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PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS THROUGH CREATIVE BEHAVIORS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES: A CASE STUDY ON WORKPLACE INTERNS IN TAIWANESE FRANCHISES

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship, a critical trend in the global economic development, is inseparable from the new opportunities, products, services, procedures, technologies, and organizations generated through creative behaviors. Because high entrepreneurial intentions promote initial entrepreneurial behaviors, fostering the entrepreneurial intentions of young people is crucial. Although many worldwide universities are currently promoting entrepreneurship courses, it is critical that these courses correspond with actual workplace experiences to effectively enable students to develop and accumulate creative and entrepreneurial behaviors, competencies, and intentions. In this study, a questionnaire survey based on self-perception theory was administered to interns working in franchises in Taiwan. According to a structural equation analysis, creative behaviors (i.e., idea generation, promotion, and realization) improved entrepreneurial competencies, which in turn significantly elevated entrepreneurial intentions. A workplace internship model was established to encourage the interns to apply their creative behaviors to enhance their entrepreneurial competencies and intentions, thereby supplementing the gap in the relationship between creative behaviors and entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, suggestions and implications are proposed for applying creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies to raise entrepreneurial intentions.

KEYWORDS

creative behavior, entrepreneurial competency, entrepreneurial intention.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in global economic development (Pfeifer, Šarlija, & Sušac, 2014). In response to rapidly changing and intensely competitive business environments, enterprises have established creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial activities to continually enhance business performance (Prahalad & Hamel, 1994). The Taiwanese economic system is primarily based on small and medium enterprises (Small and Medium Enterprise Administration, 2014), earning Taiwan the nickname "the Boss Island" (Shieh, 1992). Previous studies have indicated that high entrepreneurial intentions promote actual initial entrepreneurship (Pfeifer et al., 2014). Therefore, fostering entrepreneurial intentions through creative and innovative activities is crucial. Currently, because technical and vocational education (TVE) is closely related to economic development and the future development of enterprises, schools have established cooperative ventures with enterprises on industry-oriented implementation and internship courses in addition to improving the job opportunities of students through practical empowerment, innovation, and entrepreneurship training. Such ventures are aimed at developing competency-oriented core professional abilities, practical training courses, and job ethics to strengthen the employability, creativity, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial competencies of students (Ministry of Education, 2013; Liu, Xu, & Weitz, 2011). Practical training and internships are critical course components that provide an interactive platform for schools, enterprises, and students. Employers emphasize internships because of the numerous benefits they provide (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010), including easier professional talent recruitment and training, as well as the intangible development of team creativity, creative behaviors, and entrepreneurial spirit, and entrepreneurial competencies in students (Chang, Yeh, & Tien, 2014; Yeh & Hsiang, 2014; Yeh, 2011).

In the current context of entrepreneurship education, because the work arrangements for students influence their innovative behaviors, existing entrepreneurship education is concerned with fostering creative skills and behaviors that can be applied in job practices, education, and environments supporting innovation (Gundry, Ofstein, & Kickul, 2014). Internships must provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their innovativeness. During an internship, students must be encouraged to provide additional input and innovation. Through generating new ideas, students must be able to apply improvements in work operations to respond to customer needs and solve problems creatively (Katz-Buonincontro & Ghosh, 2014). Thus, internship enterprises can invest more in creativity and innovation than other enterprises can (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009), and they can also promote the entrepreneurial competencies of students. Additionally, through their external behaviors in workplace internships, students can determine whether they are truly interested in their respective fields of study (Chang et al., 2014) and evaluate their own entrepreneurial intentions.

Entrepreneurs of retail businesses continue to constitute the largest group of entrepreneurs in Taiwan (Small and Medium Enterprise Administration, 2014). Developing the entrepreneurial competencies and intentions of students has become increasingly crucial for the future development of retail businesses. New challenges and developmental trends have emerged in retail and franchise businesses worldwide, but few studies on workplace internship experiences have investigated the changes in innovative and entrepreneurial behaviors or the competencies and intentions of interns. Therefore, the concept of situational learning has been incorporated into increasingly more studies on innovation and entrepreneurship (Seuneke, Lans, & Wiskerke, 2013). Following the rapid expansion of workplace internship systems, further exploring student behaviors in generating, promoting, and realizing ideas, along with their entrepreneurial competencies and intentions, is thus necessary.

