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ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AND ACTION: SOCIAL INFLUENCES AS THE MISSING LINK (SUMMARY)

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AND ACTION: SOCIAL INFLUENCES AS THE MISSING LINK

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Principal Topic

Action is the central feature of entrepreneurship (McMullen & Shepherd 2006). The formation of an entrepreneurial intention, i.e., the cognitive commitment to starting a business, is a necessary condition for engaging in entrepreneurial action. However, while being necessary, intention is not sufficient. Many individuals form entrepreneurial intentions but only a small minority turn their intentions into actions (Van Gelderen et al. 2015).

Focusing on entrepreneurial intentions alone might represent an important limitation in fully explaining entrepreneurship (Adam & Fayolle 2015; Kautonen et al. 2015) many authors have studied the entrepreneurial process based on the intention models developed in the sociopsychological literature. Determinants of intention were defined, but as shown by Ajzen (1987). In this paper, we contribute to fill this gap by addressing an apparently simple question: under which conditions do entrepreneurial intentions convert into entrepreneurial action, and under which conditions don't?

We build on social cognitive career theory ([SCCT] Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Brown & Hackett 1994; 2000), which suggests that contextual support and barriers influence the extent to which career goals convert into action. Specifically, social influences from family members, friends, and faculty can play an important role in facilitating action towards career goals (e.g. Richie et al., 1997).

Method

To test our model, we use data from a specific survey, the "Student Entrepreneurship Survey", of graduate students at 64 Italian universities. The data were collected in two waves 12 months apart in 2014 and 2015 and they cover nearly 80% of Italian university graduates. In wave 1, between September and December 2014, we reached 64,710 graduated students. One year after, we surveyed all the individuals included in wave 1 and we reached 23,456 students that correspond to 33% of the initial sample.

Results and Implications

Analyses support our hypotheses that individuals' social influences can support the new venture creation process by providing information and resources that help in overcoming doubts and procrastination and act upon intentions. The paper makes several contributions: (1) it explores the link between intention and action (Shalaegel and Koeing, 2012), providing a test of the veracity of such assumptions; (2) it integrates insights from social cognitive career theory, showing how contextual factors moderate the relationship between intentions and action; (3) it sheds light on the understudied phenomenon of student entrepreneurship.

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