ARE CULTURAL ATTITUDES A CAPITAL FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP? (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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ARE CULTURAL ATTITUDES A CAPITAL FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP?
A FOUR-COUNTRY COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Principal Topic

There is a large agreement that certain cultures tend to promote entrepreneurship more than others. However, empirical research has failed to show consistent support for this assumption. Most of the previous empirical studies of cultural attitudes and their association with entrepreneurial activity in different countries have used Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) as a basis for their examination. We suggest that the choice of such generic aggregative variables of cultural attitudes might have blurred the significant correlations within each category, possibly contributing to the inconclusive empirical results, and that less generalized cultural variables have to be addressed. The aim of this study is to find out whether cultural attitudes are a capital for entrepreneurship, by differentiating between certain cultural variables that may encourage entrepreneurship versus those that may discourage it. Drawing on the cognitive perspective, social learning theory and resource-based theory, and using Bourdieu's "cultural capital" concept, we developed several hypotheses that are examined in the context of four countries. Generally, we expected that the more cultural attitudes encourage entrepreneurship in a given country, the higher the prevalence of actual entrepreneurial activity and vice versa.

Method

Our study is a secondary data analysis of samples of the general populations in four countries collected as part of GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) - Brazil, Canada, Israel and Japan, in three years-2000, 2001 and 2002. In each country, a standardized phone survey was administered to a representative sample of about 2000 adults (18-64 years old) in each of the three years, yielding a total of 21,921 interviewees in the four countries. To test our hypotheses we used bivariate analysis as well as multivariate analyses of logistic regressions, in which gender, age and education were controlled for.

Results and Implications

We found that whereas cultural attitudes encouraging entrepreneurship correlated with a high level of entrepreneurial activity, attitudes discouraging entrepreneurship were not associated with a low level of entrepreneurial activity. Further, entrepreneurs expressed more entrepreneurial attitudes than non-entrepreneurs, but also expressed entrepreneurship-discouraging attitudes more than non-entrepreneurs. As a comparative study based on a large four-country sample that measures the role of specific aspects of cultural capital rather than general constructs in entrepreneurial activities, this research makes several important contributions for future research on culture and entrepreneurship.

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