

Public Abstract

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Title:The Effects of Scale and Information Distribution on Group Decision-Making Processes and Outcomes

The means by which groups arrive at decisions has been the subject of much academic research. One of the recurring assumptions of this research is that the scale of the decision outcome may affect the decision processes that are used by groups, in turn affecting the decision outcomes. In two experiments, one utilizing university students and one utilizing professional accountants, this dissertation specifically examines the effects of scale and finds that scale does not substantially alter group decision-making processes. Instead, consistent group behaviors that occur across both continuous and discrete scales are identified. Further, this dissertation examines the decision scale's effect on the processing of uniquely-held information within groups, and scale is not found to significantly affect the processing of uniquely-held information. The results of this dissertation indicate that academic researchers should attempt to bridge the gap between the different streams of research which suggest that different scale effects cause different group decision making processes. Results also suggest that recent standards passed by accounting regulatory bodies which mandate group discussions during audits may not have the intended effect of improving audit effectiveness because information is not optimally shared among group members, but instead, social influences (as opposed to informational influences) dominate group decision processes.