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Journal of Vocational Behavior 64 (2004) 72–91

Journal of

Vocational
Behavior

www.elsevier.com/locate/jvb

The relationship between career motivation and self-efficacy with protégé career success

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Received 15 May 2002

Abstract

Research exploring the underlying processes involved in successful mentorships has been lacking. In the present study, the roles of career motivation and career self-efficacy as explanatory factors were examined. Career motivation mediated the relationship between career mentoring and performance effectiveness. Contrary to prediction, only marginal support was received for career self-efficacy as a mediator between mentoring and indicators of career success. This research is unique in that it was the first to reveal linkages between mentoring, career self-efficacy, career motivation and protégé career success. Theoretical and practical implications of results are discussed.

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Keywords: Mentor; Protégé; Career motivation; Career self-efficacy; Career success

1. Introduction

Mentoring relationships continue to be a topic of research interest—and for good reason. Research has found that those who are mentored experience considerable benefits such as higher salaries and promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Roche, 1979; Scandura, 1992; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993) and perceive more satisfaction, career mobility, and recognition than those who are not mentored (Fagenson, 1989). Until now, there has been a gap in the literature examining why mentoring results

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in these positive career outcomes. The objective of the present study is to begin to bridge this gap by examining both career motivation (CM) and self-efficacy as mediators of the relationship between mentoring and measures of career success.

1.1. Mentoring

A mentor is generally defined as an experienced employee who serves as a role model and provides support and direction to a protégé. Mentors provide feedback regarding career plans and interpersonal development and are committed to helping the protégé succeed in the adult working world (Kram, 1985). According to Kram (1985), mentors provide two broad categories of mentoring functions. *Career functions* include sponsorship, coaching, exposure/visibility, protection and the provision of challenging assignments. *Psychosocial functions* relate more to the interpersonal aspect of the relationship and include role modeling, counseling, friendship and acceptance (Kram, 1985). Studies exploring the dimensionality of mentoring have supported the existence of these two main mentoring functions (e.g., Noe, 1988).

1.2. Career motivation

It seems possible that CM is one factor that can help explain the benefits protégés realize from mentoring relationships. CM is theorized as being comprised of three components: career resilience, career insight, and career identity (London, 1983). *Career resilience* is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when circumstances are discouraging or disruptive. It consists of characteristics such as belief in self, willingness to take risks, and need for achievement. *Career insight* is the ability to be realistic about one's career and consists of establishing clear, feasible career goals and realizing one's strengths and weaknesses. *Career identity* is the extent that one defines oneself by one's work. It is associated with job, organizational, and professional involvement, need for advancement, and recognition.

In the literature, the term career commitment is often used interchangeably with CM (Carson & Bedeian, 1994). Colarelli and Bishop (1990) examined personal and situational correlates of career commitment and found that of the variables investigated, having a mentor was the most robust correlate. It was suggested that mentoring increases career commitment by three means. First, mentoring facilitates self-directedness, career involvement, career success, and positive attitudes toward the protégé's career. Second, the mentor may demonstrate the rewards that can be attained if an individual sticks with a career. Finally, mentoring helps the development of career commitment because both the mentoring relationship and career commitment revolve around the needs and ambitions of individuals (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990).

London and colleagues (London, 1990; London & Bray, 1984; London & Mone, 1987) have made several suggestions as to how to develop, support and enhance CM. To promote CM employees should be provided with positive reinforcement for good performance, given opportunities for achievement and input, and receive support for skill development (London & Bray, 1984). CM can also be enhanced through career

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