FROM ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION TO ACTION: MOTIVATION VERSUS VOLITION AS EXPLANATIONS OF THE (UNINTENTIONAL) INTENTION-ACTION GAP (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

FROM ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION TO ACTION: MOTIVATION VERSUS VOLITION AS EXPLANATIONS OF THE (UNINTENTIONAL) INTENTION-ACTION GAP

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Principal Topic

This paper offers a longitudinal empirical investigation of why people sometimes do not act on their entrepreneurial intentions in spite of favorable perceptions of desirability and feasibility. Our research question is: what is the relative impact of motivation and volition in explaining the Unintentional Intention-action Gap (UIG)?

This research focuses on the UIG through two perspectives. First, according to the motivational view, which is routinely employed in research on entrepreneurial intentions, the UIG should be a function of intention strength. Second, a complementary view proposes that while forming an intention is primarily motivational (i.e., what the person wants to achieve), the regulation of the translation of goals into action is mainly volitional (i.e., how the person exerts her will to attain what she desires).

Method

The empirical data consists of two waves (2006 and 2009) of surveys featuring working-age individuals (15-74 years) from Finland. A total of 132 people participated in both survey waves.

Intention strength is operationalized in two ways: as preference of self-employment over organizational employment and as behavioral expectancy (likelihood to become self-employed). Data on volitional issues were collected in the second wave and included uncertainty, aversion, and fear on the action level; the pull of competing goals and intentions; and competing habits and routines. Further, following the Theory of Planned Behavior, we also include Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC, measured in the first wave) as a direct predictor of behavior.

The statistical analysis employs a logit model to regress entrepreneurial behavior, defined as nascent activity or start-up between the two waves of data collection, on intention, PBC, and volitional issues.

Results and Implications

The results of this study provide support for the TPB in predicting entrepreneurial behavior. Both intention and PBC are strong predictors of whether entrepreneurial action takes place, disregarding which measure of intention is used. However, we find no support for the volition hypothesis. PBC is the strongest predictor of behavior, implying that entrepreneurial intenders should focus on resolving feasibility concerns, and entrepreneurship education should emphasize capacity building over garnering enthusiasm.

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