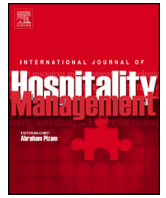




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The effects of mentoring on role stress, job attitude, and turnover intention in the hotel industry



Samuel Seongseop Kim^{a,1}, Jaemoon Im^{b,2}, Jinsoo Hwang^{c,*}

^a School of Hotel & Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Room 831, 17 Science Museum Road, TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

^b School of Tourism at Baekseok Culture University, 58 Moonam-ro, Dongnam-gu, Cheonan-si, Chungcheongnam-do 330-705, South Korea

^c Dongseo University, 47 Jurye-ro, Sasang-gu, Busan 617-716, South Korea

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ABSTRACT

In response to a dearth of mentoring studies in the hospitality literature, this study develops and tests a research model to investigate the influence of mentoring functions on role stress, job attitude, and turnover intention in the hotel industry. The data were collected from employees who had experienced mentoring programs at super-deluxe hotels in South Korea. This study conceptualized mentoring activity as having three main functions, including career development, psychosocial support, and role modeling. Structural equation model (SEM) analyses were used to explore the statistical significance of the paths between these functions and the main outcome variables. The psychosocial support function showed a significant relationship with all variables in the model (i.e., a positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but a negative effect on role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intention). The relationships were not significant between the career development function and role ambiguity, between role modeling and role ambiguity, or between role ambiguity and turnover intention. The results will enable a better understanding of the effects of hotel mentoring programs and indicate directions for improving their outcomes. The findings can help hotel managers in developing more effective mentoring programs.

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1. Introduction

Workers in the hotel industry face various challenges including those common to all service industry jobs and those specific to the hotel industry, which is characterized by small-scale employers (most hotels have a staff of 50–700 people). In particular, small hotels offer limited opportunities for promotion, advancement, training, or transfer to other departments. Employees' personal strategies to overcome these challenges and promote career advancement in such organizations have been commonly discussed in the hospitality literature. One such strategy is mentoring; mentoring programs are effective human resource management strategies for tackling the issues of role stress, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intention among employees. Mentoring involves a process in which a superior or senior employee helps a less

experienced employee in adapting to an organization's culture, in performing tasks better, or developing a better career trajectory (Eby et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2011; Underhill, 2006).

Mentoring has received a great deal of attention from both academic experts and professional managers. In the diverse fields including educational institutions, religious organizations, and other public or private organizations most studies focused on classification of mentoring functions or its benefits to mentee or mentor. The effects of mentoring can be different according to gender composition of the mentor and mentee (Clawson and Kram, 1984; Darling et al., 2006; Dreher and Ash, 1990), mentoring program (Ragins et al., 2000; Ragins and Verbos, 2007), quality of interaction in mentoring (Allen et al., 2006; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Ragins et al., 2000), mentor's qualification (Haggard et al., 2011; Noe, 1988), time of information exchange (Mullen and Noe, 1999), age of the mentor and mentee (Murphy, 2012).

In contrast to the active research in disciplines such as human resources, education, clinical psychology, and sports, few previous studies of the hospitality industry have directly (Ayres, 2006; Rutherford, 1984; Rutherford and Wiegenstein, 1985) or indirectly (Karatepe, 2013; Kong et al., 2012; Lankau and Chung, 1998; Yang, 2010) enumerated the diverse benefits of mentoring programs.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +82 51 510 1856; fax: +82 51 512 1853.

E-mail addresses: sam.kim@polyu.edu.hk (S.S. Kim), adtour@bscu.ac.kr (J. Im), jinssoohwang@hanmail.net (J. Hwang).

¹ Tel.: +852 3400 2318; fax: +852 2362 9362.

² Tel.: +82 41 550 0700; fax: +82 41 550 9113.

Further, no previous study has conceptualized or measured the construct of mentoring in a hospitality context, or tested a model that considers the role of mentoring in role stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention.

As it is likely that staff in the hotel industry, like staff in other service industries, require mentoring programs as a strategy for career advancement and for their mental health (Rutherford, 1984; Rutherford and Wiegenstein, 1985), there is a need to study the role of mentoring in the hotel industry. To fill this research gap, this study tested the effects of mentoring on role stress, job attitude, and turnover intention in the hotel industry. Specifically, the first objective of the study was to identify the relationships among various mentoring functions and role stress, job attitude, and turnover intention. The second objective was to explore the relationship among role stress, job attitude, and turnover intention. The third objective was to analyze the relationship between job attitude and turnover intention. Determining the effectiveness of mentoring by comparing those who received mentoring with those who did not is not the main objective. Rather, this study examines the quality of mentoring among those who were part of a mentoring program.

