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PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION: EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND STUDENT LEVEL AS MODERATORS

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the predictive relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention and the extent to which such a relationship was moderated by working status and level of student among 270 undergraduate students from three universities in Ghana. A descriptive correlational research design was used to investigate the problem in the study. Questionnaire was used to extract information from the participants. Confirmatory factor analysis via principal component method was used to determine the acceptability of each item on proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention scales. The result showed that all the items exceeded the acceptable threshold for retaining items for statistical analysis. Pearson correlation and hierarchical multiple regression tests were used to test the hypothesized relationships. Proactive personality was significantly and positively associated with entrepreneurial intention. Employment status and level of student related significantly with proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention. It was observed that employment status significantly moderated the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention with the interactive model accounting for 10% of the total variance in entrepreneurial intention. However, student level did not significantly moderate the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention with the interactive model accounting for only 0.3% of the total variance in entrepreneurial intention. The findings were consistent with the personality theory of entrepreneurship. The implications and limitations of the study have been discussed.*

KEYWORDS: proactive personality, entrepreneurial intention, employment status, student level, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The realities of today manifest that; no government of any country can provide jobs to absorb all graduates from her tertiary institutions. This means that, there is the need for a change in the mindset of graduates from the 'look for a job syndrome' to 'create a job mentality' in order to actualize their educational aspirations. Against this backdrop, being proactive is a necessity rather than a luxury for tertiary education students in Ghana (Prabhu, 2013). Extant literature on graduate unemployment reveals a situation that is not recent. For example, researchers reported that it took more than 20 percent of university graduates between 1987

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and 1990 a little over one year to secure a job (Aryeetey, Harrigan & Nissanke, 2000). Based on this outcome, a clarion call has been made for graduates to venture into business, use their knowledge and skills acquired to manage their own businesses, create jobs and transform society (Aryeetey et al., 2000).

Tertiary education students or graduates have to demonstrate a high sense of responsibility in order to take advantage of the entrepreneurial revolution/age. Covey (2004) associated proactive personality with responsibility where he postulated:
Look at the word responsibility – "response-ability" – the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for their behaviour. Their behaviour is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feelings (p. 71)

Proactive people demonstrate proactive behaviours such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), personal initiative (Frese, Kring, Soose & Zempel, 1996), and flexible role orientation (Parker, Wall & Jackson, 1997). Research has reported a number of antecedents of entrepreneurial intention or behaviour such as education (Kolvereid, 1996; Mazzarol et al., 1999; Ismail et al., 2009), personality traits (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2003; Ismail et al., 2009) and perceived feasibility (Krueger, 1993). Proactive personality falls within the ambit of personality. Despite the availability of empirical literature on the link between personality trait and entrepreneurial intention, the focus has been on the Big-Five personality traits such as openness to experience, consciousness, extraversion, neuroticism and agreeableness. Therefore, the present study sought to investigate the unique contribution of proactive personality in entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students in three Ghanaian universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Proactive Personality

Proactive personality is a relatively stable individual disposition toward proactive behaviour (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Accordingly, proactive personality has been defined as a dispositional construct that identifies differences among people in the extent to which they take action to influence their environment (p. 103). It has been recognized as a unique personality trait different from typologies such as the Big-Five factor model with empirical evidence showing only moderate correlations between proactive personality and the Big-Five model (Crant & Bateman, 2000). However, proactive personality has been found to be superior in predicting sales performance above and beyond conscientiousness and extraversion (Crant, 1995). It has also been differentiated from self-consciousness, need for achievement, need for dominance, and locus of control (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

Other literatures have portrayed a positive picture of the proactive personality construct. For example, in fields such as job performance through a social capital perspective (Thompson, 2005); transformational (Bateman & Crant, 1993) and charismatic leadership (Crant & Bateman, 2000) and job search success (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy & Shalhoop, 2006)

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evidence of the impact of proactive personality or behaviour has been reported. In addition, Chan (2006) investigated the interactive effects of situational judgment effectiveness and proactive personality on work perceptions and outcomes while Parker and Sprigg (1998) revealed that proactive personality moderated the interactive effects of job autonomy and demands on employee strain.

