



The Entrepreneurial Career Path: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. Maneuvering towards a framework of entrepreneurship as a career path, first I carried out a systematic review of the literature including both bibliometric and document review. There is a scholarly understanding of entrepreneurship as a career although a great deal of entrepreneurship career research focuses on the founding of a new venture and yet less is known about entrepreneurship as a career path. Emerging works on the entrepreneurship career are disconnected and explain the various dimensions of the entrepreneurship career from the stages of entry, success, and outcomes instead of seeing them as a connected career trajectory. The bibliometric review identified five themes signaling the ongoing semantic conversations with reference to entrepreneurship career. Moreover, through the systematic review of documents, I identified three themes that hint at activities and possible transitions occurring along the entrepreneurship career path. I propose a framework on entrepreneurship as a career path and suggest potential directions for future research.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, career, career path, new firm creation, career goals.

1. Introduction

Where does an entrepreneurship career start and end? There is an increasing view among scholars that becoming an entrepreneur can be seen as a career choice (Liguori et al., 2020; Burton, Sørensen, and Dobrev, 2016). In other words, similar to the practices of traditional occupational careers (e.g., mechanic, accountancy, law, teaching), the process of entrepreneurship can be looked at from the lens of career theory. Burton et al. (2016, p. 237) comment that “the focus of entrepreneurship scholars has been on the founding of a new venture as an end in and of itself”. Ultimately, entrepreneurial career choice is connected to an individual’s decision to recognize entrepreneurial opportunities (Asante and Affum-Osei, 2019); and it is a conscious and intentional endeavor (Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud, 2000). The decision for an entrepreneurial career presupposes that the individual entrepreneur has developed a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship (Henderson and Robertson, 1999; Veciana, Aponte, and

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Urbano, 2005) or developed intentions for entrepreneurship (Ajzen, 1991; Shapero, 1984) and has motivations for entrepreneurial outcomes (Gabrielsson and Politis, 2011; Mahto and McDowell, 2018). Research hence has suggested a careers perspective of entrepreneurship (Dyer, 1994; Burton et al., 2016). The conception of entrepreneurship along a career gives the opportunity of learning from the steps along the career trajectory rather than seeing entrepreneurship merely as an outcome (Bowen and Hisrich, 1986; Burton et al., 2016). Nevertheless, entrepreneurship research so far largely focuses on entry, success, and outcomes of entrepreneurship which make up part of the stages in the entrepreneurial career path. There is a piecemeal study of various aspects of entrepreneurship-entrepreneurial behaviors, subjects, motivations, and outcomes which seek a synthesis along a career trajectory. By and large, there is an increasing tendency among such studies in terms of using self-employment as a proxy for entrepreneurship career choice (Sørensen and Sharkey, 2014). Although a careers perspective of entrepreneurship has been suggested (e.g., Dyer, 1994; Burton et al., 2016), yet less is known about entrepreneurship as a career. This calls for further efforts to be made in theory building of the entrepreneurship career.

In this paper, I make a synthesis of the extant literature with respect to conceptualization of entrepreneurship as a career. I connect the dots through a review of the extant literature with the purpose of developing emergent themes that may come in line with the entrepreneurial career path and attempt to fill the gap in conceptualization of the entrepreneurship career. I draw on the definition of entrepreneurship career as the decision for self-employment through establishing or founding a new venture (Sørensen and Sharkey, 2014). Moreover, I also include in my review entrepreneurial behaviors such as intentions and aspirations leading to entrepreneurial outcomes. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explore the extant literature on entrepreneurship as a career path and suggest a framework on what constitutes the process of entrepreneurship as a career path. The next parts of the paper are structured as follows. First, I give the highlights of entrepreneurship as a career path. Second, I explore the methodological approach I followed in the review process. Third, I embark on the descriptive results of the review. Fourth, I forward the interpretation of the review terms and emergent theoretical constructs. Finally, I forward a framework of entrepreneurship as a career path and propose future research directions.

2. The Entrepreneurship Career: Transitional and Developmental Perspectives

At the micro level, entrepreneurship research focuses on how individuals identify and exploit opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Although the preexisting and objective views of entrepreneurial opportunities are challenged

by those who see opportunities as intuitively dynamic (Davidsson, Recker, and Von Briel, 2020; Dimov, 2007) in contrast with the linear and discovery views, extant entrepreneurship research reports opportunities in connection with why and how individuals explore and exploit opportunities, and the outcomes that emerge from exploiting opportunities in terms of new ventures, business growth, market share, or the creation of business activity within an existing firm (Davidsson and Gordon, 2012). Entrepreneurial opportunities are linked to the micro-level of analysis at the individual, family, team, household, firm or new activity (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Davidsson and Gordon, 2012). I use this definition and focus to include studies from diverse scholarly fields that use different terminology to describe various aspects of the entrepreneurship research in this domain. Although I limit the definition of entrepreneurship as the process of new firm creation, yet I believe that the decision for an entrepreneurial career path begins a bit earlier than a new firm creation because entrepreneurial intention comes before entrepreneurial opportunity seeking and ultimately new business creation (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Davidsson and Gordon, 2012).

Understandably, before realizing their entrepreneurial career choice, aspiring entrepreneurs show entrepreneurial behaviors or motivations towards opportunity seeking (Meoli et al., 2020; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Krueger, 2017). Entrepreneurs do not start their business out of the blue but with some degree of planned behavior (Krueger et al., 2000; Shook, Priem, and McGee, 2003). And entrepreneurship as a behavioral process begins with creating a new business (Carsrud and Johnson, 1989; Ripsas, 1998; Pryor et al., 2016). This planned entrepreneurial process is referred to in the literature as 'entrepreneurial intention' (Ajzen, 2001; Gartner et al., 1994; Lee and Wong, 2004). In connecting action and intention Krueger (2007) notes, "behind entrepreneurial action are entrepreneurial intentions" (p. 124). There are plenty of works conducted along entrepreneurial career choice, but with unclear boundaries of what constitutes the process of entrepreneurial career (Pihie and Akmaliah, 2009; Scherer, Brodzinski, and Wiebe, 1990; Dyer Jr, 1994). For example, one dimension of research focuses on what motivates individuals and what contextual factors underlie career-related choices and behaviors (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 2000). By and large, these works draw on a Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (e.g., Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996; Lent et al., 2005; Lindley, 2005) to explain such processes. SCCT argues that career interests, goals and choices are related to self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994; Bandura, 1997). In these perspectives, research confirms that one's entrepreneurial self-efficacy impacts one's attitudes toward entrepreneurship (e.g., Krueger, 1993; Lent et al., 1994; Devonish et al., 2010). Research shows that self-efficacy will enhance outcome expectations (e.g., Fouad and Smith, 1996; Lent et al., 1994). In other words, when one believes that he/she has high entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the outcomes they expect from engaging in entrepreneurial behavior should be more positive (Bandura, 2001).