LITERATURE REVIEW**SELF-PERCEPTION THEORY**

Self-perception theory posits that attitudes toward a certain event facilitate recalling past behaviors related to that event, through which people deduce their attitudes regarding the event at that time. Specifically, attitudes are used to rationalize a person's own behavior toward an event after it has occurred rather than to predict the behavior (Domagalski, 1999; Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). This theory has been supported by numerous empirical studies. If a person lacks experience or has not considered a certain attitude, then he or she tends to deduce their attitude according to their behaviors; when he or she holds the attitude for an extended period and is aware of it, then the person's behaviors are likely to be influenced by their attitude (Domagalski, 1999; Martin et al., 1998).

In the present study, self-perception theory was adopted to investigate how interns self-assess their entrepreneurial intentions according to the creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies they perceive during their workplace internships. To fulfill the prerequisites of the theoretical structure (Domagalski, 1999; Martin, Knopoff, Beckman, 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993), a control condition was implemented as follows: (a) before the internships, the interns were verified as having no clear or consistent entrepreneurial motivations, ideas, or intentions; (b) the entrepreneurial motivations, ideas, or intentions of the interns were not obviously generated out of external coercion (e.g., by managers or family members); (c) the interns exhibited inadequate or ambiguous understanding of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, resources, and practices; and (d) the interns lacked external feedback sources for the entrepreneurship, and their self-perceptions of their own attitudes were primarily determined through their external behaviors and the situations in which such behaviors were displayed.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG IDEA GENERATION, PROMOTION, AND REALIZATION, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES AND INTENTIONS

IDEA GENERATION, PROMOTION, AND REALIZATION VERSUS ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES: Existing creative behaviors related to the workplace comprise a complex series of three phases: idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization (Scott & Bruce, 1994). The first phase of a creative behavior, idea generation, involves a person creating an innovative idea by searching for new working methods, technologies, and tools, and then formulating a unique solution to a problem (Janssen, 2000, 2004). The second phase, idea promotion, requires innovative people to establish work group cooperation and support and search for a resource supply for their ideas and intentions (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Specifically, idea promotion involves mobilizing support and acknowledgement for innovative ideas, as well as inspiring vital group members to develop the ideas (Janssen, 2000, 2004). In the third phase, idea realization, innovation models are constructed, such as those that can be touched or experienced, diffused, mass-produced, turned to productive use, or institutionalized, to accomplish creativity-based objectives. In other words, innovative work behaviors can be experienced, applied, and used in a job role, group, or innovative organizational model, and are thereby realized (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Therefore, when innovative ideas are converted to practice, applied in a work environment, and the consequent benefits of the idea have been evaluated, such behaviors can have considered as a demonstration of creativity (Janssen, 2000, 2004).

Throughout these three phases, creative behaviors are expressed in the following six processes: (a) finding new technologies, processes, techniques, and product ideas; (b) generating creative ideas; (c) presenting and promoting new ideas; (d) when necessary, establishing investigation groups and acquiring funds to realize new ideas; (e) developing appropriate plans and work schedules to realize new ideas; and (f) demonstrating innovativeness (Scott & Bruce, 1994). However, not everyone can express these creative behaviors; although some people can demonstrate all of them, others may manifest only one or a few of them (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Accordingly, the three distinct creative behaviors (i.e., idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization) are inter-correlated. According to this discussion, the following three hypotheses were proposed:

H₁: Idea generation positively correlates with idea promotion.

H₂: Idea generation positively correlates with idea realization.

H₃: Idea promotion positively correlates with idea realization.

This study investigated the relationship between various creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies and intentions. Entrepreneurial competencies are individual behaviors that are either inherited from birth or learned from the environment and can be considered capabilities, personality traits, and personal behaviors (Liñán, Rodríguez-Cohard, & Rueda-Cantucho, 2011; Liñán, Urbano, & Guerrero, 2011). Entrepreneurial competencies comprise the following seven dimensions: (a) opportunity recognition (Timmons, 1994); (b) the combination of domain-related skills, creativity-related skills, and job motives (Amabile, 1997); (c) problem-solving (Liñán et al., 2011); (d) leadership (Dafna, 2008); (e) communication skills (Liñán et al., 2011); (f) development of new products and services (Schumpeter, 1934); (g) networking and establishing professional contacts (Liñán et al., 2011). These factors also involve the concepts of creative behavior (Janssen, 2000).