Entrepreneurial Intention

Intentions influence the engagement in actual behaviour. Entrepreneurial intention is a significant predictor of one becoming an entrepreneur (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A number of scholars have viewed entrepreneurial intention as a driving force of entrepreneurial activity and therefore have defined the construct to reflect this position. For example, Katz and Gartner (1988) defined entrepreneurial intention as the search for information that can be used to help fulfil the goal of venture creation. It has also been defined as the perceptions of desirability and feasibility and the propensity to act upon opportunities (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Following from these definitions, we define entrepreneurial intention as one's willingness, desire and ability to engage in entrepreneurial behaviours or establish a business that is of relevance to the person, others and society at large.

Krueger and Brazeal (1994) postulated that entrepreneurial intention is central to understanding the entrepreneurial process because it is the foundation and the first step to understanding the process of entrepreneurship. Segal et al. (2005) point out that there are two questions that predict an individual's intention to become an entrepreneur: (a) is entrepreneurship desirable to me? and (b) is entrepreneurship feasible for me? Against this backdrop, we posit that a proactive individual has the attributes that mirror someone with high desire and motivation to venture into business. Therefore, the present study sought to empirically investigate this nexus in the Ghanaian context.

Relationship between Proactive Personality and Entrepreneurial Intention

The link between personality and entrepreneurial intention has been established in literature. For instance, entrepreneurial intention model has confirmed that individual characteristics like sex, age, marital status, employment status (Reynolds, Carter, Gartner, Greene & Cox, 2002), personality (Crant, 1996), self-efficacy (Zhao, Seibert & Hills, 2005) and environmental factors (Grundsten, 2004; Lowe, 2002) were significantly associated with entrepreneurial intention. Literature has also supported the predictive link between the Big Five personality factors and entrepreneurial intentions: openness to experience (β=.678, p=.000), neuroticism (β=-.096, p=.000), conscientiousness (β=.090, p=.001), agreeableness (β=.072, p=.006), and extraversion (β=.060, p=.015) (Akanbi, 2013). Despite extant literature supporting the link between personality factors and entrepreneurial intentions, proactive personality has been ignored in literature. In view of this, the present study seeks to investigate the predictive relationship between these two constructs.

Employment Status as a moderator of Proactive personality-entrepreneurial intention relationship

We submit that employment status would affect the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention with employed individuals more likely to think of

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venturing into business than unemployed individuals. Previous research has shown that individual difference factors such as prior employment experience, education and parental role models influence entrepreneurial intention (Kristiansen & Indarti, 2004). Similarly, previous employment has been associated with new venture creation (Lee & Tsang, 2004). In addition, other researchers have reported that work experience has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention (Phan et al., 2002; Tkachev & Kolvereid, 1999). Starting and running a business requires some level of experience. One way an individual can acquire this kind of experience or exposure is through work in that work will expose the individual to the opportunity of knowing the risks and problems associated with new venture formation and people management (Barringer, Jones & & Neubaum, 2005; Welter, 2001). Thus, individuals who are working get to learn the factors involved in business and consider establishing a new organization as a natural career option. For example, it has been reported that lack of knowledge including lack of management, business, accountancy and administration knowledge were barriers to entrepreneurial intentions (Pruett *et al.*, 2009).

Student Level as a moderator of Proactive Personality-Entrepreneurial Intention Relationship

Naturally, it dawns on students to start preparing for the job market or employment when they get to third and fourth year of their university education. In view of this, we expected that student level will strengthen or weaken the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions with students nearing completing more likely to manifest proactive tendencies such as initiative taking, identifying business opportunities etc as well as thinking about the prospects of business ownership than those in their first and second year.

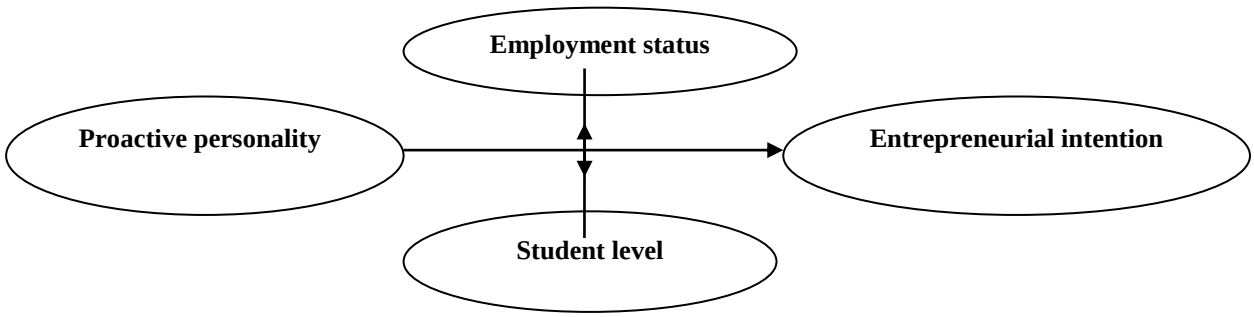

Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram showing Hypothesized Relationship between variables

METHOD

Research Design

We utilized predictive correlational design to investigate the extent to which working status and student level moderated the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students from three Ghanaian universities. The study was purely quantitative as the focus was on hypotheses testing and inferential statistical analysis such as hierarchical regression via moderation analysis and Pearson correlation.

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Participants and procedure

We recruited participants from three universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The universities were: university of Ghana, Legon, University of Professional Studies, Accra, and Zenith University College. We recruited research assistants to help with the data collection. We took them through basic data collection techniques and ethics in research. This was done to ensure that ethical protocols governing data collection and general research conduct were observed. The survey packet was hand delivered to undergraduate students (e.g., levels: 100, 200, 300 & 400) in their various campuses. Each packet included clear instructions regarding who should fill out the surveys. Further, the instructions indicated that the participants agreeing to participate in the study must be students of the participating universities who also agreed to participate in the study. The respondents were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymity was fully assured. All completed survey packets were put in an envelope and sealed.

The surveys began with an introductory letter from the researchers. Students responded to a series of questions regarding proactive personality, entrepreneurial intention and relevant demographic data such as sex, employment status, level and type of university. Three hundred (300) questionnaires were administered and 270 were completed and returned giving a response rate of 90%. Demographic composition of the sample varied. The distribution of the sample along the various demographic factors can be found in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex:	Male	136	50.4
	Female	134	49.6
Employment Status:	Working	165	61.1
	Not working	105	38.9
Student Level	100	37	13.7
	200	85	31.5
	300	67	24.8
	400	81	30.0
University Type:	Private	147	54.4
	Public	123	45.6
Total Number of Respondents (N=270)			

The study was made up of 50.4% males and 49.6% females. In terms of employment status, 61.1% were working while 38.9% were not working. In addition, 30% of the respondents were in their final years; 24.8% were in their third year; 31.5% were in their second year while 13.7% were in their first year in the university. Finally, the study was made up of 54.4% private university students and 45.6% public university students.

Measures

Self-report questionnaire was used to collect data on proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention. Responses on both scales followed the 5-point Likert format

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ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). **Proactive personality** was measured with 10-items scale developed by Crant and Kraimer (1999). All the items were anchored on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Sample items on the scale included: *"I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life", "Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change".* The Cronbach alpha value for the scale was 0.81. **Entrepreneurial Intention** was measured with the six item scale developed by Linan and Chen (2006). The items were anchored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Total disagree (1) to totally agree (5). Sample items on this scale included: *"Among my various career options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur," "I will make every effort to start and run my own firm," "I have very seriously thought in starting a firm" etc.* The scale has a Cronbach alpha value of .96.
Demographic Information: Data were collected on demographic variables such as sex, employment status, level in the university and type of university. A single item was used to measure each of these demographic variables. For example, respondents were asked to indicate their sex as either male or female.

Testing the hypothesized model

Preliminary Analysis

In order to test the hypothesized model, we first generated a correlation matrix using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test to ascertain key assumption underlying moderation analysis: the moderator variable (s) must relate significantly with the independent and dependent variable, and the independent variable must relate significantly with the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Normality of the variables was assessed using kurtosis and skewness. Finally, factor analysis was performed to ascertain the statistical suitability of the items on proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention scales. Reliability coefficient was computed for the variables.The results are presented in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Bivariate Correlation between Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sex	-					
Employment status	.120*	-				
Level	-.195*	-.480**	-			
University Type	.178**	.369**	-.240**	-		
Proactive personality	-.067	-.311**	.259**	-.094	-	
Entrepreneurial intention	-.161**	-.205**	.163**	.007	.748**	-

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

As shown in **Table 2**, employment status was significantly associated with proactive personality (r=-.311, p=.01), and entrepreneurial intention (r=-.205, p=.01). In addition, student level related significantly with proactive personality (r=.259, p=.01), and

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entrepreneurial intention (r=.163, p=.01). Similarly, proactive personality related significantly with entrepreneurial intentions.