Moreover, extant studies hypothesize that individuals with greater confidence in their ability to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors will exhibit higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions (e.g., Boyd and Vozikis, 1994; Liñán and Fayolle, 2015). However, little is known about where the entrepreneurial career path starts and ends which leaves a blurred space on entrepreneurship career choice and development. Studies hence incline towards theorizing entrepreneurship as a planned and conscious career choice with suggestions being forwarded to revisit contextual differences which become a cause for variations of attitudes towards the entrepreneurship career choice and the intentions for entrepreneurship (Liguori et al., 2020; Segal et al., 2007). Studies conclude that there is a positive attitude towards choosing a career in entrepreneurship and for individuals to develop entrepreneurial intentions.

A study of entrepreneurship from social and macro level helps to capture a broader array of scholarly perspectives such as transitions and migrations from occupational career to entrepreneurship career and vice-versa, dynamics of entrepreneurship, human capital aspects of entrepreneurship, and career trajectories (Sørensen and Sharkey, 2014; Burton et al., 2016). To this effect, I believe that a meta-analysis of the extant research helps to contribute towards making a macro level analysis and a synthesis of the current stock of knowledge on the conversations of entrepreneurship as a career.

3. Methods

3.1. Document Sampling

I started my review to explore what topics of entrepreneurship career received a wider scholarly attention. First, I applied my bibliographic search syntax in the Scopus database — one of the world's largest search engines and a registered trademark of Elsevier. Scopus holds abstract and citation databases which serve as sources of both peer-reviewed research literature and quality sources. I applied and searched through *titles*, *abstracts*, and *keywords*, but limited to those publication sources in the fields of *business*, *social science*, *economics*, *arts & humanities*, and *psychology* and further limiting to journal articles published in English language only. To solicit a representative sample of articles for the systematic literature review with reference to the career dimension of entrepreneurship, I used criterion sampling based on keyword searches (Patton, 1990). My search drew on a related approach used by other entrepreneurship scholars (e.g., Fitz-Koch et al., 2018; Grégoire et al., 2011; Shepherd et al., 2015).

To capture relevant articles in my search process, I made several iterations using keyword combinations. I believe that this approach was important because of the possible differences in the use of languages among scholars to express

similar or related concepts. My search terms included *entrep**, *new venture**, *self-employment**, or *career**, or *occupation** in combination with *entry**, *development**, or *outcome**. I think that my application of criterion sampling during the search for relevant documents in the database is valuable for several reasons. First, it makes the search process efficient because it yields relevant documents based on the yardsticks (terms) provided to the search engine. Second, in contrast to a manual search process which normally relies on handpicking of journal and articles, searching from the database based on the criterion sampling helps not only to increase accessibility to a wide source of journals but also increases the dependability of my sample. Third, criterion sampling allowed me to be familiar with the stock of extant concepts and words which have been applied within the extant research on entrepreneurship career and build my sampling frame. Because the sampling frame reduces the likelihood of missing important contributions, it confirms the robustness of my review. Based on the search criteria at this phase the search from the database yielded 3841 hits.

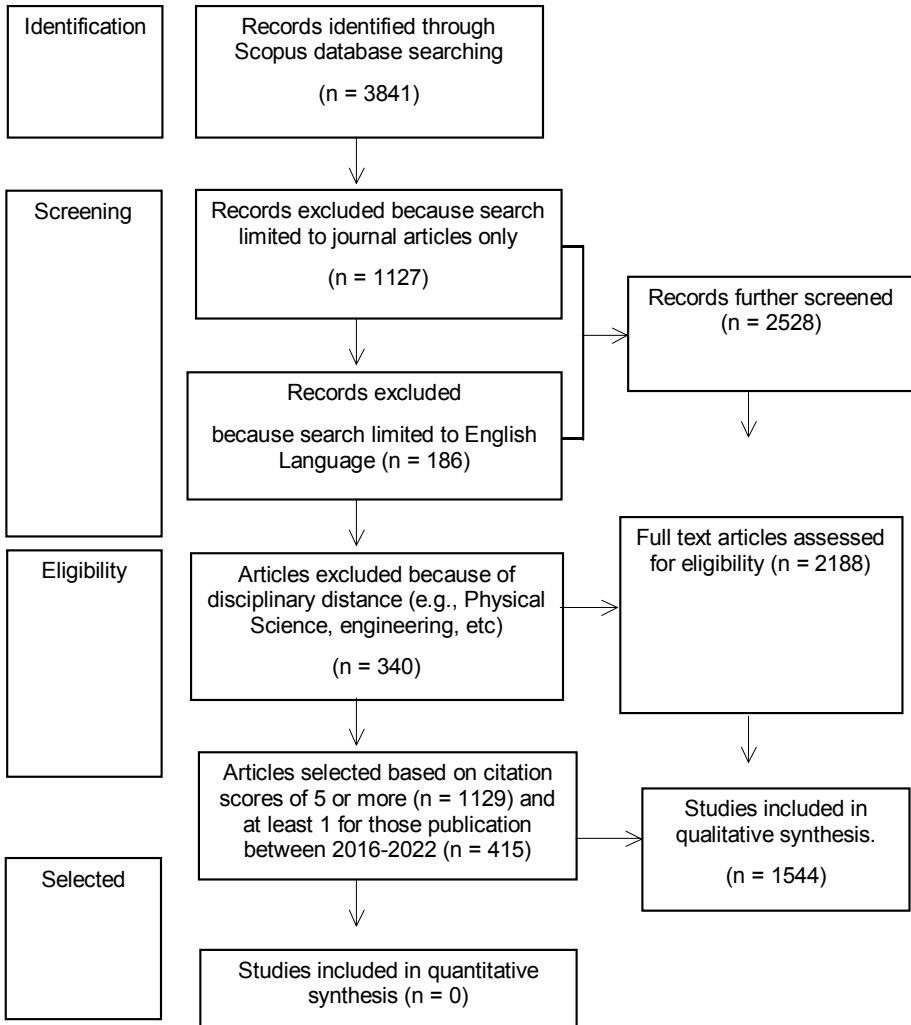
I made further criteria for selection of documents such that a document needs to have a minimum of 5 citations. However, to minimize the possible bias against the possible exclusion of relevant and important articles published in entrepreneurship career, the criteria for selection based on citation index was widened to include articles which have a minimum of 1 citation for recent publications between 2016 to 2022.