Regarding the work environment, individual creative behaviors are the foundation of high-performance organizations; not only are they critical for accumulating intangible human resources for enterprises, but they are also crucial for improving organizational efficiency and competitiveness (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). In other words, when people display creative behaviors in the workplace, they demonstrate more involvement in their work and greater ability in developing new ideas. Through the generation of new ideas, improved working methods can be applied to respond to customer needs. Thus, workflow can be promoted and more creativity and innovation can be input into an organization (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). Compared with typical work outcomes, innovative behaviors require a more adventurous spirit, open-mindedness, and creativity in generating ideas and realizing novel and feasible ideas (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Timmons (1994) maintained that a successful entrepreneur must possess three abilities (i.e., creativity, communication skills, and leadership) and use them to foster entrepreneurial teams, discover entrepreneurial opportunities, and develop resources for entrepreneurship. A successful entrepreneur is typically a considerably creative person, which enables them to discover entrepreneurial opportunities before other people do by observing changes in social and population structures, consumer behaviors, technologies, and industrial structures (Timmons, 1994). Specifically, Hansen et al. (2011) reported that assessing an innovative business involves using innovative, adventurous, positive, and active behaviors as the standards of assessment. Janssen (2000) maintained that generating, promoting, and realizing new ideas must be aimed at applying such ideas in job roles, groups, and throughout an entire organization. When organizational members understand new ideas (novel or adopted) or solutions they have formulated, they typically promote them and seek various resources for support to develop an application model for the organization according to the use and benefits derived from the final products and services; such members establish creative behaviors that facilitate innovation (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). On-the-job learning is essential in establishing professional knowledge and a basis for fostering innovative behaviors (Amabile, 1998). Through this learning process, people develop not only their potential for creating new working methods, but also promote work behaviors that enable realizing new ideas such as searching for new technologies, processes, and skills or generating new ideas (Yeh, 2011; Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). These behavioral characteristics facilitate the development and expression of entrepreneurial competencies. Accordingly, the following three hypotheses were formulated:

H₄: Idea generation promotes entrepreneurial competencies.

H₅: Idea promotion promotes entrepreneurial competencies.

H₆: Idea realization promotes entrepreneurial competencies.

ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES VERSUS ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: Entrepreneurial intentions refer to the extent of desire people have regarding their choice of entrepreneurship (Peng, Lu, & Kang, 2012; Thompson, 2009). Recent studies have implied that entrepreneurial intentions are a type of mental orientation, such as desires, wishes, and hopes, which affect a person's choice of entrepreneurship (Peng et al., 2012). Thompson (2009) indicated that entrepreneurial intentions exhibit several orientations (e.g., broad interests and concrete actions that are at an advanced stage) that are related to entrepreneurial behaviors. Entrepreneurial intentions are not simply yes-no questions; they involve an extremely narrow or broad range of assessments on whether a person expresses the intent to promote plans and spend time learning (Thompson, 2009). Therefore, through combining the viewpoints of Thompson (2009) and Peng et al. (2012), the present study defined entrepreneurial intentions as the extent of desire that a person has regarding his or her choice of entrepreneurship.

Alvarez and Busenitz (2001) maintained that to manage sustainable entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs must possess adequate abilities, attitudes, and knowledge—particularly creativity and the ability to recognize opportunities—and acquire the basic resources and opportunities required for the initial phases of entrepreneurship. According to previous studies, people who desire to perform certain behaviors or tasks express higher energy and motivation compared with people

who have no such desire. When an entrepreneur attains a certain level of ability, he or she attempts to understand and acquire the basic resources and opportunities required for the initial phases of entrepreneurship (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Realizing an entrepreneurship requires not only entrepreneurial competencies, but also persistence, which is particularly critical because it reflects whether a person has consistent basic values, interests, and interests in other people or groups, and it is concerned with whether people have direct experience with persistence. If a person has adequate experience and a consistently positive attitude, then his or her behaviors are more likely to correlate with their attitudes (Domagalski, 1999; Martin et al., 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

Because workplace internships are a type of experiential learning, the ongoing learning processes interns or learners undergo are perceived experiences. Learners commit themselves to a reflective experience and associate their current learning experiences with their past, present, and future. Such experiences have a unique personal meaning to learners; specifically, the processes and outcomes of learning are of particular importance to learners, and the processes concern the entire self, including the body, cognitions, feelings, and actions. Numerous abilities correlate significantly with specific learning outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2009). In other words, the entrepreneurial competencies that interns develop during their internship assist them in expressing their entrepreneurial intentions. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₁: Entrepreneurial competencies promote entrepreneurial intentions.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

