

Determinants of Relationship Effectiveness and Its Effect on Work Outcome in Mentorship

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Abstract—The present study focused on mentorship effectiveness from the perspective of the protégé (mentee). The purpose has threefold, namely, to examine the effects of interpersonal attraction, self-efficacy and transformational leadership on relationship effectiveness respectively, to test mentoring function as a mediator, and to verify the effect of relationship effectiveness on new employees' work outcome. We employed self-administered questionnaires to collect research data and 308 new nurses of 3 regional hospitals have been selected, the overall valid response rate was 99.35%. Furthermore, we adopted structure equation model to test our research model and compared with the competitive model. The findings indicated that interpersonal attraction, transformational leadership do have positive effects on relationship effectiveness, however, self-efficacy was not capable of providing adequate explanation of relationship effectiveness. The results also showed a striking effect of relationship effectiveness on work outcome variables including protégé's job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Keywords: *mentoring; relationship effectiveness; interpersonal attraction; transformational leadership; work outcome*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term mentoring usually refers to the interpersonal relationship between the mentor, an individual who is relatively senior and more experienced in their field, and the protégé, an individual who is junior and less experienced [1]. An increasing number of organizations are recognizing the gains that come from mentorship (mentoring relationship) in positively benefiting the protégé, with benefits including a better work attitude, an improved career attitude, a lower tendency to leave the organization, a higher income and faster promotion rates. As a result, many organizations have actively engaged in developing formal mentoring as a method of training and development, which has paved the way for the application of formal mentoring more widely amongst organizations. More broadly, mentoring has become a current issue in the field of human resource management.

In essence, mentorship is a kind of interpersonal relationship. However, the extant literature on mentoring exhibits little research that focuses on the nature of this relationship. Therefore, this study highlights the 'relationship' built during mentoring and focused on the 'relationship effectiveness' (RE) of mentor-protégé interactions, which explores whether the relationship built between the mentor and protégé is successful and effective.

Constructed from the perspective of the protégé, this study investigated what factors were the critical determinants affecting RE of formal mentoring, and whether RE would influence a protégé's work outcome.

Many factors play a role in making mentorship effective. In the initial stage of relationship formation subsequent to the mentor-protégé matching, the attitudes and cognition of the mentor and protégé critically influence the strengths and weakness of the RE. Moreover, Burke, McKeen, and McKenna [2] and Ragins [3] argued that the protégé's perception and attitude of the mentor were largely influenced by the factor of interpersonal attraction. In addition, mentorship is essentially an interactive learning process and learning in this process has key influences. Therefore, the level of self-confidence of the protégé also significantly affects whether the protégé learns from this relationship, that is, the concept of self-efficacy [4] in social learning theory. The mentor will exhibit strong leadership behavior when interacting with the protégé [5]. Scandura & Williams [6] indicated that transformational leadership (TL) is the most influential leadership style in the context of mentorship.

This paper will analyze the impacts of three constructs of RE: the interpersonal attraction construct of relationship, the construct of the protégé (self-efficacy) and the construct of the mentor (TL). In terms of the effects resulted from RE, Kram [1] argued that individuals who accepted mentoring would experience greater job involvement and their work performance would also be positively affected. Relevant studies suggest that the implementation of mentoring would influence employees' job satisfaction (JS) [7] and organizational commitment (OC) [8]. These two factors are also the important variables for measuring an employee's likelihood to resign, their overall levels of contribution to the organization, and also important in regard to work outcome within management research. Therefore, this study used the above two constructs to analyze the impact of RE on the work outcome of a protégé.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Similarity-attraction theory suggests that the more similar two individuals are, the stronger the mutual attraction will be. Since both mentor and protégé have similar opinions, they are not likely to have serious conflict getting along with each other, as a result RQ of mentorship should also be good. Psychosocial studies also suggested that individuals would tend to help those who are similar to themselves first [9], and this was due to the fact that it would possibly cost them more

if they help those who are dissimilar. Hence, mentors will be willing to spend more time and effort with protégés who have similar feelings as themselves, and protégés will also regard themselves as the same type of person and feel easier allay inhibitions and accept a mentor's advice and guidance. In this way, protégé's RL effect will also be good. Therefore, this study argued that if protégés perceive their interpersonal attraction with mentors as high, they would obtain relatively high RE from the mentorship.