2. Literature review

2.1. Mentoring

Research in mentoring has been conducted for over 30 years in diverse disciplines and professions, including educational institutions, religious organizations, and other public or private organizations. Mentoring is widely seen as beneficial in building on-going relationships between organizations and their members (Murphy, 2012; Ragins and Kram, 2007). In general, mentoring is defined as a work relationship between a mentor (an older, more experienced and qualified adult or senior) and a mentee (a younger or less experienced individual) that is formed to facilitate career and personal development (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988). The term “mentoring” is interchangeably used with words such as “advising,” “counseling” or “coaching” (Scandura, 1992). However, mentoring has a distinct meaning, because mentoring is oriented toward maintaining a long-term relationship, pursuing long-term goals, developing personal and career characteristics, and revolving diverse outcomes.

Mentoring is not “teaching,” “instructing” or “telling” as one-way instruction imposed by a mentor, but a dyadic learning partnership between a mentor and a mentee. This kind of partnership enables the mentees to take charge of their own development, release their potential, and achieve the results that they value. Such mentoring is achievable through formal communication (official mentoring provided by an organization) or by informal communication (an unofficial or individual mentoring approach which is not assigned by an organization) (Ayres, 2006; Eby et al., 2000; Kram, 1985).

Since Kram (1985) introduced her seminal work on mentoring, the most popularly discussed research topics concern the positive outcomes generated through mentoring programs. The outcomes of various mentoring programs have been studied in the context of learning (Allen et al., 2008; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Wangberg et al., 2003), salary (Chao, 1997; Dreher and Ash, 1990), job satisfaction (Ensher et al., 2001; Payne and Huffman, 2005; Lankau and Chung, 1998; Ragins and Cotton, 1999), or reduction in turnover rate (Beckert and Walsh, 1991; Karatepe, 2013; Viator and Scandura, 1991). The effects of mentoring have also been discussed in the context of organizational commitment (Ragins et al., 2000) and career development (Ayres, 2006; Haggard et al., 2011; Rutherford, 1984; Rutherford and Wiegenstein, 1985; Scandura, 1992). Such studies have explored mentoring programs

from the perspective of the benefits to the mentees (Chao, 1997; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Ensher et al., 2001; Ragins et al., 2000; Scandura, 1992), the social exchange of benefits between mentors and a mentees (Allen, 2007; Allen and Eby, 2003; Ensher et al., 2001; Lankau and Scandura, 2002), and the communal development achieved through mutual learning and personal growth (Mullen and Noe, 1999; Ragins and Verbos, 2007; Wangberg et al., 2003).

2.2. Mentoring functions

Another research stream has tried to identify the different functions or roles of mentoring. As these functions and roles vary across fields, there is no consensus on what comprises mentoring functions. However, most studies agree that mentoring is multidimensional (Chao, 1997; Haggard et al., 2011; Lankau et al., 2006; Scandura, 1992; Viator, 2001).

Some studies have identified two dimensions of mentoring: the career development function and the psychosocial support function (Chao, 1997; Reid et al., 2008). Other studies have proposed three functions: a career development function, a psychosocial support function, and a role modeling function (de Janasz and Godshalk, 2013; Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Viator, 1994; Weinberg and Lankau, 2011). The career development function has been the most frequently discussed. This aspect of mentoring mainly involves a mentor’s support for a mentee to learn his/her own job specifications, to enhance job professionalism, and to solve job-related problems (Allen and Eby, 2003; Ayres, 2006; Aryee et al., 1999; Patwardhan and Venkatachalam, 2012; Scandura, 1992; Viator, 2001). Evaluating this function involves investigating how mentors teach task-related roles to their mentees, and motivate them by providing sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, or challenging assignments (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Dutton and Ragins, 2007; Higgins and Kram, 2001; Kram, 1983, 1985; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Rutherford and Wiegenstein, 1985).

For example, Patwardhan and Venkatachalam (2012) found that mentoring was very helpful for the career advancement of female hotel staff, as it enabled information sharing among women in a male-dominated Indian hotel working environment. Based on interviews with 200 hotel general managers, Rutherford and Wiegenstein (1985) found that even though mentoring did not significantly influence the mentees’ job satisfaction or mental and emotional well-being, it did play a decisive role in the mentees’ career development process toward becoming hotel general managers. These researchers concluded that mentoring is an effective vehicle for enabling individual job/career advancement, such as promotion to a better position or transfer to a better company. Wang (2013) also found that communication and networking with other staff members was one of the career competency dimensions enabled by mentoring.

The career development function allows mentees to improve their working performance and reach their career goals. However, it tends to over emphasize “ambition for success” or “opportunism for success,” and encourages mentees to aggressively take advantage of mentoring (Allen et al., 2008; Noe, 1988; Viator, 2001). This means that in reality, a mentee may learn how to please or even flatter a superior, how to easily complete workloads using temporary expedient measures, or how to be speedily promoted. These issues led academics to study the social and psychological functions of mentoring.

The psychosocial support function has been relatively less referenced in the mentoring literature than the career-development function. However, another important function of mentoring is to help mentees stabilize their psychological relation to an organization or society, and adjust themselves to their organizational

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