REVIEW   **Open Access**

Family dynamics and intergenerational entrepreneurs' leadership style

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Abstract

Studies have shown that a family plays an important role in encouraging people to pursue an entrepreneurial career. Consequently, studies have indicated that involvement in a family role may have an effect on functioning in a non-family, work role. This study attempts to find out how behaviours, values, family structure and interpersonal interaction styles from parents can be transferred to the entrepreneur's role, as a leader, in a work environment. Specifically, this study is conducted to understand how certain parenting skills, structure, and styles enhance an entrepreneur's ability to be more efficient and effective at work. Based on the various parenting styles and family structure, propositions are made on the kind of leadership style that may arise from family dynamics. The author argues that there are various points in time where family and entrepreneurial dynamics intersect. This study argues that one very important intersection includes the entrepreneur early experiences with the family which may lead to the development of specific leadership approach at work. In this article, the author attempt to tie two streams of research together to show how entrepreneurs and their families are inextricably linked together. It is an attempt to explore the theories of family structure and parental styles to further depict these links with leadership. These areas are explored and research questions that could be empirically tested are addressed for a better understanding of how family dynamics can affect leadership. This study also explains the kind of socialization experiences that take place within the family that may lead to entrepreneurial behaviour. Such information could prove valuable to entrepreneur leaders who wish to understand their own approach towards leadership. This is important because different working environment will require specific leadership approach in order for the business to be successful. Such study would also help educational institutions to develop curriculum and training that might prove more useful in inculcating entrepreneurial values and leadership into students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Positive Interrole spillover, Interrole behavioral congruence, Parental styles, Family structure, Entrepreneurship behaviour, Leadership style

Introduction

This research indicates that family and entrepreneurial dynamics intersect at some point in time and this may have an effect on entrepreneurial behaviour (e.g., Dyler & Handler, 1994; Dyer, 1992). There are various ways in which the family can influence entrepreneurship career. Among them include family involvement in business, ownership and management decision and succession. Another important element also includes early experiences in the entrepreneur's family of origin. Early studies have emphasised on who

entrepreneurs are, and also the factors that contribute to starting a business successfully (e.g., Dyler & Handler, 1994; Dyer, 1992).

Studies have indicated that involvement in a family role may have an effect on functioning in a non-family, work role. Such phenomenon is known as positive interrole spillover or interrole facilitation (Hanson et al. 2006). Hanson et al. (2006) define positive interrole spillover as a process involving the transfer of positive effects, skills, values, and/or behaviours from the originating domain to the receiving domain. This definition leads us to find out if behaviours, values, family structure and interpersonal interaction styles from parents can be transferred to a person's role, as a leader, in their work environment.

Furr and Funder (2004) have argued that behaviour which is exhibited in family/ parenting roles may transfer to other roles that an individual perceives as being similar. This concept, known as interrole behavioral congruence (Diener & Larsen, 1984), serves as the driving mechanism used in this study to demonstrate the influence parenting roles can have on leadership styles at work.

A study conducted by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) discusses that familial behaviour transference often occurs and this leads to a direct enhancement of the quality of life within a work role. This process is known as family-to-work enrichment, and it is a component of positive interrole spillover or facilitation that involves a process whereby the resources (e.g., skills, knowledge, and abilities) a person obtains or develops in one role are applied to another role, enhancing that person's performance or affective state in the other role (Carlson et al., 2006a). An important question is whether actual leadership behaviours and skills (critical elements of leadership style) derived from parenting styles and family structure can be transferred to a person's leadership style at work.

This study is conducted to understand an important potential path for interrole facilitation: the link between parenting and leadership. The purpose of this study is to understand how certain parenting skills, structure, and styles, enhance an entrepreneur's ability to be more efficient and effective at work through their leadership style. Based on the various parenting styles and family structure, propositions are made on the kind of leadership style that may arise from family dynamics.

Review

Family environment

The family is a major influence on the consumer behaviour of its members (Sharma, 2011). According to Hawkins et al. (2004), a family is defined as a group of two people or more (one of whom is the household) related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together. Researchers have examined the family environment and its various implications in consumer socialization research mainly in terms of parental styles (e.g., Abdelmuhdi, 2012; Limbu et al. 2012; Malaki & Inokoba, 2011), family structure (e.g., Benmoyal-Bouzaglo & Moschis, 2010; Moschis et al. 2013), family resources (e.g., Churchill & Moschis, 1979) and family communication patterns (e.g., Martin, 2013; Moschis et al. 2011; Vega et al. 2011). Research on the dynamics of 3000 families conducted by Stinnett and DeFrain (1985) has identified that effective communication is a core dimension of strong families.

Positive Interrole spillover and family-to-work enrichment

There is a very limited amount of studies which have examined the work-family interface with specific leadership roles (Michel, et al. 2014). One important study by

Michel et al. (2014) has described the influence of family on leadership roles using the conservation of resources (COR) theory. The conversation of resources theory is often used to explain a stress-related process associated with an individual's psychological and social resources and is often used in organizational research. According to Michel et al. (2014), it is argued that the skills, personality type and behaviour gained through engaging in family or other activities outside of work is transferred into work-related leadership roles.

The concept of interrole facilitation goes even further by explaining the benefits of multiple role accumulation. According to Ruderman et al. (2002) the role accumulation approach highlight the possibility that there are positive and beneficial outcomes associated with a commitment to multiple roles. It is argued that multiple roles provide more opportunities to accumulate resources. Based on this approach, there are three workplace opportunities that enhance managerial resources and these are relevant to this study. These workplace opportunities include psychological, social support, and learning opportunities (Ruderman et al., 2002).

For the purpose of this study, all three of these manager-specific resource needs are considered. From the family perspective and domain, raising and nurturing children together while maintaining a strong family support system will have a positive effect on a person's perception of psychological and social support resources. It is also noted that in conversations with parents that raising a child has given them strong confidence and a belief they can achieve anything in life; in other words, compared to raising kids, everything else seems manageable. Using COR theory, this feeling of confidence can be explained by the accumulation of resources gained from raising children that apply to many other facets of life (McNall et al., 2009).

With respect to learning-related resources, an important learning opportunity involves the understanding of how becoming a parent and then developing and practicing one's parenting styles. It is in this learning situation that the learner becomes highly motivated to succeed and hence put into practice what is being learned. A study conducted by Morrison et al. (1992) among female managers with children indicated that managers attributed their work effectiveness through self-awareness that gained from being a mother.

In a different study, McCall et al. (1988) interviewed male executives and found that executives who coached their child's sports team claimed that the experience taught them leadership lessons that they continued to use on the job. These types of findings illustrate how family-life experiences can influence one's work-life in a positive way.

Based on the literature on role accumulation, researchers have also developed the concept of work-family enrichment. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) defined work-family enrichment as the degree to which the experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other main life role. Enrichment involves a process whereby one role provides resources that improve the quality of one's experiences in another role. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006) work-to-family enrichment occurs when work experiences improve the quality of one's family life, and family-to-work enrichment (the focus of the present study) occurs when family experiences improve the quality of one's work life.

Through interrole enrichment, these types of quality life improvements can occur in theory through one of two pathways, namely instrumental and affective (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Enrichment through the instrumental pathway occurs when the

resources obtained in one role directly improve performance in another role. Enrichment through the affective pathway occurs when the resources gained in one role indirectly impact an individual's positive affect in another role (Carlson et al. 2006a). According to Greenhaus & Powell (2006) research focusing on both directions of work-family enrichment has shown that enrichment from family to work is notably stronger than work-to-family enrichment.

Interrole Behavioural congruence

Interrole behavioural congruence among workplace leaders is also an important factor considered in this study. The concept of interrole behavioural congruence has many similarities with cross-situational consistency in personality trait expression. A study conducted by Diener and Larsen (1984) on behavioural consistency across situations suggests that individual behaviours, affect, and cognition tend to be similar across situations that are similar.