I believe that my criteria of selection traced a sample of scholarly research in terms of disciplinary breadth and width of knowledge about entrepreneurship career. This is so because I sampled journal articles from various disciplinary sources in the fields of business, social science, economics, arts & humanities, and psychology with a notion that various aspects of entrepreneurship career from micro, meso, and macro level will be covered in various disciplines. My sampling was further refined with the exclusion of other studies that appeared as conceptual, book chapters, books, or conference papers.

To ensure rigor in this search process, I draw on protocols and tools both in the sampling procedure of the documents, and analysis of the outcomes (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Following the PRISMA Method² (Liberati et al., 2009; Cardella et al., 2020), I illustrate the procedure of document screening, refinement, and selection. This screening stage resulted in 1544 articles published between 1960-2022 (Figure 1).

2. PRISMA stands for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis. It guides authors in the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analysis (<http://www.prisma-statement.org>).

Figure 1. Sampling of reviewed documents



3.2. Bibliographic (Text) Sampling

Because my review focuses on aggregate and meta-analysis rather than individual review of the articles, I imported all 1544 articles to the VOSviewer³ software,

3. VOSviewer is a software tool developed by Leiden University. It is a tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks. The networks may include networks of journals, researchers, or individual publications. The software develops networks based on citation, bibliographic coupling, co-citation, or co-authorship relations. Moreover, VOSviewer supports in terms of text mining that can be used to construct and visualize co-occurrence of networks of important terms extracted from a body of scientific literature (<https://www.vosviewer.com>).

for further review and made a text mining to be applied for the meta-analysis and sampling of the key terms used in those literatures. Because my review relies on meta bibliometric research, I begin with mining of key terms in the articles I have sampled earlier in terms of their bibliographic occurrence and to guide me in clustering the scientific publications on entrepreneurship career. VOSviewer clustering helps analysis at an aggregate level (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). Such clustering solutions are helpful for this type of meta-analysis that include large volumes of publications (e.g., Boyack and Klavans, 2014; Waltman and Van Eck, 2012). I use inductive interpretation for making sense of these clustering solutions in line with conceptualization of entrepreneurship career. At this stage, the text mining and counting process resulted in 28,108 terms in all the abstracts and titles of the articles selected. From these terms, using a co-occurrence criterion, I sampled 1087 terms based on the threshold of minimum number of occurrences of a keyword to be 10 (Waltman and Van Eck, 2012). I have assumed a threshold level of relevance of 60 percent as default rate, and this resulted in 652 terms. I have further skimmed these terms and excluded some terms which infer to research methodologies, figures, names of countries, and regions which are out of the scope of the review. This reduced the number of sampled terms to 501. A similar method is supported by related earlier works (Vallaster et al., 2019). Figure 3 gives the bibliographic co-occurrence of these terms.

4. An Aggregate Overview of the Literature of Entrepreneurship as a Career Path 1960-2022: A Bibliographic and a Literature Review

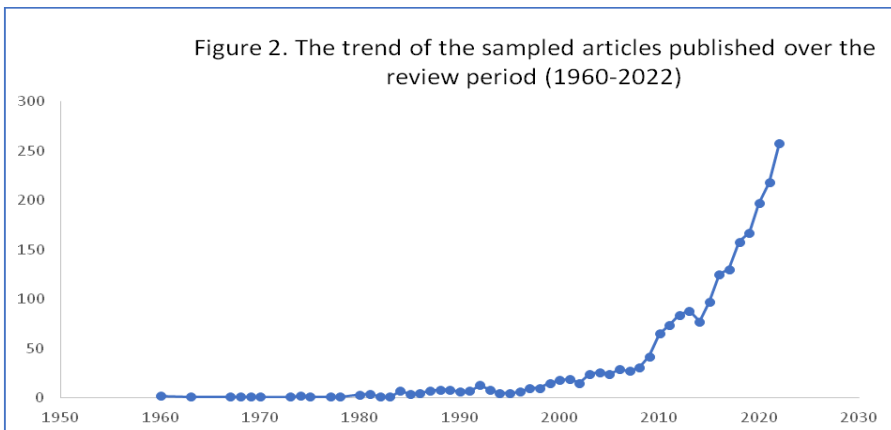
The highest number (602 or 39%) of the scientific documents on the topic of Entrepreneurship as a Career Path, selected for this review, belong to the disciplines of Business, Management, and Accounting, followed by those which come from the Social Sciences disciplines (509, or 33%). Furthermore, 14% of the selected documents belong to the disciplines of Economics, Econometrics, and Finance; 8% belongs to Arts and Humanities, and 6% to Psychology.

In terms of the journal outlets in which the sampled articles were published, the top ten journals in which 325 articles (21 percent of the sample) were published are shown in Table 1. As shown in the table, some journals which historically focus on human capital development and career like *Education+Training*, *Career Development International*, and *Journal of Vocational Behavior* have also conversed about entrepreneurship and career.

Table 1. The Top Ten Journal outlets in which the sampled articles were published

Journal Name	Number of Publications
1. Education+Training	54
2. Career Development International	37
3. Journal of Vocational Behavior	35
4. International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal	33
5. Journal of Entrepreneurship Education	31
6. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	30
7. Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship	29
8. Entrepreneurship & Regional Development	28
9. International Journal of Management Education	25
10. New England Journal of Entrepreneurship	23
Total	325

