Original article

Collective efficacy: A resource in stressful occupational contexts

Le sentiment d'efficacité collective : une ressource en contextes de travail stressants

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction and objective. – We examined the effect of collective efficacy on the strategies adopted to cope with stress in occupational contexts (problem-focused coping), comparing it with that of self-efficacy and self-determination.
Method and results. – We studied two groups working in two different sectors of the foodservice industry, both characterized by high perceived stress but differing in their perceived interdependence (fastfood industry versus traditional restaurants). We showed that (1) collective efficacy is a more effective resource for dealing with stress than self-efficacy; (2) the relationship between self-efficacy and adaptive strategies is mediated by self-determination, but no such mediation is observed between collective efficacy and adaptive strategies, (3) these results are only observed in the presence of high levels of perceived interdependence (e.g., fastfood industry).
Conclusion. – The managerial implications for mobilizing collective resources to overcome occupational stress are discussed.

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R É S U M É

Introduction et objectif. – Nous examinons l'effet du sentiment d'efficacité collective (SEC) sur les stratégies adaptatives en contextes de travail stressants (*coping* centré sur le problème), comparativement à l'effet du sentiment d'efficacité personnelle (SEP) et au sentiment d'autodétermination.
Méthode et résultats. – Nous comparons deux groupes de salariés travaillant dans différentes organisations de restauration, tous deux caractérisés par un haut degré de stress perçu mais différant sur le plan de l'interdépendance perçue (établissements type fastfood et restaurants traditionnels). Nous montrons que (1) le SEC est une meilleure ressource contre le stress que ne l'est le SEP ; (2) la relation entre le SEP et le *coping* centré sur le problème est médiatisé par le sentiment d'autodétermination, mais que cette médiation n'est pas observée entre le SEC et le *coping* centré sur le problème ; (3) ces résultats sont observés seulement lorsqu'un haut degré d'interdépendance est perçu par les salariés (e.g. fastfood).
Conclusion. – Les implications managériales pour mobiliser les ressources collectives permettant de faire face au stress professionnel sont discutées.

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The literature clearly shows that self-efficacy is less predictive of certain outcomes than collective efficacy. For instance, individuals working interdependently perform better if they have a strong sense of collective efficacy rather than a strong sense of self-efficacy (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi, & Beaubien, 2002; Pina-Neves, Faria, & Räty, 2013; Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson, & Zazanis, 1995). Does this superiority of collective efficacy extend to the coping strategies adopted in stressful occupational settings where the nature of the job or the organization is perceived as a stressor? The aim of the present study was to examine the effects of collective efficacy and self-efficacy on adaptive strategies adopted in stressful occupational contexts. We expected collective efficacy to be more closely correlated with problem-focused coping than self-efficacy. This is a highly relevant issue in management, given recent research suggesting that maladjustment experienced in the

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workplace is generated just as often by organizational factors, such as team management, as it is by the individual's disposition (Burke & Cooper, 2006; Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001; Dewe, O'Driscoll, & Cooper, 2010; Lu, Siu, & Cooper, 2005).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984)'s transactional theory, the stressful nature of a situation is defined by an individual's perception of an imbalance between the constraints imposed by his or her environment and the resources he or she has to cope with them. The nature of the coping strategy that is adopted is determined by the individual's cognitive assessment: he or she makes "cognitive and behavioural efforts (...) to reduce, minimize, control, or tolerate the internal and external requirements of the person/environment transaction" (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986, p. 572). In other words, the person chooses to concentrate either on the resolution of problem, or on the emotional regulation of the situation. Previous research (see Pervin & John, 2001) has revealed that emotion-focused coping strategies, such as avoidance, emotionalism and wishful thinking, are effective in the short term, specifically in health-related and affective outcomes, but do not contribute to the long-term resolution of the perceived stress, notably in occupational contexts. Conversely, problem-focused coping strategies, such as planning, increased effort and management of priorities, are efficient under conditions where the person deems the situation to be controllable. Various studies have supported the idea that problem-focused coping strategies are associated with lower levels of chronic stress and greater adaptability in workers (Dorz, Novara, Sica, & Sanavio, 2003; Ogus, 1991).