Descriptive Statistics and Normality Test

Values for skewness and kurtosis were used to ascertain the normality of scores on the independent and dependent variable in the study. In addition, descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation scores were computed for proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions. The results can be found in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Normality Test Results for Proactive Personality and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Proactive personality	41.933	6.194	0.067	0.041
Entrepreneurial intention	45.941	6.638	0.070	0.051

As shown in Table 3, the skewness and kurtosis values were lower than the acceptable threshold of ±2 for normal distribution of scores.

Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

In addition, to ascertain the statistical acceptability of each item on the study instruments: proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions, confirmatory factor analysis via principal component analysis was conducted. Conditions for conducting factor analysis such as sampling adequacy test and Bartlett test of Sphericity were conducted. These two critical conditions for performing factor analysis were satisfied (See Table 3 & 4). To retain an item on a scale for statistical analysis, that item should not have factor loading below the acceptable threshold of 0.4 (Hinkin, 1995). As shown in **Table 4 & 5**, all the items on proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention had standard factor loadings exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.4. Thus, all the items on the original scales were retained in this study. Results of reliability test showed that entrepreneurial intention and proactive personality had reliability coefficient values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4: Factor Analysis and Cronbach Alpha: Entrepreneurial Intention

Construct items & Alpha value	**Standard Factor Loadings**
Entrepreneurial Intention (α=.899)	*Factor*
1. Among my various career options, I'd rather be an entrepreneur.	0.741
2. I'm determined to create a firm in the future.	0.748
3. I will make every effort to start and run my own firm.	0.787
4. I've got the firm intention to start a firm some day.	0.700
5. My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur.	0.622
6. A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me.	0.705
7. I'm ready to make anything to be an entrepreneur.	0.669
8. I have very seriously thought in starting a firm.	0.740
9. Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction for me.	0.750
10. If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a business.	0.685
11. Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me.	0.654
Cumulative percentage of the variance explained (%)	50.52
KMO Sampling Adequacy=.905	
Bartlett's test of Sphericity=.000	

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Table 5: Factor Analysis & Cronbach Alpha: Proactive Personality

Constructive items & Cronbach Alpha	**Standardized Factor Loadings**
Proactive Personality (α=0.898)	*Factor*
1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.	0.752
2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.	0.791
3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.	0.724
4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.	0.751
5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.	0.731
6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.	0.601
7. I excel at identifying opportunities.	0.682
8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.	0.739
9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.	0.750
10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.	0.701
Cumulative percentage of the variance explained (%)	52.392
KMO Test of Sampling Adequacy = .916	
Bartlett's test of Sphericity = .000	

Testing the Hypothesized Model

Baron and Kenny (1986) three step procedure for testing moderation hypothesis was followed. Before generating the regression output, the scores for the Independent variable (e.g., proactive personality) and the moderators (e.g., level of student and employment status) were centred to reduce or eliminate the effect of multicollinearity (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

In centring, the mean score for the independent variable and moderators were computed, and then separated from the individual scores to obtain a standardized score for each individual response. The centred scores were then multiplied to obtain the interactive term (e.g., Proactive Personality X Student level and Proactive Personality X Employment Status). In testing for moderation, the independent variable is entered first, followed by the moderator, and then, the interactive term. The moderation hypothesis is supported when the interactive term is significant and not supported when the interactive term is not significant.

Table 4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the Moderation Effect of Working Status on the Relationship between Proactive Personality and Entrepreneurial Intentions

	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)
Proactive personality	.748**	.757**	.640**
Employment status		.030	.013
Proactive personality X Employment status			.150*
R^2	.559	.560	.563
ΔR^2	.559	.001	.003
F	340.169**	170.152**	114.178**

**p is significant at the 0.05 level, **p is significant at the 0.01 level; Note: Standardized Beta Values are shown*

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Proactive personality significantly predicted entrepreneurial intentions in model 1 (β=.748, p=.000). Proactive personality-entrepreneurial intention model was significant [$F_{(3, 266)}$ = 340.169, p=.000]. Employment status significantly moderated the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate university students. [β=.150, p<.05; $F_{(3, 266)}$ = 117493, p=.000], with the interactive model accounting for 10% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention.