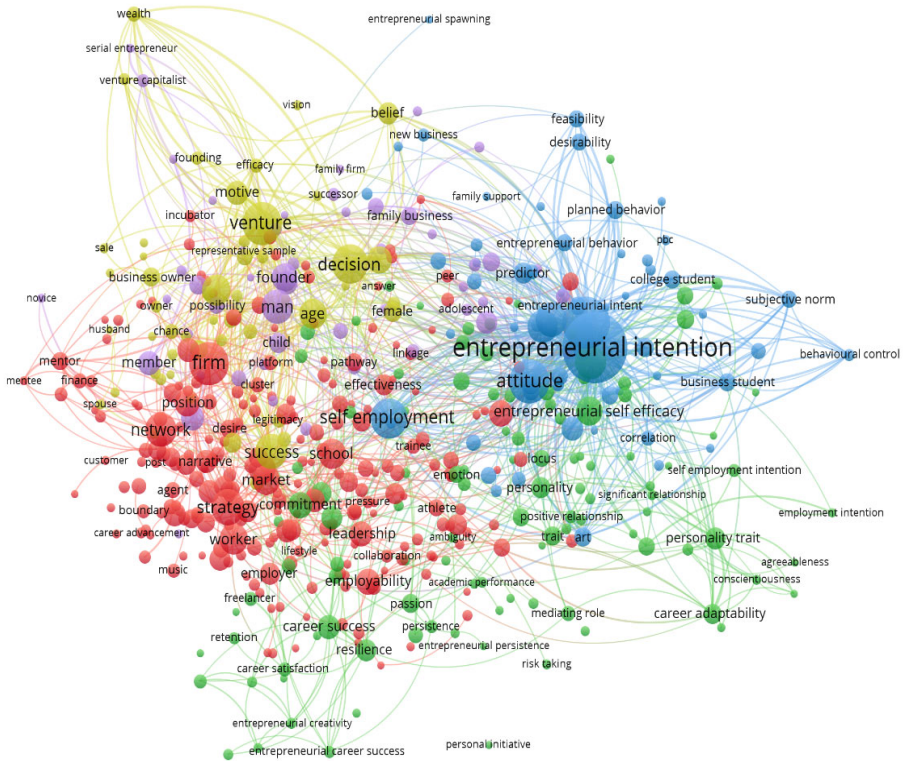
Moreover, regarding the trend of the number of published articles over the review period, scholarly conversations on entrepreneurship and career have been increasing over time. Particularly, a steep upward trend in the number of published articles is visible from the year of 2010 onwards (Figure 2). This was the time when a scholarly call for research on the career perspective of entrepreneurship was forwarded using macro level theories from social psychology and sociological perspectives which view entrepreneurship as a path or a staged process including transitions, rather than merely as an end (Beeka and Rimmington, 2011; Burton et al., 2016; Pérez-López, González-López and Rodríguez-Ariza, 2016; Asante and Affum-Osei, 2019). In such views, the decision to found a new firm is conceptualized from a stage, transition, and path perspective inviting a wider scholarly audience to study the topic of pursuing entrepreneurship as a career option. This is evidenced from cross-citation analysis of the articles.



5. Bibliometric Review

The analysis draws on inductive and interpretive approaches because of the linguistic and semantic nature of the search process that relies on the use of co-occurrence relations of terms used in these sources. Figure 3 provides a network diagram of the co-occurrences of the 501 terms which are extracted and sampled from the selected 1544 articles in this review. The network diagram shows 5 clusters of bibliographic interpretation of the literature in view of entrepreneurship and career. The network represents a comprehensive semantic component and co-occurrence analysis of terms from articles published on entrepreneurship and career.

Figure 3. Network diagram of the bibliographic co-occurrence of terms in the literature of entrepreneurship and career from 1960-2022



Cluster 1. Entrepreneurial career arena and decision making (Red dots, 232 terms, 46.3%)

Cluster 1 characterizes the context of entrepreneurial career choice. The terms in this cluster represent the settings of the individual entrepreneur such as

environmental enablers or obstacles (Kimjeon and Davidsson, 2022) which give nuances for understanding the process of choosing either entrepreneurial career or employment. Potential aspirations for the entrepreneurship career choice are linked to contexts in which the potential entrepreneur survives (Nambisan and Baron, 2013; Estrin, Korosteleva, and Mickiewicz, 2013; Henley, 2007). The terms in Cluster 1 show a pool of institutions and related issues like the organization, firm, market, place, school; job related matters such as position, work, employment, employer, employability; and social and cognitive matters such as community, discourse, and narratives. The issues are connected with shaping the entrepreneurial mindset and career aspirations of the entrepreneur and transitions to self-employment (Henley, 2007).

Table 2. Most recurrent terms in Cluster 1

Term	Occurrences	Link strength ^a
Firm	262	3094
Strategy	186	2075
Worker	140	1511
Market	135	1112
Organization	130	958
School	129	1749
Position	107	1402
Employability	99	1212
Discourse	82	872
Narrative	78	724
Employer	71	788
Place	68	767

a. Indicates a measure provided by VOS which shows the strength of the link of a term to other terms in the clusters.

Table 2 shows that from the top recurrent terms, ‘firms’ and ‘strategies’ show the highest recurrence and strong external linkage with other terms in the other clusters showing the relevance of the concepts of new firm or new business formation in the process of realizing an entrepreneurial career.

Cluster 2. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, individuality, and personality issues (Green dots, 109 terms, 21.7%)

A large proportion of the literature in this cluster focuses on the individual behaviors and personality traits that influence the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the entrepreneur. Self-efficacy theory explains how beliefs about personal competence influence human decision, adaptation, and adjustment (Maddux and Lewis, 1995). This theory is presented in these literatures in different verses such

as motivation (White, 1959; McClelland et al., 1953), and social learning (Rotter, 1966). These studies report that self-efficacy theory gives a strong explanatory power in terms of explaining the influence of self-efficacy beliefs on an entrepreneurial career choice (Maddux and Lewis, 1995). Such studies emphasize that individual beliefs about personal competencies matter a lot in terms of committing oneself to the challenges of an entrepreneurial career which involves shouldering uncertainty and risk-taking (McGee et al., 2009; Chen, Greene, and Crick, 1998).

Table 3. Most recurrent terms in Cluster 2

Term	Occurrence	Link strength
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	127	318
Commitment	100	1445
Career success	87	1253
Personality trait	73	1340
Resilience	70	934
Autonomy	69	222
Personality	63	1054
Career adaptability	61	1101
Job satisfaction	48	1316
Risk-taking	15	621

A closer view of the top ten terms used in Cluster 2 (see Table 3) shows a bidirectionality of behaviors where on one side of the continuum self-efficacy beliefs designated by surrogates such as motivations, commitment, personality, and risk-taking are included, and expectations of outcomes (e.g., self-employment, profit, autonomy, career success, career satisfaction) appear on the other end of the continuum. An example is a study by (Drnovšek, Wincent, and Cardon, 2010) who found a significant positive correlation between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the business start-up decision. This view is further elaborated by other studies where the impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial outcomes is moderated by environmental dynamism (Hmieleski and Baron, 2008; Forbes, 2005; McGee et al., 2009). In other words, entrepreneurial activities like opportunity recognition, risk-taking, commitment, and investment are influenced by environmental settings.