A questionnaire survey was conducted on fourth-year students of vocational colleges or universities of technology in Taiwan who had completed a minimum of 6 months' internship. The participants completed courses on creativity, entrepreneurial education, communication management, and leadership before commencing their internships, which were primarily offered by service enterprises such as retail and franchise businesses and logistics companies. The internship sites were located at the retail outlets, factories, and logistics plants of franchise companies, and the tasks included retail service, warehouse management, inventory management, logistics management, merchandising, store management, ordering, and cashier work. These tasks involved the competencies the interns would require to become entrepreneurial managers of franchise businesses in the future. Twenty universities of science and technology as well as vocational and technological colleges were randomly selected, and through the internship centers and departments providing internship courses at these schools, 50 interns were randomly selected to be interviewed individually by two internship instructors before commencing their internships. Subsequently, the instructors jointly evaluated whether the selected participants met the following four conditions: (a) the participants did not possess any clear entrepreneurial motives, thoughts, or intentions before their internships began; (b) the participants' motives, thoughts, or intentions were not clearly generated by external pressures such as enterprise managers or family members; (c) the participants' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, resources, and processes were insufficient or ambiguous; and (d) the participants lacked external feedback sources regarding entrepreneurship. Any intern who did not fulfill any of these conditions was removed from the sample and another intern was randomly selected. During the internships, the instructors regularly visited and interviewed the interns and enterprise managers to understand and confirm that the interns' conditions and tasks were consistent with the original plans. A total of 1,000 questionnaires were randomly distributed to interns who had completed at least 6 months of their internship. Among the 355 questionnaires that were returned, 17 were invalid and removed, leaving 338 valid questionnaires, which constituted a valid response rate of 33.8%.

MEASUREMENT

To formulate the initial scalar question items, we first defined idea generation, idea promotion, idea realization, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions in the workplace internships, and then collected and organized relevant literature and adapted items from existing scales. To derive the status of workplace internships in Taiwan, interviews were conducted to add, revise, and generalize critical items to supplement the literature. The interviews were conducted by the managers of internship enterprises concurrently cooperating with the universities and science and technology. The managers were experienced in internship planning, intern training, and work supervision, and they planned to interview 12 interns. The items were developed and revised according to the guidelines that HinKin (1998) proposed for shortening items by using simple and positive sentences and addressing one topic with a given item. The post-interview potential items were then examined and revised by two internship managers and an internship mentor to clarify the items for subsequent respondents and to ensure that each item addressed only one question. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses, with values ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Subsequently, the newly added and revised potential and multiple items derived from extant scales and the interview data were organized to create the initial scale. A content validity analysis was conducted on the initial constructs. The managers and mentor discussed the items individually to determine whether they reflected the original concepts and were semantically clear; those that were semantically confusing, repetitive, or inconsistent with the original concepts were removed or revised. The revised items were then reviewed and corrected by five domain experts who had doctorates, years of practical experience with entrepreneurship, a minimum of 2 years of internship mentoring experience, and were specialists in entrepreneurial education. From the discussion among the five experts, the following scales were derived.

IDEA GENERATION: The idea generation behavioral scale (three items) was based on the scale by Janssen (2000, 2004) and was concerned with the cognition of the interns regarding their behaviors related to generating new ideas, searching for new working methods, technologies, or tools, and forming original solutions during internships. An example of the items developed is, "During the internship, I constantly created new solutions to solve difficult problems." All three items were retained after the interviews and a pretest. Higher scores indicated that the interns were more capable of generating new ideas. This scale attained a Cronbach's α of .83.

IDEA PROMOTION: The idea promotion behavioral scale (three items) for evaluating the interns' behaviors related to mobilizing support, acquiring others' acknowledgement, and motivating organizational members to develop innovative ideas was also based on a scale developed by Janssen (2000, 2004). An example of the items developed is, "During the internship, I actively sought for support from the manager and colleagues regarding my innovative ideas." All the three items were retained after the interviews and a pretest. Higher total scores indicated that the interns were more capable of promoting their ideas. This scale attained a Cronbach's α of .85.

IDEA REALIZATION: The idea realization behavioral scale (three items) was also based on the scale developed by Janssen (2000, 2004). The items measured the interns' ability to apply innovative ideas in practice, introduce new ideas to the work environment, and evaluate the benefits of their ideas. An example of the items developed is as follows, "During the internship, I applied the innovative ideas into practices." All three items were retained after the interviews and a pretest. Higher total scores indicated a greater ability in realizing ideas. The scale attained a Cronbach's α of .82.

ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES: The entrepreneurial competency scale by Liñán et al. (2011) was adapted in this study and reflects the influence of the students' workplace internship experience on their individual behavior. The scale was used to evaluate the interns' professional abilities that they would need after completing their internships such as applying professional abilities in practice, possessing a basic understanding on workflow, and learning by doing. Initially, the scale contained six items; however, after a pretest, three items were eliminated. The remaining three items included "After completing the internship, I clearly understand the knowledge required for entrepreneurship," and "After completing the internship, I am now capable of planning for entrepreneurship." Higher total scores indicated that the interns demonstrated a higher level of entrepreneurial competence. The scale attained a Cronbach's α of .81.

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: The entrepreneurial intention scale in this study was adapted from Thompson (2009). This scale was used to measure the interns' attitudes and desire regarding their choice of entrepreneurship. After a pretest, one item was eliminated. The remaining five items included "After completing this internship, I am determined to start a business," and "After this internship, I am committed to establishing and managing a company." Higher total scores indicated a higher level of entrepreneurial intentions. This scale also attained a Cronbach's α of .89.

To avoid common method variance, each set of questionnaires was distributed to the selected interns at two time points: the first time point was 2 weeks prior to the end of the internship period (creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies were examined), and the second time point was 1 week after the internship was completed (entrepreneurial intentions were examined). For the data analysis, the data returned by the interns were used as the data source for exploring the interns' creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions for the subsequent hypothesis verification. Thus, the bias caused by the same interns filling out the data of the independent and dependent variables simultaneously at the same time point was avoided. AMOS.60 was

employed to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis on the questionnaire data, and SPSS.16 was employed to confirm the construct validity and test the overall research model and hypotheses (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

DATA ANALYSIS

RELIABILITY, VALIDITY, AND CORRELATIONAL ANALYSES

The Cronbach’s α values were above .80 for all of the scales, and the factor loadings were above 0.70 for all of the retained items, indicating that the scales applied in this study attained satisfactory reliability and validity. Table 1 lists the reliability and validity analysis results.

TABLE 1: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ANALYSIS RESULTS

Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach’s α
Idea Generation	Q1	.83***	.83
	Q2	.71***	
	Q3	.75***	
Idea Promotion	Q4	.81***	.85
	Q5	.87***	
	Q6	.73***	
Idea Realization	Q7	.88***	.82
	Q8	.87***	
	Q9	.83***	
Entrepreneurial Competencies	Q10	.75***	.81
	Q11	.87***	
	Q12	.83***	
Entrepreneurial Intention	Q13	.80***	.89
	Q14	.80***	
	Q15	.80***	
	Q16	.91***	
	Q17	.80***	

Note. *** $P < .001$

According to the correlation analysis results (Table 2), idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization were significantly correlated with entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial competencies correlated more significantly with entrepreneurial intentions than did either idea generation, idea promotion, or idea realization.

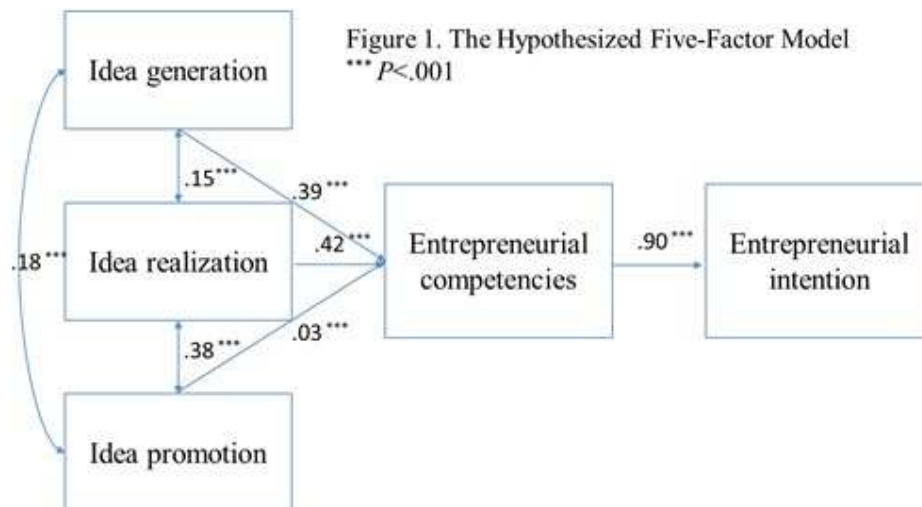
TABLE 2: CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

Variables	Idea Generation	Idea Realization	Idea Promotion	Entrepreneurial Competencies	Entrepreneurial Intention
Idea Generation	1				
Idea Realization	.409**	1			
Idea Promotion	.455**	.775**	1		
Entrepreneurial Competencies	.237**	.362**	.306**	1	
Entrepreneurial Intention	.271**	.331**	.310**	.680**	1