A. H1: Protégé's perceived interpersonal attraction with mentors will be positively related to the RE of mentoring.

Ragins [3] also suggested the higher level of homogeneity in the characteristics of the dyad of mentor-protégé, i.e. the higher level of similarity between the two, the higher likelihood of mentor providing functions such as career development, psychological support, and role modeling. In addition, if the learning goal of mentor and protégé differ, MF provided by the mentor would be suppressed and it would be difficult for the protégé to capture the connection to his or her career goals. Allinson, Armstrong, and Hayes [10] argued that the higher level of similarity of mentor-protégé perceived learning style, the more 'nurturing' the relationship was to each other and they would like and respect each other more. However, good relationship comes from psychological functional support, and liking and respect towards mentor is associated with role modeling. It can be seen that if the protégé perceives a high level of interpersonal attraction with the mentor, the protégé's perceived MF will also be strong.

During the interaction, the mentor assigns the protégé with challenging tasks in order to expand the protégé's knowledge and techniques, stimulate his or her growth, give the protégé directive guidance, support the protégé's career development and promotion, and help the protégé to solve problems. Moreover, during these processes, the protégé obtains various methods and techniques needed through RL with the mentor. That is, MF can improve RL. On the other hand, the mentor provides advisory function so that when faced with personal and professional difficulties, the protégé can receive effective listening and appropriate assistant. It helps the two in building up a trustful and harmonious relationship. Given the trust and respect that a protégé may hold for his or her mentor, imitation of behavior may be a likely occurrence. Such deep mutual assistance, mutual learning, and mutual trusting interaction will help improve the protégé's experience, impression and future expectations of the entire mentorship as well as improving RQ.

B. H2: MF received will mediate the positive relationship between perceived interpersonal attraction and RE of mentoring.

When individuals have high level of self-efficacy, they believe that they are more capable of controlling and achieving performance targets. As a result, they are less afraid of their goals and less likely to alter pre-arranged goals when faced with obstacles, which in turn promotes attainment of goals and changes in behaviors[11]. An individuals' perceived self-efficacy is an important factor in

determining behavioral performances. Meanwhile, in mentorship, learning is an essential factor and when a protégés' self-efficacy is high, the protégés will affirm themselves that they have the abilities of completing tasks in the workplace, solving problems and facing challenges. They are able to freely communicate information with mentor, learn from each other, and exchange growth opportunities. As a result, the effect of RL for the protégé will also be relatively high. Furthermore, the more faith that protégés have in themselves learning from a mentor and developing their ability, the more likely they will have behaviors of focused attention, persistence in pursuing goals and overcoming obstacles. Hence, they will show better learning attitudes and performances. If mentors perceive that a protégé has a good learning attitude and performance, they will form good impressions of their protégés and communicate experience and thus form a good RQ. This will improve the amount and quality of information and mentors are willing to share with protégé, and enhance the protégé's trust and satisfaction in relationship with the mentor.

C. H3: Protégé self efficacy will be positively related to RE of mentoring.

Day and Allen[12] argued that the functions of mentoring and self-efficacy of a protégé were highly corrected. According to the suggestions from mentoring theory, a mentor can provide a protégé with functions such as guidance, role modeling and acceptance. These functions are directly associated with the protégé's sense of ability and self-esteem. According to the preliminary interviews conducted in this study, when the protégé began his or her job, much professional knowledge and many skills were unfamiliar, the protégé had to depend on the assistance provided by the mentor. In regard to the level of effectiveness of a mentor's guidance, suggestion, discussion of questions and difficult tasks assignment on MF, and also how much information the protégé can absorb, this varies according to the protégé's individual character. One of the key factors is the level of an individual protégé's degree of self-efficacy.