Cluster 3. Entrepreneurial intention issues (Blue dots, 61 items, 12.17%)

The collection of the literature in this cluster converges into “entrepreneurial intention”, which is one the most conversed topics in entrepreneurship and career literature (Krueger et al., 2000). This literature links entrepreneurial intention to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Van Gelderen et al., 2008; Kautonen et al., 2015), emphasizing the predictive part of

intentions on actions (Krueger et al., 2000; Ferreira et al., 2012; Obschonka et al., 2010). For instance, an excerpt of this literature suggests that intention is inherently part of a process and therefore studies of the processes of new business formation and the decisions to grow or exit a business by an individual helps to predict his or her intention to choose an entrepreneurial career (Nishimura and Tristán, 2011; Meoli et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship processes are discussed from various aspects in various disciplines like for example psychological dimensions (e.g., entrepreneurial motivation), economic dimensions (e.g., self-employment decision) and social cognitive perspectives (e.g., venture creation). Table 4 shows the most often occurring themes in cluster 3.

Table 4. Most recurrent terms in Cluster 3

Term	Occurrences	Link strength
Entrepreneurial intention	714	10502
Attitude	286	1379
Self-employment	228	3214
Intention	390	705
Entrepreneurial intent	46	12
Planned behavior	38	1261
Entrepreneurial behavior	43	690
Desirability	42	950
Feasibility	41	1083
New business	26	614

Cluster 4. New venture creation, ownership, and mobility (Yellow dots, 50 terms, 9.98%)

This set of terms explains how entrepreneurship career is reflected through new business creation. The terms reiterate that the creation of new ventures is a central topic in entrepreneurship scholarship. By and large, there is a scholarly recognition of new venture creation as an integral part of the entrepreneurship career decision (Metallo et al., 2021; Nikiforou et al., 2019), although the entrepreneurship process encompasses various aspects linked to new venture creation such as new venture ideas, exploration, exploitation, growth, and exit (Metallo et al., 2021; Kuratko et al., 2015; Shane and Vankataraman, 2000). Analysis of the interlinkages of the terms shows that the entitlement towards an entrepreneurial career begins when the individual entrepreneur founds a new business, and acts as an owner-manager (Alsos and Kolvereid, 1998; Chandler, 1996; Van Praag, 2003). This argumentation suggests that individuals who engage in entrepreneurial careers must be associated with one or several legally registered businesses as founders, managers, or owners, have control over at least one business, and receive most of their income from businesses owned or controlled (Rosa, 1999; Muñoz-Bullon et al., 2015). Scholars should aim to

develop a definition of self-employment that covers legal business activities in all types of businesses, with or without employees in addition to the controlling entrepreneur (Burton, Anderson, and Aldrich, 2009). The success of the self-employment decision through new venture creation differentiates between who the founder is as a person on the one hand, including experience of the entrepreneurs (founder's profile — novice, serial, parallel, gender, and age), and on the other hand the motives of the founders (e.g., subsistence, success, wealth creation) (Birley and Westhead, 1993; Klapper and Parker, 2011; Muñoz-Bullon et al., 2015; Shane and Khurana, 2003). Table 5 shows the most often occurring themes in cluster 4.

Table 5. Most recurrent terms in Cluster 4

Terms	Occurrences	Link strength
Venture	262	4753
Decision	221	3814
Success	183	2948
Women entrepreneur	136	1842
Age	129	2399
Motive	82	1931
Belief	72	1615
Team	61	880
Business owner	53	920
Wealth	32	1416
Legitimacy	30	292
Founding	24	370

Cluster 5. Entrepreneurship career succession issues (Mauve dots, 49 terms, 9.78%)

The groups of terms in this cluster explore developmental and succession aspects of the entrepreneurial career (Handler, 1994; Butler et al., 2001; Rubenson and Gupta, 1997). These terms characterize post-founding behaviors in terms of the survival of the business, career mobility, and role adjustment between the entrepreneur and generations of families (Van Praag, 2003; Handler, 1990; Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2021; Rubenson and Gupta, 1997; Nordqvist et al., 2013). The terms feature the continuity of the entrepreneurial career in businesses in reference to ownership — the business being owned by the individual entrepreneur as an owner-manager or the business being collectively owned by family, parent, or team (Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2021; Nordqvist et al., 2013). Terms like founder, social capital, role model, and parent appear in the top five most occurring in this category and have significant linkage with other terms in the same cluster or outside cluster 5 (see Table 6).

Table 6. Most recurrent terms in cluster 5

Terms	Occurrences	Link strength
Founder	115	1632
Social capital	89	1084
Role model	75	1101
Parent	54	147
Family business	48	621
Conflict	40	115
Entrepreneurial role model	35	332
Entrepreneurial competence	28	205
Successor	24	266
Offspring	18	200

6. Literature Review

To complement the above bibliometric meta reviews and to get an insight of the literature of entrepreneurship career, I further selected 55 articles based on their citation score and reviewed them. After reading the articles, I coded and grouped them into three organizing themes along the paths of entrepreneurial career: entrepreneurial career intention, entrepreneurial career action, and entrepreneurial career goals (outcomes); along three levels of analysis: Individual, Group/Family, and Institution (Table 7).

Table 7. A framework for Modeling Entrepreneurship as a Career Path

	Entrepreneurial Career Intentions	Entrepreneurial Career Actions	Entrepreneurial Career Goals	TOTAL
Individual	9	1	1	11
Group (Family)	19	4	5	28
Institutional, Social, Process	6	5	5	16
TOTAL	34	10	11	55

6.1. Entrepreneurial Career Intentions

Consistent with the bibliometric results, 34 or 61.82% of the articles reviewed discuss entrepreneurial career intentions mainly at the group level. These documents characterize how different groups including students, families, entrepreneurs, non-entrepreneurs, men, women, nascent entrepreneurs, and serial entrepreneurs develop entrepreneurial intentions (e.g., Wilson, Kickul, and Marlino, 2007; Bosma et al., 2012; Moriano et al., 2012; Gorgievski et al., 2018).

These articles use theory of planned behavior (TPB) and illustrate that entrepreneurial career is intentional, cautionary, and proactive. In relation to entrepreneurial intentions, the documents use the concepts of entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial passion, motivation, and self-efficacy to explain that entrepreneurial career is not reflexive but planned and an intentional choice (e.g., Zhao, Seibert, and Hills, 2005; Wilson et al., 2007; Laspita et al., 2012).

