



The interplay of humor and creativity: shaping rationality and decision-making quality

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between humor, creativity, rationality, intuitiveness, and decision-making quality, all of which are vital in organizational management and success. Despite the importance attached to decision-making, prior research has not fully addressed how humor and creativity interact with rationality. Drawing from psychology, cognitive science, and management studies, we investigate how humor and creativity jointly influence cognitive reflection and decision quality. Using a sample of 998 participants and employing a mediating-moderation PROCESS model, our findings indicate that rational individuals tend to make higher-quality decisions, with affiliative humor mediating this relationship. Furthermore, we observed that employees' creativity levels moderated this relationship, especially among rational employees with high creativity, who made higher-quality decisions. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of humor, creativity, and rationality in decision-making processes, offering practical implications for organizational behavior and management practices. Understanding this interplay can provide a nuanced approach to enhancing decision-making processes in management, emphasizing the value of humor in organizational contexts.

Keywords Decision-making · Affiliative humor · Creativity · Cognitive reflection · Rationality

Introduction

Decision-making is a fundamental process that significantly influences organizations' success and sustainability. At its core, decision-making involves choosing from alternative courses of action based on the evaluation of relevant information and potential outcomes (Salas et al., 2010). The quality of decision-making is crucial because it directly affects an organization's capacity to achieve its goals and maintain a competitive edge. By emphasizing the importance of quality in decision-making, organizations can better navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities, ensuring long-term success and resilience (Johnson & Walker,

2023). Specifically, high-quality decisions are characterized by thorough analysis, consideration of diverse perspectives, and a balanced assessment of risks and opportunities.

In this study, we aim to investigate the effect of (1) cognitive reflection versus rationality and (2) creativity and humor on the quality of decision-making. *Cognitive reflection* (CR) refers to the mental process of consciously evaluating and re-evaluating one's initial thoughts and intuitions before deciding. CR involves a deliberate and analytical approach to problem-solving, whereby individuals question their automatic responses and consider alternative perspectives and information. This reflective thinking is crucial for avoiding cognitive biases and errors in judgment, leading to more accurate and rational decision-making. In organizational contexts, fostering cognitive reflection can enhance the quality of decisions (Frederick, 2005; Sirota et al., 2021). Notably, Frederick (2005) developed a test to measure CR (CRT), which will be used in this study.

Our study involves two more independent variables – vital drivers of innovation and competitive advantage – namely, creativity and humor. *Organizational creativity* involves generating novel and valuable ideas, solutions, and approaches to improve products, services, decision-making

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