On the other hand, Furr and Funder (2004) made a distinction between objectively similar situations and subjectively similar situations. They noted that situations that are objectively similar are identical and can be experimentally manipulated or defined. Conversely, situations that are subjectively similar are based on perceptions or experiences that lead an individual to believe that the two situations are similar. In the context of the present study, the two situations of interest (work roles and parenting roles) can be seen as subjectively similar and, therefore, likely to foster transference of leadership qualities from parenting experiences.

Parenting styles

The next aspect which is addressed in this study is on specific parenting styles adopted by parents to nurture their child(ren). Parental style is defined as "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which aren't behaviours are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488).

According to Berman (1997), an important factor that fosters the development of prosocial or socially competent behaviour is the type of control that their parents exhibit over their children. Studies have examined parental discipline on various outcomes. For instance, Hoffman's theory takes as established that inductive discipline is linked to prosocial behaviour and accounts for this relation by positing that empathy plays a key role (Hoffman, 1982).

Baumrind (1991) has identified two key dimensions underlying parental style: *demandingness* is the extent to which parents show maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys; *responsiveness* is the extent to which parents show affective warmth, acceptance, and involvement. The combined effects of these two dimensions yield a four-fold classification of parental styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and negligent.
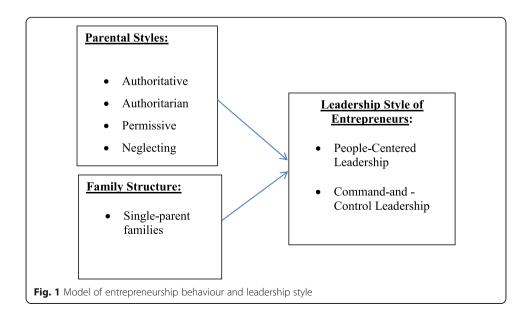
According to Baumrind (1991) typology of parental styles, parents can be categorized as employing one of the four parenting styles (Authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglecting), representing attitudes and values toward parenting, communication patterns with their children, and specific practices they employ in socializing their children.

Parenting styles and leadership styles

There are a very limited number of studies which have examined the link between leadership and parenting, typically extending from the workplace to the family. For instance, authoritative parents demonstrate a balance between demandingness and responsiveness by being assertive and demanding, while also being loving and responsive (Baumrind, 2013). This type of parenting style includes exercising warmth, affection, and adequate control toward one's children. It has been positively associated with healthy child development and generally positive adolescent life outcomes (Smith, 2011). In a similar fashion, but within the work domain, transformational leadership is a model of leadership that research has identified as a positive form of managerial leadership. Such research indicates a significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational functioning (Barling et al., 1996).

In another study, Morton et al. (2011) have used transformational leadership theory to develop a "transformational parenting" questionnaire that adolescents used to rate their parents. Morton et al. (2011) found that parents' engagement in transformational leadership behaviors was associated with heightened self-regulation, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction among their adolescents. These outcomes are similar to the organizational outcomes of transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by managers. For example, research on managers classified as being transformational leaders has demonstrated positive employee outcomes such as increased job performance, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and motivation (Jex & Britt, 2008).

Figure 1, depicts a proposed conceptual framework of entrepreneurship behaviour and leadership style. The family parenting styles indicates that the entrepreneur's values regarding the family dramatically may shape the direction of entrepreneurship engagement, including that of their children. Parents who engaged in an *authoritative* parenting styles at home may play a more significant role in encouraging their children to start entrepreneurial careers, and engaged in entrepreneurial activities. A study by Sharma et al. (2015) indicated that authoritative parental styles that are successful at upbringing their offspring had relatively smooth succession process with their kids in

Fig. 1 Model of entrepreneurship behaviour and leadership style

the family business. As a result of conversational process, consensus is usually found on strategic changes needed for the business. Since authoritative parental style enhances their children to engage more in conversational process and find consensus, entrepreneur leaders raised in such families will tend to impose less control over the business. This could explain why parents who demonstrate an authoritative parental style at home are more likely to engage towards transformational leadership at work as demonstrated in the studies of Morton et al. (2011) and Jex & Britt, (2008).

On the other hand, where parenting is exercised in an *authoritarian style*, children have less open conversation with their parents. They are expected to perform according to the parents performance demand. If the child is successful at meeting the parent's performance demand in the business, then they need to act in the same line as the parent, replicating an autocratic model that the parents would have developed and leaving little room for consensus (Sharma et al., 2015). In such situation, entrepreneur leaders who are raised in authoritarian parenting style would tend to impose more in control over the organization.

It may be further more challenging for children to succeed from their parents business if the entrepreneur leader grew up in a *permissive* or *neglecting* parental style. Permissive parents tends to allow self-regulation but do not necessarily demand high mature behaviour. Usually confrontations with the next generations tend to be avoided, which gives the children greater degree of freedom (Baumrind, 1991). Permissive parental style tends to foster social skills but weak instrumental skills. It tends to develop egocentrism and poor self-control which makes it hard to reach family consensus. The dominance of individual needs makes it hard to create proper family council dynamics. As business tend to be seen as a source of family welfare (wealth, prestige, entertainment), hence, business needs and the interest of other stakeholders are often disregarded. Family interest tends to invade business spheres (Sharma et al., 2015). Since business needs and stakeholders interest are disregarded, entrepreneur leaders who are raised in such parenting style will have the tendency to impose more control over the business.

On the other hand, *neglecting* parental style tends to be uninvolved and cold with their children and tend to generate less competent children in all fields (Baumrind 1991; Sharma et al., 2015). Entrepreneur leaders raised in a neglecting parental style may wish to be more in control over their businesses and faced challenges in the succession plan (Baumrind 1991). Colling & Moore (1964) noted that the childhoods of the entrepreneurs who are filled with negligence created needs for control in entrepreneurs and a desire to create and control their own businesses in order to overcome what might be considered a hostile world. The personality type also affects the way in which the entrepreneurial firm functions, influencing decision making, employee reactions, and succession planning.

In a similar fashion, but within the work domain, command- and-control leadership is a model of leadership that research has identified as a form of managerial leadership. Such research indicates a significant relationship between command-and-control leadership and organizational functioning (Barling, et al., 1996). Command –and-control leadership is a leadership style which has remained pervasive throughout business, government, and non-profit organizations. According to Gill (2010) command- and- control leadership approach is a leadership style that uses standards, procedures, and output statistics to regulate the organization. Importantly it is authoritative in nature and uses a top-down approach, which fits well in bureaucratic organizations in which privilege and

power are vested in senior management. It is founded on, and emphasizes a distinction between, executives on the one hand and workers on the other.

Even though business leaders are exposed to every management theory and best practice, switching to a people-centered approach (which is the opposite of command-and-control leadership) would however means relinquishing control to others and trusting that employees will not abuse that responsibility. This is not easy to do for most leaders; it takes someone who is very confident and comfortable in his or her role to do so. And in times of stress, Gill, (2010) has argued that it is the human tendency to narrow our field of vision and revert to controlling behaviours that feel safe and less risky to us, whether they are or not.

Command-and-control is not always counter-productive (Gill, 2010). However, many managers in positions of authority will try to control schedules (e.g., time in the office), output (e.g., number of sales calls), and budget (e.g., line item for travel) before they have earned the trust of their employees. Based on the literature review described above, the following propositions are made in this study:

Proposition 1: Entrepreneur leaders who grew up in "authoritative" parental style at home are more likely to demonstrate a people- centered leadership style at work.

Proposition 2: Entrepreneur leaders who grew up in "authoritarian", "permissive" or "neglecting" parental style at home are more likely to demonstrate a command–and-control leadership style at work.

Family structure

Family structures also play a significant role in children's development. Theorist has distinguished between 'single parent families' and 'two parent families.' McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) have long claimed that children raised in single parent families tended to be associated with lower levels of well-being. Studies conducted on psychoanalytic model of entrepreneurship also noted that the childhoods of the entrepreneurs they studied were filled with poverty, insecurity, and neglect, and this was due to the fact that one parent was absent from home (Kets de Vries, 1977). As the child grows up to become an entrepreneur leader, s/he tend to create and exert firm control over their own businesses in order to overcome what might be considered a hostile and threatening world. The entrepreneur leader tends to create an organization that is authoritarian. This personality type also affects the way in which the entrepreneurial firm functions, influencing decision making. This study argues that the type of family structure at home will influence the type of leadership style of the entrepreneur leader. This leads us to the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Entrepreneur leaders who grew up in a single family structure at home are more likely to demonstrate a command- and -control leadership style at work.

Methodology

The target population and sample for this study include participants who meet the following criteria: Entrepreneur leader with single parent, with current or recent past supervisory experience at the manager level or above in their own business.

Entrepreneur leaders will be asked to provide information regarding their age, sex, marital status, household parenting status, span of supervisory responsibility, time

spent in current/most recent leader position, overall time spent in managerial/ leadership positions, and the industry in which the participant performed managerial/ leadership duties. These demographic variables should be included to maintain consistency with other research on work-family issues and leadership (Hanson et al., 2006; Kacmar, et al., 2014; Michel et al., 2014).

The duration of the participants' current or most recent leader-oriented job should also be included because research by Arvey et al. (2007) stated that work-related training and development experiences and/or opportunities is a strong predictor of the leadership tendencies. Therefore, the time spent in a given managerial occupation may capture the amount of training and development each person has received. These criteria are necessary to ensure accurate assessment of one's parenting style and leadership.

To measure the impact of parenting on leadership questions, qualitative data from participant regarding the entrepreneur leader current managerial style and abilities could be collected. Qualitative questions gathered can provide insight into major influences on participants' leadership and managerial style development.

In terms of parental style, entrepreneur leader will be asked to recall back on their perception towards their parents approach to parenting. The information pertaining to all parenting styles will be included in the scale. Responses can be made on a seven-point Likert scale of agreement, with higher overall scores on the authoritative facet indicating a more authoritative parenting style.

In term of psychometric properties of the parental styles instrument, several studies have found significant statistical relationship between parenting style and developmental outcome such as performance, achievement, learning and well-being of the child (e.g., Aunola, et al., 2000; Huang & Prochner, 2004; Chan & Chan, 2005; Turner, et al., 2009; Besharat, et al., 2011; Revers, et al., 2012). Although these studies were successful in finding strong association between parental styles and the development of a person, very few of them have elaborated on the instrument adopted for measuring parenting styles (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014).

Among the few studies which elaborated on the parental styles instrument include a study by Buri (1991). In the study, an instrument consisting of 30 items was administered to parents and their children. Steinberg et al. (1991) has developed the authoritative parenting scale to measure the extent of authoritativeness of parents over the child. The scale consisted of 36 items, and the alpha coefficient of the dimensions ranged between 0.72 to 0.76.

Among the other few instruments which have shown good external validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability is the parental style instrument developed by Beyers & Goossens (1999). The instrument consisted of two dimensions of parenting styles, namely support and strict control, and had an alpha coefficient of 0.77 and 0.74 respectively.

Gracia, et al. (2008) developed a parenting style index to assign the parents to four categories based on their parenting style, namely, authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful and indulgent. The instrument measured parental warmth and control, as perceived by the adolescents, with alpha coefficients 0.9 and 0.81 respectively.

Reitman, et al. (2002) have assessed parenting style using the Parenting Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R). This 30-item measure captures parents' perceptions of

their approach to parenting their child (ren). Responses were made on a seven-point Likert scale of agreement, with higher overall scores on the authoritative facet indicating a more authoritative parenting style. In previous studies, the PAQ-R has demonstrated adequate internal consistency (α = .77), test-retest reliability, and convergent validity (Reitman et al., 2002).

Parenting style instruments were developed mostly in western cultures where some considered only three parenting style and some were meant for parents only rather than for both parents and children. More research is needed on parenting scale as parenting practices may be sensitive to cultural context.