6.2. Entrepreneurial Career Actions

Entrepreneurial career action refers to practices that the entrepreneur undertakes in the process of realization of his or her entrepreneurial aspiration, intention, and motives (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994; Delanoë-Gueguen and Liñán, 2019; Mathias, Williams, and Smith, 2015; Carter et al., 2003). These include self-efficacy development through training, new venture creation, and business incubation (Frese et al., 1997; Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006; Nanda and Sørensen, 2010). New business creation and registration of the business is reported as the entry point into self-employment and entrepreneurial career (Fayolle, Basso, and Tornikoski, 2011; Ahmed et al., 2020; Rotefoss and Kolvereid, 2005). Studies report that institutional contexts such as culture, norms, family, and support systems largely influence the gestation stages of entry into self-employment through new business creation (Rotefoss and Kolvereid, 2005; Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006; Fonseca, Lopez-Garcia, and Pissarides, 2001). Such a view is supported by the literature of contextualization of entrepreneurship (Welter, Baker, and Wirsching, 2019) such that social and regional contexts either support or discourage entrepreneurship career activities and entry into self-employment. Moreover, entrepreneurial career activities or actions also refer to managing the business as the owner and manager and growing the business (Feldman and Bolino, 2000; Farrington, Gray, and Sharp, 2011).

6.3. Entrepreneurial Career Goals

Understanding the reasons why entrepreneurs pursue an entrepreneurial career rather than wage employment (occupational career) is an important aspect for enhancing a career in entrepreneurship (Culbertson, Smith, and Leiva, 2011). This view is discussed in research on entrepreneurial motivation which draws on the fact that entrepreneurship career is a goal-directed behavior and the existence of a set of goals motivates entrepreneurs to sustain their business (Kuratko, Hornsby, and Naffziger, 1997; Segal, Borgia, and Schoenfeld, 2002). Studies report several reasons in connection to motivation for entrepreneurial careers (Dunkelberg et al., 2013; Feldman and Bolino, 2000; Stewart et al., 2003; Burke, 2011) despite the risky nature of entrepreneurial activities (Culbertson et al.,

2011). Studies report that there are deviations in the values attached to entrepreneurial career goals before and after the start of the business venture. For instance, Kuratko et al. (1997) report extrinsic rewards, independence (autonomy), intrinsic rewards, and family security as the motivating factors for pursuing an entrepreneurship career. While independence was reported in many studies as the most important factor to explain the career choices of nascent entrepreneurs, wealth creation stands out to be the ultimate driving force for serial entrepreneurs (Chrisman, Chua, and Zahra, 2003; Bailey and Lumpkin, 2021). Amit et al. (2001, p. 119) share “that the desire to attain personal wealth has long been regarded as the foremost motive for entrepreneurship”. This shows the values attached to entrepreneurial career differ between the pre- and post-entry stages of the entrepreneurship career. In a phenomenon of what Ronstadt (1988) calls “The Corridor Principle”, entrepreneurs see the creation of multiple ventures as their goal and eventually extend the duration of their entrepreneurial career.

7. Discussion

A careers perspective of entrepreneurship has come to the attention of researchers especially since the last three decades (Dyer, 1994; Burton et al., 2016). Since then, a growing number of publications on entrepreneurship careers led to various aspects of micro theories regarding the careers of entrepreneurs. For instance, studies report various essential elements of entrepreneurship career theories such as career choice (Pihie and Akmaliah, 2009; Thébaud, 2010; Asante and Affum-Osei, 2019), career socialization (Starr and Fondas, 1992; Scherer, Brodzinski, and Wiebe, 1990); career orientation (Kang and Park, 2017), and career progression (e.g., Douglas and Shepherd, 2002; Pihie and Akmaliah, 2009; Rocha and Van Praag, 2020; Meoli et al., 2020). By and large, such research focuses on providing insights on the formation of entrepreneurial career intentions. Entrepreneurship career aspirations emerge over time and may be predicted from intention and action of individual entrepreneurs (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994). Entrepreneurial career choice includes both intentional and behavioral indicators that indicate early entry into entrepreneurship (Lanero, Vázquez, and Aza, 2016). The entrepreneurship process includes various dimensions and stages from entry to exit (Wennberg et al., 2010; DeTienne, 2010) and research tends to focus on one or few dimensions along the process of entrepreneurship, which makes it challenging to achieve a comprehensive entrepreneurship career theory development (Dyer, 1994). An alternative call for entrepreneurship theory development is using a life-story approach, seeing entrepreneurship as a step along a career trajectory rather than an end (Burton et al., 2016). However, there is a lack of clarity in extant entrepreneurship career theories in terms of the boundaries of acting as an entrepreneur and an employee when the entrepreneur

transitions from employment for pay to self-employment or when he or she directly enters an entrepreneurship career.

This paper found that entrepreneurship career research largely focuses on entrepreneurial intention in connection with a pre-startup stage of new venture creation. This implies that a career perspective of entrepreneurship should trace that individuals assume playing the role of the entrepreneur when they are self-employed or have developed the intentions for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is the process of new firm creation, and thus, the entrepreneurship career path starts when the individual develops intentions to become self-employed. This is supported by Shook et al. (2003) who found that some studies of entrepreneurial intentions measured intentions to start a firm, while other studies measured intentions to become self-employed. Therefore, many individuals engage in entrepreneurship (since they intend or actually start a business), without pursuing an entrepreneurial career (since they have no intention to become self-employed). When individuals develop the intention to become self-employed, some are already business owners while others intend to start businesses in order to become self-employed (Luc et al., 2018; Burke, 2011).

Entrepreneurship is nonlinear, discontinuous, and multidirectional (Groves, Vance, and Choi, 2011; Groves et al., 2008), which makes that any attempts of theory building need to account for inter-career mobilities and dynamics. Several factors make the entrepreneurial career different from an employment career, upon which entrepreneurship career theory building may ponder. With the understanding of the possibilities of duality of careers because of mobilities between being an employee and self-employed or the other way around (Walsh and Stephens, 2022), a career perspective of entrepreneurship should distinguish between careers as employees and careers as entrepreneurs. For instance, hybrid entrepreneurs combine the two different careers, with the intention to become self-employed or become business owner (Luc et al., 2018). They gradually transition towards developing an entrepreneurial career if they tend to be successful or fall back to employment if they fail. As intentional and planned behavior, many entrepreneurs continue learning from their failures and ensure their entrepreneurial career choice (Drost and McGuire, 2011; Galloway and Kelly, 2009).

