

Staying or leaving? A mixed methods study on behavioural and subjective drivers of entrepreneurial network turnover

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Abstract

The majority of studies on entrepreneurial networks have emphasised their value and significance in entrepreneurial success. Yet, the reasons entrepreneurs are leaving their networks despite these supposed benefits remain unknown. Turnover can have detrimental effects on groups, teams, networks and organizations. Integrating newcomers costs the network resources, while experienced members leaving can lead to a loss of resources. Understanding turnover in such networks therefore deserves particular attention. We present a behavioural measurement approach in an attitudinally dominated literature stream, conceptualizing the investment model of commitment to explain turnover and shed light on why entrepreneurs leave or persist in their networking groups. Leveraging a 12-year longitudinal dataset with 19,162 member-year observations from Swiss entrepreneurial networking groups, we employ a mixed-methods approach enhancing and corroborating our quantitative analysis with qualitative insights from several surveys. Counterintuitively, we show that past, high networking performance can also increase turnover. Mediation analysis confirmed the role of commitment in shaping turnover dynamics. The qualitative analysis enhanced these findings by revealing additional factors such as personal growth, mentorship, economic benefits, group dynamics and structural constraints within networks, as key factors in stay or leave decisions. We contribute to the investment model and propose a behavioural approach to study commitment in networks.

Keywords

commitment, entrepreneurial network, investment model, mixed methods, turnover

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