SOCIAL INFLUENCE OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION, EVALUATION, & CAPITALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Social influence is one of the oldest and most researched constructs in organizational behavior. Most research has examined the ‘what’ and ‘who’ of social influence behavior, and it was not until recently that scholars began examining the ‘how’, or the operation of social influence techniques and behaviors. Social effectiveness constructs, such as political skill, have been the primary focus of this research effort. However, despite these constructs illuminating social influence processes, little is known about the actual operation of the social effectiveness constructs themselves. Thus, to develop a more complete understanding of social influence effectiveness, this article develops a theoretical framework by synthesizing several literatures and explaining how the individual dimensions of political skill affect the social influence process. Specifically, the authors (a) review and integrate research and theory in social influence and political skill, (b) develop an opportunity recognition, evaluation, and capitalization model to provide a theoretical framework for the dimensional dynamics of political skill, and (c) provide suggestions for how this framework informs future political skill research.

GOALS

• Develop a framework that explains how individuals engage in intentional attempts to recognize, evaluate, and exploit opportunities for social influence

• Provide a theoretical foundation that explains political skill’s role in the social influence process

• Encourage future research on political skill’s underlying dimensions by explaining how those component parts play critical and specific roles in the social influence process, providing a theoretical basis for future dimensional research

BACKGROUND

• “There are few concepts more essential to the very foundations of the organizational sciences” (Ferris et al., 2002: 66) than social influence.

• An impressive body of work has been amassed to address the “how” of social influence, with much of it detailing the role of political skill

• Two questions remain:
  1. “What is the process that leads up to individuals’ actual attempts to influence others?”
  2. “What role do the political skill dimensions play in the social influence process?”

CONCLUSION

Social influence and political skill research have grown steadily in recent years. Yet despite this, little research has focused on the overall process of social influence, or the inner workings of political skill and the effects of its dimensions on social influence. Our opportunity recognition, evaluation, and capitalization conceptualization provides a more specific articulation of the social influence process, through a specification of the dynamics of the political skill dimensions. This sheds light on how political skill operates within an agentic conceptualization of social/political influence in organizations, which can be used to drive future empirical research in a number of areas.