First, one central difference between entrepreneurial careers and careers as employees in an organization as revealed in this review was the separation of intention and action in the entrepreneurship career. Although less than half of individuals with a preference for entrepreneurship develop entrepreneurial intentions, only half of those who try to start a firm succeeded in starting a firm because of the high rate of dropouts during the entrepreneurial process. On average, a new business survives less than 5 years. More than 50% of those who become self-employed and have their businesses as their main source of income give up during the first two years. Many novice entrepreneurs who fail will never

try again. Only seven countries in the world have more than one dollar billionaire per million people (Sanandaji and Leeson, 2013).

Second, many entrepreneurship careers have a short duration and entrepreneurs often need to adjust themselves to failure experiences when their businesses fail. Career constructing theory offers a model for explaining how people react to changes affecting their work and career position (Savickas, 2005). The theory suggests that people craft their careers by making an effort to position themselves strategically to create space for themselves in society. A person's ability to undertake career transitions is often labeled "career mobility" (Forrier et al., 2009), and the means utilized in order to make such transitions "career capital" (Brown et al., 2020). The high dropout rate during the entrepreneurial process makes these two career resources (Hirschi et al., 2018; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009) particularly relevant for entrepreneurs. Both the protean (Hall, 1996) and boundaryless (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) career concepts require individuals to become more flexible and self-directed in the management of their careers in response to changes in work arrangements (Wiernik and Kostal, 2019). This implies that the entrepreneurship career has a portfolio of (other) careers which are overlapping, and a portfolio of consequential theories of career choice and career adaptation from entry to exit.

Third, the non-linear and discontinuous career models have important implications for entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurship training and education since they acknowledge that individuals often move between different employment statuses. Educators should therefore prepare prospective entrepreneurs for career paths that are non-linear, discontinuous, and multidirectional. Individuals differ in their ability to cope with a discontinuous and changing career. Research has shown that individuals who are proactive, flexible, and open to new experiences, and individuals who acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and have good networking skills, are better at managing non-traditional careers (Eby et al., 2003; Forret and Dougherty, 2001).

This review has shown that although a comprehensive theory of entrepreneurship has been proposed along life stories (Dyer, 1994; Burton et al., 2016), yet less is known about where the entrepreneurship career begins and ends. Scholarly attention is given to how entrepreneurial career intentions develop rather than entrepreneurial career progression and advancement (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). New venture creation is taken as reference point for entry into entrepreneurship or self-employment although the entrepreneurship career includes intra-career mobilities or transitions along stages (Henderson and Robertson, 1999). This paper synthesized five perspectives of themes or topics widely discussed on entrepreneurship as a career. Moreover, extending on a life-story and path dependence perspective of entrepreneurship as a career from entry to exit (Garud and Giuliani, 2013; Rypestøl, 2017; Obschonka, Silbereisen, and Schmitt-Rodermund, 2011), this paper contributes to the attempts of earlier works on delineation of entrepreneurship as a career (Dyer, 1994; Burton et al., 2016).

8. A Way Forward: Modeling the Entrepreneurship Career Path

In this section, I put the themes or clusters identified through both the bibliometric and the literature reviews into perspective. Seeing entrepreneurship as a step along a career path and defining it as the process of a new venture creation or self-employment, I forward a model of the entrepreneurship career path. Practically, entrepreneurship is both a new way of thinking and a new way of doing (Anderson et al., 2012; Loi and Fayolle, 2022). Entrepreneurship research focuses on giving insights on cases of the cognitive behaviors of individual entrepreneurs (e.g., intentions, personality, self-efficacy), the types of startups (novice, serial), multiple cases on how entrepreneurs manage and own firms as individuals or families, and contexts in which entrepreneurial activity takes place (Gartner, 2008; Neck and Greene, 2011; Hjorth, Holt, and Steyaert, 2015).

Research connecting entrepreneurship intention and action predicts that an entrepreneur first should develop an intention of entrepreneurial career before making the decision to become self-employed or create a new business (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Kautonen, Van Gelderen, and Fink, 2015). This view is supported by the theory of planned behavior which reflects the career of the entrepreneur as an “intention” which reveals in a new firm formation (Kautonen et al., 2015; Yang, 2013). Preference for self-employment and entrepreneurial intentions are the starting point of an entrepreneurial process (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Fayolle and Liñán, 2014). However, a new venture creation process itself involves both cognitive and behavioral dimensions that characterize multiple careers and transitions in the process of new venture creation (Gartner, 1985; Forbes, 1999; Baron, 2007). Although a possible career transition from entrepreneurial intention to real entrepreneurial action begins with new business startup, there is a high possibility that those who develop entrepreneurial intent fail to start a business. The entrepreneur’s experience in the path from new firm formation, growth, ownership, and management gives a career meaning to the entrepreneur.

The first step in the entrepreneur’s early-stage career reveals in terms of thinking and intention for new venture formation. Research reports that intentions to become self-employed determine actual entry into self-employment (Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006; Burke, 2011).

The second step in the process of new venturing can be completion of events in the business start-up process, such as meeting legalization and formalization requirements in the form of business registration, marketing, and sales (Alsos and Kolvereid, 1998; Cassar, 2006). Entrepreneurs often do not quickly withdraw from an employment career and act on a part-time basis because of financial constraints (Petrova, 2012; Block and Landgraf, 2016). Part-time entrepreneurs combine several careers and their career as entrepreneurs starts when the owners are no longer employed by others, commit most of their time to their businesses

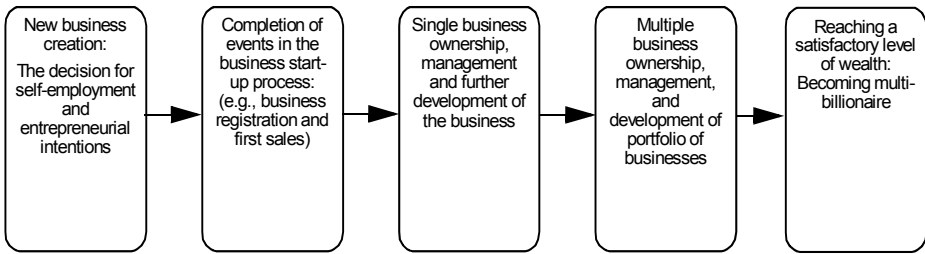
and become self-employed (Mungaray and Ramirez-Urquidy, 2011; Luc et al., 2018).