Implications for theory and practice

The preceding discussion has presented an overview of the previous work that has been done to examine how family plays an important role in influencing the entrepreneur's leadership style. There are still many gaps to fill in and questions to answer. However, this article has helped to raise important issues related to theory, research, teaching, and practice that will need to be addressed as we try to understand the dynamics that exist between parental styles, family structure and leadership.

As this study is conceptual in nature, it does not capture cultural differences nor has it been applied into specific cultural environment. Thus, empirical studies are needed to confirm the relationship between parental style, family structure and leadership. Comparative and empirical studies are needed to understand how entrepreneurs view their world and attempt to cope with it, especially in different cultural context.

Parenting behaviour is very much influenced by culture. The culture decides the limits of behaviour that to be controlled and praised. Most studies which have been conducted on the parental behaviour have been centred in western cultures where parental expectations, values and norms may be different with eastern cultures (Rodriguez et al. 2009). Contextual validity is highly relevant for constructs like parenting styles as the instruments contains statements which reflect cultural preference of the respondents. Therefore, validity of measures of parenting styles should be carefully applied in non-western cultures.

Although this study has shed lights into the implications of family structure and parental styles in determining entrepreneurs' leadership style, it does not mean that these two elements are the sole determinant of a particular approach to leadership. Educational institutions are considered an ideal place to promote entrepreneurial culture and leadership too, and there are many different programs in which individuals can enrol to build a solid foundation and to gain proper training and advice on leadership which is appropriate for their work environment.

On the other hand, educational institutions, training centers and entrepreneurship incubators need to ensure that their curriculums are relevant in providing a solid foundation to entrepreneurs. Educators are responsible for the planning and development of effective entrepreneurship training system where proper entrepreneurship and leadership knowledge are shared. Training programmes should focus on developing entrepreneurial mind-sets, which means changing attitudes. In developing training for entrepreneurs, the methods and approaches of learning should be varied and can range between traditional ways of informational transfer through to interaction with peers. Formal approaches may be complemented by tacit learning with peers and networks.

Conclusion

The present study found support for the contention that entrepreneur leaders who grew up in an authoritative parental style at home are more likely to adopt a people-centered leadership approach at work, whereas entrepreneur leaders who grew up in an authoritarian, permissive or neglecting parental style at home are more likely to adopt a command-and control leadership approach at work. It is also argued that entrepreneur leaders who grew up in a single family home structure tend to adopt a command-and control leadership approach at work. Previous studies have argued that parenting roles and managerial roles require similar behaviours, which can lead individuals to behave similarly within those roles (Morton et al., 2011; Popper & Mayseless, 2003).

Research also indicates in subjectively similar situations, behaviours and cognition are also typically similar (Diener & Larsen, 1984), but only to the extent that individuals perceive the situations as being subjectively similar (Furr & Funder, 2004). In other words, when individuals perceive their parenting roles and leadership roles as being similar and requiring similar behaviours, they will typically experience family-to-work enrichment more than individuals who do not find the situations to be similar.

The resources accumulated as a child from parents are applicable to many other facets of life, including the workplace (McNall et al., 2009). Research on this topic could also consider using longitudinal design where data collection begins prior to participants having children, and continuing data collection for a longer period of time. Another consideration for future research would be to include a comparison group of workplace leaders who do not have children. Research in this area could also examine the influence of parenting skills by using multiple sources of information including subordinates, co-workers, children, spouses, and even financial performance of the organization.

This study is also potentially useful for application and/or consulting purposes. Although leadership behaviours can be learned (Kelloway & Barling, 2000) and current programs for developing these behaviours exist, a better approach may be even more successful than those available today. Although more research may be necessary before implementing leadership development program, using authoritative authoritarian, permissive or neglecting parenting skill development as the foundation to understand the type of leadership development may prove to be a successful method. Overall, this study is useful for theoretical advancement and practical purposes. This research indicates that entrepreneur leaders attribute their leadership success at work to the experiences involved with the family at home.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

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