Table 5: Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the Moderation Effect of Student Level on the Relationship between Proactive Personality and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Model 1(β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)	
Proactive personality	.748**	.756**	.725**
Student level		-.033	-.022
Proactive personality X Student level			-.059
R^2	.559	.560	.570
ΔR^2	.559	.001	.010
F	340.169**	170.027**	117.493**

***p is significant at the 0.01 level, Note: Standardized beta values are shown*

The result in Table 5 indicates that proactive personality significantly predicted entrepreneurial intention (β=.748, p=.000) with the proactive personality-entrepreneurial intention being significant [$F_{(3, 266)}$ = 340.169, p=.000). Student level in the university did not significantly moderate the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intention (β=-.059, p>.05). This implies that students who were in their latter stages of their undergraduate studies did not demonstrate significantly high level of proactive behaviours and entrepreneurial intentions than those in their early stages of their undergraduate education. However, the model was significant [$F_{(3, 266)}$ = 114178, p=.000], explaining 0.3% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention.

DISCUSSION

The contribution of entrepreneurs to employment creation and economic development of countries has not been questioned in literature. Undoubtedly, their significant contributions have been celebrated. The study investigated the predictive relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students in Ghana and the extent to which the relationship was moderated by working status and student level. The empirical evidence in this study revealed that proactive personality significantly and positively predicted entrepreneurial intentions. This finding corroborated literature that indicates that an individual with proactive personality trait is endowed with skills for actively changing his/her environment as well as show initiative to persist until change occurs (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Similarly, proactive individuals identify problems on their own and solve them to advance their personal life (Leavitt, 1988).

Further, working status was found to significantly moderate the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions such that individuals who are working would have high intention of becoming entrepreneurs than those who are not working. This

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finding was consistent with existing literature (Phan et al., 2002; Tkachev & Kolvereid, 1999) which reported that previous employment or employment was associated with increased intention to start a business. Other researchers also supported the view that, employment increases one's capacity to want to become an entrepreneur because it exposes the individual to people management, risks and problems associated with business creation (Barringer et al., 2005; Welter, 2001). Finally, experiential, business, accountancy and administration knowledge have been found to be associated with increased entrepreneurial intentions (Pruett et al., 2009).

Contrary to the expectation of the study, student level did not significantly moderate the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, engagement in proactive behaviours was not associated more with students in the latter stages of their university education compared with those in their early stages. Similarly, student level did not show significant difference in entrepreneurial intentions

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The outcome of this study has significant applied value because it brings to fore what other individuals and organizations can benefit from by leveraging on those exhibiting proactive tendencies. Evidently, proactive individuals have the energy, focus and enthusiasm to become successful entrepreneurs and therefore if the right entrepreneurial environment is created, such individuals can create and sustain businesses. Against this backdrop, university students have to learn and engage in proactive behaviours so that they would be able to take initiatives such as starting their own businesses or generating business ideas.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has created fertile grounds for future research. Most importantly, it would be prudent that researchers examine the extent to which variables such as entrepreneurial environment, perceived government support and networking moderate the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, there is the need to consider from the student side, the role of entrepreneurial education on proactive personality-entrepreneurial intention relationship. The need to conduct this research in a different setting is required to consolidate the validity of the proactive personality variable in predicting entrepreneurial success. In view of this, using entrepreneurs as the target population, it would be exciting to investigate how proactive personality influence entrepreneurial success and networking. Finally, utilizing longitudinal design in future studies is also a worthy call.

CONCLUSION

The dynamic nature of business environment calls for individuals with skills necessary for creating opportunities and successful businesses. The present study revealed that proactive personality which is an antecedent for proactive behaviours was a direct predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and indirect predictor of entrepreneurship. Exposure to the dynamics of work was found to help people actualize their entrepreneurial ambitions because

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it enables them acquire people management, business management and marketing skills which are essential for venture success.

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