A MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS WITHIN THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES POPULATION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

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Principal Topic

While self-employment presents many challenges, an entrepreneurial path for a person with a disability can mean the difference between unemployment or severe underemployment and a truly exceptional and prosperous career. Recent research highlights the importance of entrepreneurial intentions (i.e., the interest of a person in starting, acquiring or buying a business) as a precursor to entrepreneurial behavior (Zhao et al., 2005). Further, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Zhao et al., 2005), defined as the level of confidence individuals have to identify new opportunities, create products, think creatively, or commercialize an idea, is positively associated with entrepreneurial intention. In reviewing the literature on people with disabilities, however, we find reason to believe that this model does not fully explain the entrepreneurial activities of persons with disabilities. Thus, we integrate the literatures on entrepreneurship and people with disabilities to propose a refined model. A few of the propositions offered by our model are included below.

Sample Propositions

Proposition 1: The more negative the psychological response and treatment, then the less favorable the perceived alternatives for employment, which, in turn, increases the person with a disabilities’ entrepreneurial intentions.

Proposition 2: The more negative the reactions and treatment to one’s disability, the more likely the potential entrepreneur is to focus on entrepreneurial activates requiring minimal interaction with the non-disabled population.

Proposition 3: The more serve a disability and the earlier the onset, the more likely the potential entrepreneur is to focus on entrepreneurial activates serving others with the same disability.

Results and Implications

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, by offering a model of entrepreneurial intentions for persons with disabilities, our study directs policy makers and educators towards developing training programs to increase these individuals’ entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We believe our model can direct previously unemployed, or under-employed, individuals towards a productive and prosperous path of entrepreneurship. Second, we extend prior work which has examined entrepreneurial intentions by considering the individual’s perceptions of alternatives. This construct could be extended to consider groups other than those with disabilities (e.g., minorities, nascent entrepreneurs, individuals in rural setting or Third-World countries), offering opportunities for training and self-assessment programs to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviors.

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