Note. ** $p < .005$

OVERALL CONCEPT MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS VERIFICATION

Figure 1 shows the overall structural model goodness-of-fit indices ($\chi^2 = 276.35$; $df = 112$; $\chi^2/df = 2.467$). The model goodness-of-fit results are as follows: GFI = .84; AGFI = .86; NFI = .90; IFI = .87; CFI = .87, root mean square error of approximation = .05; $p < .001$. According to the model verification standard established by Segars and Grover (1993), the research results indicate that the overall model goodness-of-fit was acceptable. In other, the three types of creative behaviors were inter-correlated. In particular, the correlation between idea realization and idea promotion ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) was higher than those between idea generation and idea promotion ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$) and between idea generation and idea realization ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H₁, H₂ and H₃ are supported. The hypothesis verification revealed that idea generation ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$), idea promotion ($\beta = .03$, $p < .001$), and idea realization ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) positively influenced entrepreneurial competencies; therefore, H₄, H₅ and H₆ are supported. Additionally, the effect of idea realization on enhancing entrepreneurial competencies was significantly higher than those of idea generation and promotion. And entrepreneurial competencies have a significantly positive influence on entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = .90$, $p < .001$), thus supporting H₇.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the perspective of self-perception theory, this study explored the environmental context of internship enterprises. Examining the idea generation, promotion, and realization behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies of interns in a 6-month retail internship revealed that all three types of creative behavior positively influenced their entrepreneurial competencies. In particular, idea realization had the most significant effect in enhancing their entrepreneurial competencies. In internship work environments, when interns encounter difficult problems, they seek acknowledgement and acceptance from managers and colleagues for the new solutions they formulate, and these innovative solutions are applied in practices and introduced in the internship workplace. Creative internship behaviors similar to this equip interns with entrepreneurial knowledge on work processes through practical learning and application. According to previous studies on applying the learning model to on-the-job training, learning outcomes can be categorized into verbal information, intellectual skills, motor skills, attitudes, and cognitive strategies (Robbins & Judge, 2009). In other words, the learning outcomes of workplace internships and entrepreneurship involve behaviors and attitudes that, through interacting with environmental changes, are critical to the prerequisites of entrepreneurship. Creative and innovative behaviors and activities are the basis of entrepreneurship (Gundry et al., 2014). When interns prepare to start their own businesses, they can discover opportunities for success through applying the creative behaviors they learn through their internship experience. Therefore, the creative behaviors of interns enhance their entrepreneurial competencies.

This study confirmed that entrepreneurial competencies had a considerable effect in promoting entrepreneurial intentions. When the interns learned entrepreneurial competencies, such as entrepreneurship knowledge, solve problems related to work and daily living and retail management in their internships, they earned an advantage over other first-time entrepreneurs for establishing and managing their own companies in the future. Interns must reflect on and apply their own experiences for self-understanding and self-evaluation of their career needs, abilities, resources, and work objectives (Domagalski, 1999; Martin et al., 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Therefore, entrepreneurial competencies promote entrepreneurial intentions.

The model proposed in the present study verifies the benefits that workplace internships provide in developing students' entrepreneurial intentions and may provide a reference for franchise managers and entrepreneurship educators on encouraging and managing the entrepreneurial development of interns. According to previous studies on the relationship of entrepreneurial competence and idea generation, promotion, and realization behaviors, as well as entrepreneurial intentions, idea promotion and realization are centered on creativity, which is the manifestation of novel and practicable ideas (Janssen, 2000, 2004). Creative connections generate new opportunities for developing new products, services, procedures, technologies, and organizations, which are at the core of entrepreneurship (Gundry et al., 2014). This is because individuals and their organizations generate new ideas through interacting, thereby providing opportunities for entrepreneurial success. Such is the value derived from creative innovation (Gundry et al., 2014; Ward, 2004). When individuals and groups introduce new products and procedures to their organizations, they attempt to project benefits for the company or its shareholders. This is a pattern of innovative behavior. Specifically, behavioral activities related to innovations are crucial for the competitiveness of new enterprises (Gundry et al., 2014). Furthermore, a person's entrepreneurial activities are influenced by his or her social experiences, personal interests, competencies, and personal traits. Individual competencies are generally related to a person's desired occupational intentions such as their ambition to become an entrepreneur. Therefore, providing interns with an opportunity to express their creative behaviors through workplace internships enhances their entrepreneurial competencies and thereby promotes their entrepreneurial intentions.