D. H4: MF received will mediate the positive relationship between protégé's self efficacy and RE of mentoring.

TLF involves various learning mechanisms, such as individualized consideration involving coaching, counseling and giving individual attention, and such behaviors encourage protégé to see learning as valuable and also improve expectations on career success. Intellectual stimulation allows protégé to challenge existing hypotheses, to consider old problems with new thinking, to have courage for learning and trying new things. Idealized influence, on the other hand, emphasize on mentors being role models and convincing protégés that their own achievement, characteristics or behaviors are protégés' examples of their future career advancement and mentors are the persons to trust and to learn from. Therefore, this study anticipated that the higher level of TLB of mentor, the stronger protégé's RL. Bettencourt [13] also proved that TLB had positive effect on

leader–member RQ and such RQ were mainly from mutual trust, respect and confidence.

E. H5: Mentor TLB will be positively related to RE of mentoring.

For the most part a TL leader exhibits idealized influence behaviour. Noe [14] also found that there was a positive relationship between idealized influence behaviour and the realization of a mentor's role modelling function. Effects of individualized consideration behavior are related to the effects of counseling provided to protégés and individual trainings. These were important functions of mentoring, namely a mentor's TLB could provide protégés with tailor-made guidance according to their individual needs and this was beneficial for both the protégés' psychological development and also their career development. Scandura and Schriesheim[5], on the other hand, specifically argued that TL was the key determining factor for whether MF would have an impact, and it could be seen that TLB largely influenced the amount of MF.

F. H6: MF received will mediate the positive relationship between mentor TLB and RE of mentoring.

Workplace learning can influence an individual's career success and their own evaluation of their career. Thus, learning opportunities at work can be an important factor determining an employee's work attitude and behavior. Moreover, mentoring provides the organization with an important tool for workplace learning. Workplace learning had a significantly direct and positive influence on JS. JS has shown that employees are gratified by a feeling of being appreciated, having a sense of involvement and through their career development. Through RL of mentoring, not only can protégés learn various skills from a mentor, but they can also satisfy their personal needs of being acknowledged and appreciated. Moreover, exchange and interaction of experience in the workplace can increase a protégé's sense of participation, satisfy their career development needs and create a high level of JS. In addition, Ng et al. [15] found that learning opportunity had a positive and significant influence on an employee's OC. Mentoring mechanisms are the important source for supporting the protégés to build up a sense of identity within an organization. Protégés with high RQ with their mentors would exhibit: a relatively high level of belief and acceptance of an organization's goals and values, a greater willingness exert themselves for the organization, and a stronger desire to maintain membership inside the organization. Previous research on leader–member relationship (LMX), has demonstrated that employees with high RQ would show a relatively high level of JS [16] and OC[17].

G. H7: The greater the degree of the protégé perceived RE of mentoring, the higher the level of work outcome reported by protégé.

III. METHOD

A. Sample

Mentoring in a nurse's professional and career development has been shown to be well established in Taiwan. This study chose new nurses from regional level and above hospitals from north, middle and south area of Taiwan as sample, and sent out 308 questionnaires in total to all new nurses who had been working in these hospitals for two years or less. This study adopted a self-report method, and within three weeks collected 306 valid questionnaires in total. Resulting from the adoption of the self-report method for questionnaires collection in this study, there could potentially be a problem of CMV. Harman's one-factor test indicated that the first factor could explain 31.43% of the variation,. In total, 44 main components were needed for explaining 97.85% of the variation.

B. Measures

This study divided RE into two dimensions, RL and RQ. RQ was defined as the protégé's overall impression and evaluation of the mentorship. RQ included two dimensions: satisfaction and trust and referenced upon Allen and Eby[18]; RL referred to job-related knowledge or individual development techniques that a protégé believed they had learned from their mentor during mentorship, as well as the opportunity of an information exchange, mutual learning and interactive development with the mentor. Referenced upon Allen and Eby's [18] scale, the measurement items were in total ten questions, with Cronbach's α of 0.96.