A third step in the career transition of the entrepreneur may be management and ownership of the business. If business owners remain self-employed, the management and further development of the businesses could also be regarded as part of their entrepreneurial careers (Politis and Landström, 2002). Business owners may also become multiple business owners and managers (Chandrakumara, De Zoysa, and Manawaduge, 2011; Stewart et al., 1999). Management of the portfolio of businesses owned would also constitute parts of an entrepreneurial career (Armstrong and Hird, 2009). Serial entrepreneurs often involve in establishing multiple businesses after their first startup and this gives an experiential learning opportunity to pursue an entrepreneurship career (Plehn-Dujowich, 2010; Parker, 2013; Dabi et al., 2021).

At the last end of the continuum of the entrepreneurship career path, a successful entrepreneur extends his/her business goal to the creation of maximum wealth rather than achieving self-employment (Kuratko, Hornsby, and Naffziger, 1997; Segal, Borgia, and Schoenfeld, 2002). This view is supported by the Social Cognitive Career Theory which theorizes that career intentions and choices are related to self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994). A successful entrepreneur sets the goal of reaching a satisfactory level of wealth in his or her entrepreneurial career. This stage is exceptional because only few entrepreneurs jump to this level and only few have created over 95 percent of the world's wealth (Segal et al., 2002). Yet some entrepreneurs are not satisfied before they become multi-billionaires.

In a nutshell, the argumentation that the entrepreneurship career begins with a new firm creation suggests that individuals who engage in entrepreneurial careers must be associated with one or several legally registered businesses as founders, managers, or owners, have control over at least one business, and receive most of their income from businesses owned or controlled. This creates a path to an entrepreneurship career (Sorgner and Fritsch, 2018). A theory development of the entrepreneurial career path, therefore, should emphasize at least a definition of self-employment through new business creation and explore experiences in the process of business formation that covers legal business activities in all types of businesses, and commitment with or without employees in addition to the controlling entrepreneur (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The Entrepreneurial Career Path



In many cases, the entrepreneur's career path (Figure 4) may start after cross-career mobility from other careers including switches from wage-employment, because individuals' motivations for becoming an entrepreneur may stem from prior experience in an employment career. Similarly, career mobility may also involve intentions for self-employment steps developing into an entrepreneurship career. This intention advances further into more visible steps and goals in terms of new firm creation. The career path designates transitions in a portfolio of careers from developing entrepreneurial intention to actions through new venture formation, ownership, management, and growth (Henderson and Robertson, 2000).

9. Potential for Future Research

Research about entrepreneurship as a career has emerged in a non-holistic, dynamic and disconnected manner. Entrepreneurship as a career involves multiple, nonlinear careers crossing over boundaries of occupational careers. Because of cross-career mobility from employment career to self-employment career or the other way around, setting the boundaries for entrepreneurship-as-a-career is challenging. The most commonly suggested definition of entrepreneurship begins with the creation of a new venture. This gives a clue where the entrepreneur's real career takes off. Research on a careers perspective of entrepreneurship largely focuses on entrepreneurship as "intentional" and "planned action". Future attempts towards a comprehensive theory and future research on entrepreneurship-as-a-career may address the following topics to increase our understanding of the dynamics of the entrepreneurial career path.

9.1. New Venture Creation and Entrepreneurship Career Intention

A large number of scholarly works characterize entrepreneurship careers as "intentional" and a "planned behavior" (Meoli et al., 2020; Belchior and Lyons, 2021) and as a non-reflexive activity (Krueger et al., 2000). Moreover, entrepreneurship intention is directly connected to actions of new venture

creation and self-employment. Research reports that intention predicts action and thus entrepreneur's intention manifests through entrepreneurial career and outcomes (Bird, 2015; Drost and McGuire, 2011). However, the relationship of entrepreneurial intent and a concrete business creation needs to be addressed (Hunjra et al., 2011) for instance, in terms of what causes an entrepreneurial intent and the role of entrepreneurial intent in the transition to business creation. Future research needs to address, for example, how nascent young graduates develop entrepreneurial intention and their tendency to create new ventures as their career choice.

9.2. Entrepreneurship Career and the Role of Ownership and Management

Another question that needs to be addressed is the role of property rights and ownership in entrepreneurship careers. While entrepreneurship leads to the path of business ownership (Cooper and Dunkelberg, 1986; Dyer Jr and Handler, 1994), and possibly also the path of 'serial entrepreneurship' if (former) business owners create new ventures (Plehn- Dujowich, 2010), future studies need to address whether control of a resource as an owner or earning income from the payroll of the business helps or limits sustaining an entrepreneurship career. This may be extended further to other forms of ownership like in family businesses where ownership is collective and has a sense of socio-emotional logic rather than a mere economic motive (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2013; Newbert and Craig, 2017).

9.3. Entrepreneurial Career and Goals

An entrepreneurship career entails creating and growing wealth, and ownership is a crucial aspect of this process (Wright, 2001). Entrepreneurs attach different goals to their careers including self-employment (Segal, Borgia, and Schoenfeld, 2002; Culbertson, Smith, and Leiva, 2011), employment creation for others (Kuratko, Hornsby, and Naffziger, 1997), and creation of maximum wealth (Katz, 1995). Studying the integration of the entrepreneurship career and outcome goals specific to self-employment and wealth creation helps address what goals keep the momentum of an entrepreneurship career.

9.4. Entrepreneurial Human Capital Development

As a planned behavior, entrepreneurship career development signifies preparations in advance in terms of skills and knowledge for boosting entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the entrepreneurs (St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015).

The non-linear and discontinuous career models have important implications for entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurship training and education since they acknowledge that individuals often move between different employment statuses. Educators should therefore prepare prospective entrepreneurs for career paths that are non-linear, discontinuous, and multidirectional. Individuals differ in their ability to cope with a discontinuous and changing career. Research has shown that individuals who are proactive, flexible, open to new experiences, and who acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and have good networking skills are better at managing non-traditional careers (Eby et al., 2003; Forret and Dougherty, 2001). Future studies on the role of education, mentorship, and training for preparations of the youth for protean, nonlinear and boundaryless entrepreneurial career choices may be of interest to policy makers and the academia. The protean/boundaryless career concepts imply that people take the self-initiative of becoming more self-directed and flexible in managing their careers in response to societal shifts in work arrangements (Wiernik and Kostal, 2019). Education and training should improve people's resilience to dynamics in the workplace where one way of managing such dynamics could be entry into business as a career.

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