SELF-EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYMENT CHOICE AND THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic and Research Questions

In our study, we look at the relationship between the individuals' propensity for rather entrepreneurial than traditional career choices. We examine people with a consistent educational background and human capital, and in particular accounting students, as there are a substantial number of self-employed accountants and accountants are employed in a variety of more or less entrepreneurial organizations. We further build on and integrate prior research from the domains of entrepreneurial intentions and vocational behaviour in the accounting profession.

Theoretical Framework

From the entrepreneurial intentions perspective, we employ the theory of mixed control (Monsen & Urbig, 2009) to better understanding of the potential for entrepreneurially-oriented behaviour (Krueger et al., 2000; Monsen et al., 2010). To evaluate one's entrepreneurial potential, we measure entrepreneurial self-efficacy (McGee et al., 2009), internal locus of control (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2012) and promotion regulatory focus (Lockwood et al., 2002; Tumasjan & Braun, 2012). We additionally measure “irrational” or “biased” self-perceptions, i.e. illusion of control and planning fallacy (Keh et al., 2002; Simon & Houghton, 2002). Finally, to link entrepreneurial intentions to the accounting profession, we examine the job characteristics which accounting researchers have identified as those most valued by accounting students (Ahmed et al., 1997; Byrne & Willis, 2005; Danziger & Eden, 2006; Sugahara & Boland, 2009).

Method

This research was carried out in two stages. The methodological goal of the first stage survey was to develop and evaluate effective binary sets of entrepreneurial job descriptors that clearly distinguish between preferences for accounting jobs and work situations that are either more “entrepreneurial” or more “traditional”. In the second stage, the five most efficient pairs of job descriptors from the first stage were included in the final questionnaire as pairs of job opportunity scenarios in the format of a choice-based conjoint experiment (Street et al., 2005; Street & Burgess, 2007).

Primary findings and implications

We confirm that the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial employment choices with graduate accounting students is partially moderated by internal locus of control, regulatory focus, illusion of control and planning fallacy. Methodologically, our paper is one of the first papers to provide even more sophistication than traditional survey based (Krueger et al, 2000; Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006) and metric conjoint based (Monsen et al., 2010; Douglas & Fitzsimmons, 2013) approaches to measuring entrepreneurial career preferences by introducing a choice-based conjoint approach.

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