According to the results of this study, we propose three suggestions. First, regarding internship systems and entrepreneurship education (including coursework), school authorities must actively establish close and systemized academic-industrial intern partnership models with enterprises to strengthen the creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship training of interns, and they must maximize the number of hours they are offered for their workplace internships. For example, students must be able to use technologies or instruments to discover new work methods, create unique solutions to problems, promote innovative ideas together with managers and colleagues, apply the ideas they develop in practice by introducing them into the workplace, learn how to assess the effectiveness of their innovative ideas, and acquire knowledge on and develop plans for entrepreneurship. Thus, interns can learn and apply creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies, and the quality of their internships can be focused on developing their creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial competencies. Second, for existing academic-industrial intern partnerships, school authorities can provide competency-oriented internship experiences for students by formulating a comprehensive internship outcome evaluation system. In such a system, internship outcome indices should be implemented to evaluate the interns' idea generation, idea promotion, idea realization, and entrepreneurial competencies, and to assess the effectiveness with which interns perform tasks assigned by the enterprises, which would facilitate further developing their creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies. Finally, enterprises must provide a friendly on-the-job learning environment; for all the dimensions, such as service and product development, group cooperation, interpersonal interactions, work environment, task design, and student self-achievement, creative and innovative work atmospheres must be actualized.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

Internships provide students with an opportunity to evaluate their career development status, understand whether they are suitable or interested in certain professions, and experience the complexity and pressure of the workplace, thereby improving their competitiveness and innovative capacity (Beggs, Ross, & Goodwin, 2008). Student interns can experience working in multiple departments to acquire actual experience and additional opportunities to learn from mentors. In other words, internships enable students to recognize business opportunities, which can promote their entrepreneurial intentions (Chang, et al., 2014). According to self-perception theory, people's behaviors affect their attitudes; people tend to assess their own attitudes according to their behaviors and the environment in which such behaviors are exhibited. Generally, students are unclear about their entrepreneurial intentions when they first start working in an actual workplace. Enterprise internships improve the perceived entrepreneurial competencies of individuals and teams, and thereby provide an opportunity for them to assess their entrepreneurial intentions. Regarding the entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors of student interns, most current studies adopt the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the intention-based models of social cognitive career theory (Pfeifer et al., 2014); for entrepreneurial competencies, most studies adopt experiential learning theory (Katz-Buonincontro & Ghosh, 2014). However, these viewpoints are based solely on cognitions and attitude-behavior; they do not explain the actuating effect that the behaviors and abilities of interns have on their entrepreneurial intentions. Because enterprise and entrepreneurial work environments are socially dynamic environments, studies on entrepreneurship should incorporate multiple theoretical perspectives (Seuneke et al., 2013). Moreover, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship are interrelated. In the present study, self-perception theory was adopted to construct a structural model of workplace internship behaviors and attitudes. The proposed model provides a basis for exploring the actuating effect of the creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies on the entrepreneurial intentions of student interns. In addition, it supplements research on the relationship between creative behaviors and entrepreneurial intentions, and expands the application of the theory to workplace internships. These were the vital theoretical contributions of this study. This study also provides a reference for future studies on the development of entrepreneurship teaching and learning, internship innovation, and the manifestation of creative and innovative behaviors, as well as the theoretical structures underlying entrepreneurship education for TVE services.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Reinforce creative behaviors, basic entrepreneurial abilities, and training talent: Development of TVE services has bottlenecked on teaching designs and student learning. When entering the workplace, students must effectively relearn critical creative and innovative abilities and behaviors emphasized by enterprises through cooperation and adaptation. This reveals a gap between school education and employment regarding the expression of creativity and development of the creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions of students. The results of this study may also serve as a reference to assist practitioners in designing personnel training activities in order to more effectively satisfy student needs, improve the quality of their input and learning outcomes, and assist them in applying their creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial abilities in the workplace, all of which benefit their creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial performance, both individually and in group work.

