit or misfit on the organisational factor of autonomy (Neessen et al., 2019) will influence intrapreneurial behaviour.

2.3 Autonomy misfit

- Generally a fit between person and their environment is desired to reach the optimal outcome, however the field of P-E fit argues for a nuanced perspective.
- van Vianen (2018) displayed in her in review study that experiencing misfit will lead to adaptation. Depending on the misfit perception, opportunities to repair the misfit, and environmental and individual mitigating factors it might motivate individuals to leave the job or to adapt to the situation.
- For example Yu & Davis (2016) discovered that the mismatch between the levels of autonomy desired by an employee and the autonomy provided has been found to lead to higher levels of proactive behaviour at newcomers
- This finding originates from the self-regulatory view that argues that newcomer behaviours are highest when there is a misfit between the organisational supply of autonomy and the needs of the individual (Yu & Davis, 2016).
- On that same note Simmering et al. (2003) found that autonomy misfit for an individual leads to higher engagement in employee development. Surprisingly this holds true for individuals with low levels of autonomy, but high levels of autonomy as well (Simmering et al., 2003).
- Although the research of Yu & Davis (2016) and Simmering et al. (2003) are primarily focused on newcomers, Simmering et al. (2003) suggests that established employees could use the same strategies as newcomers to improve their fit levels.
- Neessen et al. (2019) determined autonomy as an important organisational factor contributing to intrapreneurial behaviour. Jong & Ford (2021) argues that it is critical not to only examine the job autonomy on its own, but to examine the congruence between autonomy and preference for autonomy.
- Examining the needs-supplies fit of autonomy as such will provide a clearer picture on the effect of autonomy as contributing factor to intrapreneurial behaviour.
- Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) also showed that “in almost every case the complementary form of needs-supplies fit has the greatest impact on “individual attitudes and behavior” (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, pp. 317 - 318). Which also suggest that in this case an effect on intrapreneurial behaviour will exists.
- As such I hypothesise that a misfit of the needs-supplies regarding autonomy will positively influence intrapreneurial behaviour.

Hypothesis 1: Autonomy misfit is positively related to intrapreneurial behaviour

2.4 Psychological safety

- The business environment of today accomplishes much work in collaboration (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017)
- Organisational research has identified psychological safety as an important factor in understanding how people collaborate (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014)
- Frazier et al. (2017) recognises that psychological safety is a key factor in facilitating the process of learning, collaborating, and employee engagement
- Psychological safety is the shared belief by members of the team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (A. Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017)
- High levels of psychological safety has been linked to higher levels of creative thinking and risk-taking, innovation in R&D teams, process improvements in manufacturing, knowledge creation, and successful implementation of technology (Newman et al., 2017)

Relevance to intrapreneurial behaviour:

- Higher levels of psychological safety enhances risk-taking, information sharing and learning behaviour of members from the team (A. Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017)
- Risk-taking is an intrapreneurial behaviour in the nomological network of Neessen et al. (2019)
- The outcomes and characteristics of psychological safety can be expected to have a relation with each other, as such I hypothesise:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological safety is positively related to intrapreneurial behaviour

- Given that higher levels of proactiveness is present in case of a misfit on autonomy level, I hypothesise that higher levels of proactiveness, reached due to psychological safety will positively influence the intrapreneurial behaviour

2.5 Autonomy misfit, proactive behaviour & psychological safety

- Yu & Davis (2016) & Simmering et al. (2003) identified that an autonomy misfit leads to higher levels of proactive behaviour.
- Ashford & Black (1996) identified seven key types of change-oriented proactive behaviours:
 - feedback seeking; information seeking; job change negotiation; positive framing; general socialising; building relationships with the boss; and networking
- From these behaviours information seeking and feedback seeking have been found to be moderated by psychological safety
- De Stobbeleir et al. (2020) showed that higher levels of psychological safety increases the amount of feedback seeking
- feedback seeking may be beneficial for individuals to cope with the misfit of autonomy (van Vianen, 2018)
- High levels of psychological safety has shown that information will be sought within the team, where lower levels of psychological safety will lead to information seeking outside the team (Safdar et al., 2017)
- These forms of proactive behaviours all embed a form of risk-taking. It requires confidence and trust to engage in voice behaviour and start to ask for feedback and information.
- As higher levels of psychological safety reduces the barrier to engage in proactive behaviours I hypothesise that the level of psychological safety will influence the effect of autonomy misfit towards intrapreneurial behaviour
- Meaning that high levels of autonomy misfit and high levels of psychological safety will lead to higher levels of psychological safety.

Hypothesis 3: Psychological safety moderates the positive effect of autonomy misfit towards intrapreneurial behaviour

Conceptual model

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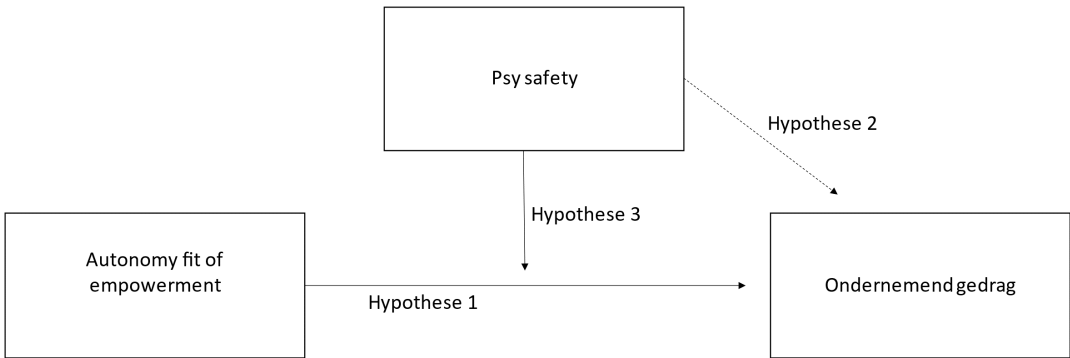


Figure 2: Conceptual model

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