

Examining career-related mentoring and managerial performance across cultures: A multilevel analysis [☆]

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Received 30 March 2007

Available online 5 December 2007

Abstract

The benefits of the mentoring relationship for protégés have been a primary focus in the mentoring literature. Researchers have recently begun to examine how mentoring can benefit the mentor. The purpose of the present study is to examine whether direct report-ratings of a manager's career-related mentoring behaviors are related to boss-ratings of that manager's performance. In addition, this study assesses whether the cultural background of the manager moderates the career-related mentoring–performance relationship via multilevel methodology. Results reveal that managers who are rated by their direct reports as engaging in career-related mentoring behaviors are perceived as better performers by their bosses. Moreover, the GLOBE societal culture dimension of Performance Orientation was a significant cross-level moderator of the career-related mentoring–performance relationship. Implications for the practice of mentoring in cross-cultural contexts across multiple disciplines are discussed.

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Keywords: Career-related mentoring; Culture; Hierarchical linear modeling; GLOBE; Leadership

1. Introduction

The concept of mentoring dates back to Homer's *Odyssey* where Odysseus, before leaving to fight in the Trojan war, entrusted his older friend Mentor to teach and educate his son, Telemachus. The term “mentor” has become proverbial for a faithful, trusted or wise advisor. Researchers have begun to study mentoring across various contexts and disciplines, including youth mentoring (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Linnehan, 2003; Miller, 2002; Rhodes & Bogat, 2002) faculty-student mentoring (Busch, 1985; Campbell & Campbell, 1997) and the workplace.

[☆] The authors would like to express our appreciation to Ellen Van Velsor and Marian N. Ruderman for their insightful comments in reviewing earlier versions of this manuscript.

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The study of mentoring has expanded substantially since the works of Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) and Kram (1985), including: benefits of being mentored versus not being mentored; choice in the mentoring relationships; differences between formal and informal mentoring programs; motives and willingness to mentor; gender and race differences; and associations with objective and subjective career success (see Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Underhill, 2006; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003 for reviews). Of particular interest to our study is career-related mentoring research in the managerial or supervisory domains (e.g., Scandura & Williams, 2004; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Sosik, Godshalk, & Yammarino, 2004).

Mentoring research has shown that protégés receive substantial benefits including higher job performance ratings (Scandura & Williams, 2004). There is, however, a growing interest in the benefits of mentoring to the mentor (Allen, 2007; Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2006; Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006). In qualitative studies, mentors experience increased personal and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 1997; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Quantitatively, mentoring relates to a mentor's objective and subjective career success (Allen et al., 2006; Bozionelos, 2004), as well as job attitudes and reduced job content plateauing (Lentz & Allen, *in press*). A shortcoming of the current mentoring literature is that personal factors (e.g., satisfaction) and indirect measures of success (e.g., higher incomes, faster promotion rates) are used as proxies for managerial or organizational performance, with a few exceptions (e.g., Eby et al., 2006). Moreover, very little cross-cultural mentoring research exists.

We extend mentoring research by investigating the benefits of career-related mentoring to the mentoring manager as well as examining how societal culture relates to the mentoring relationship. We first review existing mentoring research to identify why career-related mentoring should be linked to a manager's performance. We then examine the cultural dimension of "Performance Orientation" as a cross-level moderator and empirically test our hypotheses using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). We also discuss the implications of our findings, including how our research may inform other mentoring contexts such as youth mentoring and faculty-student mentoring.

1.1. Mentoring and manager performance

Kram (1985), among others, theorized different mentoring functions and behaviors that aid in the growth, development, and advancement of others. Specifically, Kram argued that a mentor assists a protégé by providing career-related and psychosocial support (see Kram, 1985 for details of each mentoring function). Subsequent empirical and conceptual work has supported these mentoring functions (Allen et al., 2004). Our research focuses specifically on career-related mentoring (e.g., sponsorship, coaching, or challenging assignments).

Managers who mentor their direct reports affect significant outcomes for direct reports, including job performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (e.g., Brashear, Bellenger, Boles, & Barksdale, 2006; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Scandura & Williams, 2004; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Managers may also benefit from mentoring others (Allen, 2007; Allen et al., 2006; Bozionelos, 2004; Eby et al., 2006). We contribute to mentoring research by examining the relationship between the use of career-related mentoring behaviors and ratings of performance for the mentoring manager.

There is evidence that those who mentor have higher job satisfaction and motivation, feel more satisfied and rejuvenated, gain a sense of accomplishment and meaning in work, and increase their esteem among peers and managers (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Though not performance outcomes, these often are related to increased performance. Mentoring theory (Kram, 1985) suggests an additional benefit for managers in terms of performance; when a mentoring manager develops protégés and increasingly delegates work to them, managers may become more effective and efficient in their jobs (Nykodym, Freedman, Simonetti, & Nielsen, 1995). Moreover, information and support from protégés may become the foundation for a mentoring manager's organizational advancement (Dreher & Ash, 1990). Recently, Bozionelos (2004) found that the mentoring a manager provided was directly related to the manager's career success, demonstrating that a manager's career can be enhanced when the manager mentors others.

Mentoring may also benefit managers based on upward striving (Wollack, Goodale, Wijting, & Smith, 1971). Managers generally desire to move up in an organization and better their standard of living. By men-

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