Among the resources thought to be mobilized in the occupational context, self-efficacy, a concept originating from Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1995,2003), occupies pride of place. This "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2) refers to the ability to summon up the motivation, cognitive resources and behaviour required to exert control over life events (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Its efficiency has mainly been highlighted in teachers, in whom strong self-efficacy is associated with a low level of burnout and a coping strategy focused on problem resolution (Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russel, 1992; Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2002; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

In many studies (see Guay, Ratelle, Senécal, Larose, & Deschênes, 2006; Guay, Senécal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003), self-efficacy has been investigated in relation to Deci and Ryan (1985,2002) theory of self-determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). A review of the extant literature on self-determination theory is beyond the scope of this paper, so for the purposes of our study, we merely stress that according to this theory, motivation is linked to the need for self-determination, in that every individual wants to self-organize experience and behaviour, and seeks to control the environment in order to achieve a feeling of competence. In the same way, the greater an individual's self-efficacy, the higher the standards that person will set him- or herself, and the more efficient his or her cognitive engagement will be in the pursuit of a goal (Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006). Consequently, self-efficacy and self-determination are two different but related constructs (Guay et al., 2003; Huitt, 2009). According to Deci and Ryan's model, the most self-determined form of motivation corresponds to intrinsic motivation, that is, engagement in an activity for its own sake, for the pleasure and interest that can be derived from it. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, drives individuals whose behaviour is guided by instrumental motives, where the activity is of interest not for itself but for its consequences (rewards, salary, social recognition, etc.). Amotivation lies at the opposite end of the self-determination continuum to intrinsic motivation, characterizing individuals who perform an activity in a mechanical way, without any internal or external control over it. Not only does

self-determination contribute to people's psychological health and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2009) but, as many studies have shown (Baker, 2004; Boggiano, Shields, & Barrett, 1992; Ntoumanis, Edmunds, & Duda, 2009; Ryan, Plant, & O'Malley, 1995), during the perception of a stressful event, it also constitutes a personal resource which can promote more efficient coping and thus reduce stress to a less detrimental level for the individual.

However, the management of stressful events is unlikely to rely solely on the activation of personal resources such as self-efficacy or self-determination. An individual may also develop a sense of collective efficacy, defined as "the group's shared belief in their conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 2003, p. 708). According to Stajkovic, Lee, and Nyberg (2009), collective efficacy has roughly the same definition as the concept of "group potency" except that, according to Shea and Guzzo (1987), the latter refers to generalized beliefs about the broad capabilities of a team in a variety of contexts and tasks, whereas collective efficacy relates to tasks in a specific setting. According to Bandura (2003), collective efficacy is a group-level construct composed of individual perceptions. Accordingly, collective efficacy is generally measured as an individual perception of the group's performance and the efficacy of the interactions between each of its members (Jex & Bliese, 1999; Lent, Schmidt, & Schmidt, 2005). Whereas it is conceptualized as a shared property of the group, a "group power" (Guzzo, Yost, Campbell, & Shea, 1993; Riggs & Knight, 1994), it refers to a collective representation of each of the group's members. However, collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the individual members' self-efficacy, just as high self-efficacy among all the members of a group does not necessarily mean that they will have high collective efficacy beliefs. Collective efficacy as a group-level construct is based on the assumption that individual perceptions can be aggregated into a higher-level construct expressed as perceptual consensus (Bandura, 2003; Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Parker, 1994; Zaccaro et al., 1995). In other words, we must be certain that group members share the same perceptions about their team or the place of personal abilities within this team. Therefore, in accordance with James (1982) (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993), we need to estimate the degree of within-group variability of the group members' perceptions in order to affirm that individual perceptions are indeed shared within this group. As such, collective efficacy can be regarded as a group-level construct even if we focus on individual beliefs about collective efficacy.

Lastly, all the meta-analyses relating to the correlations between collective efficacy and performances (Gully et al., 2002; Stajkovic et al., 2009) attest to the importance of interdependence (i.e., the necessary coordination between group members), insofar as it moderates the relationship between collective efficacy and performances. This is therefore a key factor for elucidating the effects of collective efficacy (Alavi & McCormick, 2008). When tasks require a low level of interdependence, collective efficacy beliefs are less operative. In groups where the achievement of objectives relies partly on the interdependence of their members, collective efficacy is perceived as a resource, just like self-efficacy (Stephanou, Gkavras, & Doulkeridou, 2013).

The superiority of collective efficacy over self-efficacy regarding the adoption of an efficient coping strategy in a situation perceived as stressful has already been demonstrated. In a longitudinal study of American soldiers, Jex and Bliese (1999) highlighted the distinct moderating effects of self-efficacy and collective efficacy on the relationship between stressors (workload, schedules, type of task) and indicators of felt tension (job satisfaction, organizational engagement, psychological tension and physical symptoms): self-efficacy tends to reduce feelings of psychological tension, whereas collective efficacy acts more on the