Interpersonal attraction construct contains two dimensions: perceived similarity and learning–goal orientation similarity. Its measurement was referenced upon scales of Godshalk and Sosik.[19], with eight question items and Cronbach's α of 0.90. Self-efficacy was defined as the belief of a protégés of learning from their mentor through the mentorship and achieving growth in ability. Measurements on this construct were based on Gilad et al. [20] and Bradley and Roberts[21], with six question items and Cronbach's α of 0.89. Transformational Leadership referred to how the protégés believed mentors would influence their individual career development, intellectual stimulation and would encourage them to pursue higher levels of organizational goals, as well as clearly communicate attractive visions. Question item design were reference upon related researches[6,22], and were in total ten questions with Cronbach's α of 0.94. Mentoring Function was defined as the protégé's perceived degree of career development functions provided by the mentor through the mentorship, and also the psychological support function and role modeling function. Items were mainly based on related researches [19,23] with nine questions and Cronbach's α of 0.91.

Work outcome was divided into two dimensions: JS and OC. JS is defined as the protégés' attitude towards their

overall satisfaction when evaluating their work content or experience. Short MSQ items exhibited good construct validity[24]. Therefore, this study used five questions, referenced upon short MSQ content, with Cronbach's α of 0.865. Additionally, OC included three dimensions: value commitment, effort commitment and commitment to stay. Items were mainly based on Meyer and Allen's[25], with six questions and Cronbach's α of 0.913.

C. Validity and Reliability

Regarding content validity, questions were all designed based on the theory or the previously devised questionnaires proposed by past research. CFA analysis showed that $\chi^2/df = 2.44$; GFI = 0.91; AGFI = 0.87; RMR = 0.02; CFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.96; and RMSEA = 0.07. The model fit was very good. Results in Table 2 showed that in terms of internal consistency, the minimum of composite reliability was MF of 0.88, and the minimum of AVE also had an MF of 0.71. Regarding convergent validity, the measurement items for the six constructs, their loads were all reached statistical significance and only one question item had a variance more than 0.5. In the case of discriminate validity, AVE for the six constructs was larger than the square of their correlation coefficients with other dimensions.

IV. RESULTS

In this study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test our hypotheses. The research model had $\chi^2/df = 2.57$; GF I = 0.90; AGFI = 0.86; RMR = 0.02; RMSEA = 0.07; CF I = 0.97; NFI = 0.96; and IFI = 0.97. Figure 1 showed that the path coefficient of interpersonal attraction on RE was 0.18. Thus, H_1 was supported. In addition, the path coefficient of interpersonal attraction on MF was 0.35, and the path coefficient of MF on RE was 0.31. It meant that a protégé's perceived interpersonal attraction with their mentor indeed had a positive effect on RE through the MF as a mediator (H_2). However, the results also indicated that interpersonal attraction had a direct effect of 0.18 on RE, which was larger than the indirect effect. Yet the overall effect of interpersonal attraction on RE was approximately 0.29. In terms of self-efficacy, the path coefficient of self-efficacy of a protégé on RE was 0.02 ($P=0.648$). Thus, H_3 was not supported. The path coefficient of self-efficacy on MF was -0.01 ($P=0.758$), H_4 was not supported.

The path coefficient of TLB on RE was 0.33, supporting the argument of H_5 . Furthermore, the path coefficient of TLB on MF was 0.58, and the path coefficient of MF on RE was 0.31. This indicated that a protégé's perceived TLB indeed had a positive impact on RE of mentoring through MF as a mediator (H_6). Yet, the direct effect of TLB on RE was 0.33, which was larger than the indirect effect. It can be seen that TLB's direct effect on RE was relatively stronger, and the total effect of TLB on RE was 0.51. In terms of the influence of RE on work outcome, Figure 1 showed that the path coefficient of a protégé's perceived mentorship effectiveness on work outcome was 0.76, which suggested that mentorship effectiveness indeed had a positive impact on a protégé's work outcome. Thus, H_7 was supported.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Research has shown that interpersonal attraction and TLB both had a positive influence on MF. Therefore, during the initial matching stage, it is suggested for the manager to work on the aspects regarding these two dimensions, mentor-protégé interpersonal attraction and a mentor's individual TLB. This will likely improve MF. Furthermore, the positive effect of MF on RE seems to indicate that formal mentoring can ensure that all new staff can receive the guidance and assistance they deserve, and it can equip new staff with good RQ and learning, which in turn assists new staff in developing their work outcome. It shows that implementation of formal mentoring is indeed important for human resources management.