Construct workplace internship models for improving entrepreneurial competencies and intentions: Typically, university graduates from developing countries have stronger entrepreneurial intentions compared with those from developed countries. However, workplace internships have been practiced for years and have

enabled students to develop specialized job skills before graduation (Liu et al., 2011). However, few graduates in Taiwan have the opportunity to apply the entrepreneurial intentions and competencies they develop in their internships. Research on workplace internship outcomes have typically focused on work competencies, employment achievements, and role transformation (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Liu et al., 2011). To investigate the effectiveness of workplace internships in improving the entrepreneurial intentions of students, a broader range of perspectives must be adopted to explore other predispositions (Karimi et al., 2014) such as at the level of enterprises (e.g., internship environment conditions, social support) (Gamboa, Paixão, & de Jesus, 2013) and characteristics of students (e.g., attitudes, emotions, abilities, behaviors) (Chen & Chen, 2011; Lewis, 2013; Liu et al., 2011). Thus, to understand students' entrepreneurial intentions, franchise interns retrace their behaviors from their internship, deduce their entrepreneurial competencies according to these behaviors, and finally consider their entrepreneurial intentions. Internships in franchise and retail businesses generate diverse synergies. First, students gain real-world experience from their internships such as applying and strengthening their specialized job skills and increasing their confidence, developing their work values and interests, reevaluating their job options, providing work experience, establishing professional interpersonal networks, and reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses. Second, students have more job opportunities after graduation and are more able to adapt to the expectations of their first jobs. Third, students get to experience higher-level career development from their internships. Numerous franchise and retail stores have been effective in encouraging young people to start their own businesses through creative development and innovative management. Therefore, research on entrepreneurial intentions must focus on the creative behaviors of interns during their workplace internships and explore the entrepreneurial behaviors and open-thinking methods that enable interns to engage in the production, planning, and promotion of creativity in the workplace, as well as how they accumulate resources to realize their creative ideas (Yeh, 2011; Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). Thus, the basic competencies and intentions for entrepreneurship can be developed, and creativity-oriented workplace internship models that benefit the entrepreneurial competencies and intentions of students can be established through applying self-concept theory.

Evaluate external creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions: Recent sales internships provided by retail and franchise enterprise units involve five core disciplinary skills related to sales abilities (i.e., communication skills, organizational skills, teamwork and leadership skills, computer skills, and marketing and sales skills) and five experiential conditions (i.e., positive attitudes, work ethics, professionalism, creativity, and industry and field knowledge) (Swanson & Tomkovic, 2012). Previous studies on assessing franchise internship outcomes have typically focused on cognitions, emotions, competencies, and attitudes; although this research stream stresses developing the creativity of interns, few related studies have examined specific creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies. Therefore, through observing internship work environments, we revealed the practical outcomes of the creative behaviors and entrepreneurial competencies of interns by constructing a workplace internship model of such behaviors and competencies, thereby expanding the implications of internship outcome assessments and filling a research gap in international research.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Several limitations were encountered while conducting this study. First, we adopted a cross-sectional research design and conducted a questionnaire survey on students only after they had completed their internships; however, internship tasks of the various phases and the changes in the job competencies after experiential learning were not investigated. Future studies should consider adopting a longitudinal qualitative or an experimental research with control designs to further examine the learning content involved in developing the creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions of intern students in various workplace settings, as well as the behavioral and psychological changes students experience during their internships. Thus, the perceptions students have regarding their creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial behaviors can be clarified. Second, we sampled only franchise businesses in Taiwan as the workplace internship environment, and the participants were students in the universities of science and technology. Consequently, our results are only applicable to TVE services and franchise businesses but not to other education services, enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and public sectors. Future studies should consider exploring the relationship among creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions in the internship tasks and on-the-job training in other industries. Third, interns can be assigned to temporary, part-time, or full-time internship positions; however, the context of this research was limited to full-time positions. Future studies should consider focusing on how the experiential quality of these internships influences the creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions of interns according to the hours they work. Fourth, we focused on students' individual-level self-assessments to evaluate the job competencies that they developed in their internships, in addition to their internship goals and course design set by their schools and workplaces. Such a single-level self-assessment method is inadequate for comprehensively evaluating the research objective of this study from other perspectives. Future studies should involve a higher group and higher organizational levels in their investigation. Data can be collected through adopting a cross-level research design, in which mentors and enterprise managers can be requested to conduct such assessments to reduce common-method variance. Moreover, this approach would enable the effects of internships on creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions to be examined from various perspectives. Finally, this study included only single-level variables related to five workplace internships in the research structure. Other variables related to entrepreneurial intentions or mediators and moderators of creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions (e.g., other procedural variables, mentor-related variables, external or internal instigation, and demographic) were not considered in the structure. Future studies should consider including other research variables related to internships, such as experiential quality and the type of tasks, to investigate the effects of these variables on creative behaviors, entrepreneurial competencies, and entrepreneurial intentions.

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