

Mentor commitment in formal mentoring relationships

Tammy D. Allen ^{a,*}, Lillian T. Eby ^b

^a *The University of South Florida, Department of Psychology, 4202 East Fowler Avenue, PCD 4118G, Tampa, FL 33620, USA*

^b *University of Georgia, Department of Psychology, Psychology Building, Athens, GA 30602-3013, USA*

Received 6 September 2007

Available online 8 December 2007

Abstract

This research examined the role of mentor commitment relative to protégé perceptions of relationship quality within formal mentoring programs. Based on a matched sample of 91 mentors and protégés, the results indicated that mentor commitment related positively to protégé reports of relationship quality. This relationship was stronger for male protégés than for female protégés. The results indicated that protégés reported higher quality relationships when mentors underestimated their commitment to the relationship relative to the protégés estimate of mentor commitment. Suggestions for future research are offered.

© 2007 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Mentoring; Formal mentoring programs; Mentors; Proteges; Commitment

1. Introduction

The popularity of formal mentoring programs within U.S. organizations continues to grow. Major companies such as Bank of America, Marriott International, and Charles Schwab have formal mentoring programs in place to help them attract, retain, and develop high performers (Eddy, Tannenbaum, Alliger, D'Abate, & Givens, 2003). One critical ingredient necessary for the success of these programs is the participation of mentors who are committed to their protégés and to the mentoring relationship (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Surprisingly, while mentor commitment has been discussed as an important variable in mentoring research (e.g., Scandura & Williams, 2001; Zachary, 2000), it has rarely been empirically examined.

Mentor commitment may be a particularly important focal variable in the study of formal mentoring relationships. In fact, Eby and Lockwood (2005) reported that unmet expectations and mentor neglect, both of which may stem from a lack of mentor commitment, were two of the most commonly reported problems among protégés participating in formal mentoring programs. Because mentors may be coerced or reluctantly recruited into participating in formal mentoring programs, there may be considerable variation in the commitment of mentors within formal programs (Kizilos, 1990; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The present study examined the role of mentor commitment in mentoring relationships. Specifically, we examined the relation between both mentor and protégé perceptions of mentor commitment and protégé perceptions of mentorship quality.

* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 813 974 4617.

E-mail address: tallen@shell.cas.usf.edu (T.D. Allen).

Because gender influences mentoring process and outcomes (cf. Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003), and men and women differ in their orientation toward close relationships (Powell & Mainero, 1992), protégé gender was investigated as a moderator of the mentor commitment-mentorship quality relationship. Finally, an important feature of the present research is that perceptions of mentor commitment were collected from both protégés and mentors. This allowed us to examine whether mentor-protégé agreement on the mentor's level of commitment related to protégé perceptions of relational quality.

1.1. Commitment and relationships

Commitment has been referred to as a fundamental property of relationships (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002) and a determinant of the extent that individuals are dependent on their relational partner (Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b, 1983). It represents concern for the interests of the partner and the relationship and it promotes pro-relationship behaviors such as willingness to engage in behaviors that help build a strong and satisfying relationship, such as spending time together, pursuing shared interests, and disclosing personal information (Finkel et al., 2002; Gagne & Lydon, 2005; Rusbult et al. 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997).

Although the research on mentor commitment and workplace mentoring relationships is sparse, other areas of research support the importance of commitment to the satisfactory development and sustainability of relationships. For example, the interpersonal relationships literature indicates that level of and mutuality of commitment associate with both relationship satisfaction and couple adjustment (Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1999). Commitment is also a proximal predictor of relationship stability in marriages, romantic relationships, and close friendships (Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). Similarly, the youth mentoring literature stresses the importance of mentor commitment to ensuring the success of formal mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (Sipe, 2002). Accordingly, we expected that protégés with more highly committed mentors would report greater relationship quality than protégés with less highly committed mentors.

Hypothesis 1. Mentor commitment relates positively to protégé reports of mentorship quality.

1.2. Gender

Mentor commitment may be especially important to female protégés. Relationships are central to women's self-identity and women tend to place greater value on relationships than do men (cf., Cross & Madson, 1997; Powell & Mainero, 1992). Dispositionally men tend to be less relational and more individualistic than women (Gagne & Lydon, 2003). These gender differences are largely a function of socialization experiences, where women are tasked with greater responsibility for developing and maintaining relational ties than are men (Chodorow, 1978; Miller, 1976). In contrast, particularly in Western society, men concentrate more on individual achievement and the process of separation from others (Miller, 1976). These gender differences have been found to play out in close relationships. For example, women have a stronger motivation to become involved in relationships characterized by high levels of commitment (Buunk, 2005). Buunk reported that women responded more favorably to relationships characterized as high in commitment, while men responded more favorably to relationships based on high levels of freedom and autonomy. Likewise, women had a greater desire for long-term commitments in love relationships and were less likely to engage in casual romantic relationships than were men (Buss, 1994; Buss & Schmitt, 1993), further supporting the importance of relational commitment among women.

Hypothesis 2. Gender moderates the relation between mentor commitment and protégé perceptions of relationship quality such that the relationship between mentor commitment and mentorship quality will be stronger for female protégés than for male protégés.

1.3. Dyadic effects

Limited research has examined dyadic effects related to mentoring outcomes. This is surprising given that mentoring relationships are inherently dyadic in nature (cf. Allen & Eby, 2007), a point frequently highlighted

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات