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RECONSIDERING SERIAL ENTREPRENEURS: INTERVENING EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE AS THE MISSING LINK (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

Serial entrepreneurial endeavors may not be consecutive. Empirical evidence showed that a significant number of serial entrepreneurs were employed just before they reentered entrepreneurship (Westhead & Wright, 1998; Amaral et al., 2011). This paper thus aims to examine whether and how this intervening employment experience makes a difference in the relationship between prior entrepreneurial experience and intention to reenter entrepreneurship. Drawing on Schneider’s (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory, we argue that when entrepreneurs exit their ventures and start to work on an employment job in an organization, their prior entrepreneurial experience would hamper their socialization within the organization, which in turn increases their intentions to leave the organization to start another venture (i.e., selection to attrition). This relationship, moreover, would be altered by the organizational context such as organizational structure (Covin & Slevin, 2006).

Method

We are conducting two studies on Amazon Mechanical Turk, which has been demonstrated as a reliable data source for studies on human psychology (Kittur, Chi, & Suh, 2008; Buhrmester et al., 2011). The first is conducted on serial entrepreneurs to examine how their initial entrepreneurial experiences affect their intervening employment experiences. The second is with ex-entrepreneurs currently working on an employment job to test how initial entrepreneurial experience and the current employment jointly shape intention to reenter.

Results and Implications

This paper makes several theoretical contributions. First, we identify an important phenomenon that serial entrepreneurs may have intervening employment experiences prior to reentry, which are essential in shaping subsequent entrepreneurial intentions. Complementing the current research on serial entrepreneurs that is largely focused on prior entrepreneurial experience (Ucbasaran et al., 2006), second, this paper highlights that the impact of entrepreneurial experience on intention to reenter may be actually passed through the intervening employment, if any. Third, ASA assumes that any organization has a distinct “organizational personality” (Schneider et al., 1995) as a result of the attraction-selection-attrition process. Our model suggests that new ventures may have a personality that is distinct from organizational personalities so that ex-entrepreneurs are apt to join new ventures and merge into that personality.

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