Passion and “parenting style”: Dualistic influences of passion on entrepreneurial behaviors of employees

Passion has been identified as a core characteristic of entrepreneurial behavior, a phenomenon deemed necessary for individuals to engage and persist in the risky and stressful pursuit of entrepreneurship (Bird, 1989; Smilor, 1997). Entrepreneurship research has mostly looked at how the entrepreneurs’ passion affects the person on the entrepreneur himself/herself - their thinking (Cardon et al., 2009; Thorgren & Wincent, 2013) or behavior (Klaukien et al., 2013; Murnieks et al., 2014). However, we do not know much about how passion of the entrepreneur is being transferred outside to employees and how it affects them.

Employees have a critical importance for the success of new venture. Especially, employee proactive behaviour has been identifies as an important contributor to venture success. Employee proactive behaviour lead to sales performance (Crant, 1995), entrepreneurial behaviors (Becherer & Maurer, 1999), individual innovation (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001), and small-firm innovation (Kickul & Gundry, 2002). The fast pace of internal developments, as well as the decentralized organizational structures present in young ventures increase the need for employees to use their initiative and be self-starting (Campbell, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001). Out of these reasons, proactive behaviour of employees is of critical importance for new ventures.

Because employees interact intensively with the entrepreneur in the early stages of the venture, their attitudes and behaviours are highly likely to be influenced by the founder’s entrepreneurial passion. This paper aim to understand how and through which mechanisms the passion of the entrepreneurs influences employees’ proactive behaviours.
In understanding this transfer, we use a parenthood metaphor and look at entrepreneurs as parents. Indeed, entrepreneurs often describe their businesses as their “babies,” speak in passionate terms about them, and express identification with them. Indeed, a human relational – and not only economic – perspective on entrepreneurship seems to be needed if we want to understand more “illogical” aspects of entrepreneurship such as emotions (Cardon et al., 2005).

In her work on parenting styles, Baumrind (1989, 1991) differentiates between authoritative and authoritarian parents. Both type of parents will have high demands on their children. However, the authoritarian parents will not be non-intrusive and responsive, while authoritarian parent will be intrusive and non-responsive. Thereafter, authoritative parent will exercise reliable control in a legitimate and loving fashion and give children a considerable degree of freedom to experiment on their own. On the other hand, authoritarian parents will exercise close supervision and try to shape and control children’s behaviour and attitudes. Regarding the responsiveness dimension, authoritative parents are responsive to feedback, they encourage verbal give and take, share the reasoning behind their decisions; and are warm and flexible. Authoritative parent on the other hand, do not encourage verbal give and take, take unilateral decisions, are not open to discussion, and are detached and less warm.

If passionate entrepreneurs are like parents, it might be that they have different parenting style, depending on their passion type.

Based on the dualistic model of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003), we distinguish between harmonious and obsessive and aim to explore how these two types of passion lead to different types of parenting styles, and therefore impact employees’ proactive behaviors differently.

In the case of harmonious passionate entrepreneurs, the venture activity is important mainly because the entrepreneur derives pleasure out of it. The entrepreneurial activity is seen as important
but not all-consuming, and is well integrated with other life domains, such as the personal life. Harmonious passionate entrepreneurs fully partake in the venture tasks with secure sense of self-esteem, are flexible and open to engage in new experiences in a non-defensive and mindful manner. Because they highly care about the venture, harmonious passionate entrepreneurs are likely to set challenging goals for their venture and be demanding. However, because they feel in control of the venture activity and have a secure sense of self-esteem, they will not be intrusive in the employees’ work. Their flexibility and openness will make them responsive to employees’ needs.

On the other hand, obsessive passionate entrepreneurs will engage in the activity with a fragile sense of self-esteem, which will be dependent on the success of the venture. Therefore, they will be more likely to become defensive rather than open to new experiences and information, and will be rigid in their pursuit. The obsessive passionate entrepreneur will experience a strong and uncontrollable urge to partake in the entrepreneurial activities; which will become difficult to regulate and integrate with other areas of life. Just as in the case of harmonious passion, the venture will have a very high importance in the life of the obsessively passionate entrepreneurs, so they will demanding and set challenging goals for their venture and employees. However, obsessive passionate entrepreneur will try to compensate for their low sense of control and insecure sense of self by intruding in employees work. Moreover, because of their rigidity and defensiveness they are likely to not integrate employees in their decision and be less responsive.

Based on the above arguments, we hypothesize:

H1a: Perceived harmonious passion of the entrepreneur will be more positively related to an authoritarian parenting style than obsessive passion.
H1b: Perceived obsessive passion of the entrepreneur will be more positively related to an authoritative parenting style than harmonious passion.

Going forward to the second part of our model, we have argument that these different parenting style will affect employees’ proactive behaviour in different ways. Parenting style literature (Baumrind 1989, 1991) found that authoritarian parenting style leads to passivity, dependence, decrease self-assertiveness and self-directed, autonomous effort of children. On the other hand, authoritative parenting style was conducive to social responsibility, independence, achievement orientation, and vitality. Moreover, theories from social psychology, such as the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 2000), the action theory (Hacker, 1998) or the social–cognitive theory (Bandura 2001) suggest that individuals are motivated to engage in proactive behaviors if they feel autonomous and related, if they believe they will be in control of the situation and don’t fear dealing with negative consequences of behaviour. Lastly, the organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al. 1986) affirms that perceived supervisor support increases psychological safety, and expectation that efforts will be noticed and rewarded, so that employees with high perceived supervisor support are likely to engage in more extra-job efforts.

Out of these reasons, we hypothesize:

H2a: Perceived harmonious passion of the entrepreneur will have a positive indirect effect on employees’ proactive behaviours via authoritative parenting style

H4a: Perceived obsessive passion of the entrepreneur will have a negative indirect effect on employees’ proactive behaviours via authoritarian parenting style
We plan to test this model on a sample of 350 employees of young (less than 3 years), small (3-10 employees) ventures in the USA, that have intense direct contact with the entrepreneur. We will use established measures to reflect our constructs, such as the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). The Parenting Style scale by Buri (1991), and proactive behavior (Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006). We will controls for age, gender, education, length of employment with entrepreneur, work experience, and entrepreneurial experience. Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) macro will be used to test whole model, including the multiple mediators, at once. This method relies on bootstrapping to test the indirect effects of perceived passion on proactive behaviors. We will run two analyses for each type of passion with the other type and the controls as covariates.
References