Now when making mentor-protégé matches, it is often according to managers' subjective assignment, that is random and based on past experience and intuition, and seldom considers the degree of similarity between the mentor and protégé. According to this study, it is suggested future pairings, when assigning mentors within a hospital workplace, one should consider more about improving mentor-protégé interpersonal attraction, and focus on two aspects, perceived similarity and learning-goal orientation similarity. In doing so will help improve relationship depth and the effects of mentoring. A mentor's TLB indeed could strengthen RE between the mentor and their protégé. Thus, it is suggested that during general educational training, one should improve the formation of mentor TLB, so that behaviors of individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence would appear in the interaction between the two. Such considerations will facilitate the development of RL and RQ between mentor and protégé. When an organization implements formal mentoring, for the purpose of improving the development of RE, regardless of the level of protégé's self-efficacy, it can effectively improve RE through the appropriate amount of mentor TLB and improvement in level of attraction between mentor and protégé.

RE showed a significant positive impact on work outcome. Therefore, it is suggested that when implementing formal mentoring in practice, one should focus on strengthening variables such as interpersonal attraction, TLB and MF, which will not only improve RE between mentor and protégé, but also improve the protégé's work outcome.

Due to the limitations of time, this study adopted a cross-sectional design for data collection and analysis. Thus, when examining the causal relationship among constructs, there was still place for improvement. It is suggested that future researchers could use longitudinal study design in order to analyze the effects of various factors on RE as well as the impact of RE on work outcome. When investigating the factors that affect RE, this study only showed the effects of research constructs *inter alia* interpersonal attraction, self-efficacy, TLB and MF. Future researchers could continue to examine influencing factors of mentoring RE from different theories. In addition, this study only adopted the commonly used JS and OC for measuring work outcome. It is suggested

that future researchers could analyze the effects of mentoring on other work outcome.

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Table 1. Correlation analysis between each construct.

Construct(Code)	Mean	SD	A	B	C	D	E	F
Work Performance (A)	1.99	0.35	1					
MF (B)	2.58	0.38	0.57**	1				
Relationship Effectiveness (C)	4.25	0.62	0.41**	0.74**	1			
Self-efficacy (D)	3.41	0.46	0.33**	0.31**	0.23**	1		
Transformational Leadership (E)	3.69	0.58	0.54**	0.85**	0.74**	0.28**	1	
Interpersonal Attraction (F)	3.55	0.47	0.52**	0.78**	0.67**	0.46**	0.73**	1

Note: ** means $p < 0.01$

Table 2. Assessment of convergent and discriminant validity.

Construct and item	Factor loading	Error variance	Composite reliability	AVE
Interpersonal Attraction			0.89	0.81
Learning Similarity	0.94 **	0.12		
Cognition Similarity	0.86 **	0.27		
Self-efficacy			0.92	0.85
Self-efficacy 1	0.93 **	0.14		
Self-efficacy 2	0.92 **	0.16		
Transformational Leadership			0.98	0.92
Intellectual Stimulation	0.96 **	0.08		
Individualized Consideration	0.99 **	0.01		
Idealized Influence	0.96 **	0.08		
Inspirational Motivation	0.92 **	0.15		
Relationship Effectiveness			0.99	0.97
Relationship Quality	0.98 **	0.03		
Relationship Learning	0.99 **	0.02		
Mentoring Function			0.88	0.71
Career Development	0.89 **	0.21		
Role Modelling	0.90 **	0.20		
Psychosocial Support	0.73 **	0.46		
Work Performance			0.89	0.73
Job Satisfaction 1	0.67 **	0.55		
Job Satisfaction 2	0.72 **	0.48		
Value Commitment	0.94 **	0.12		
Stay Commitment	0.93 **	0.14		
Effort Commitment	0.89 **	0.20		

Factor loadings are standardized. ** $p < 0.01$.

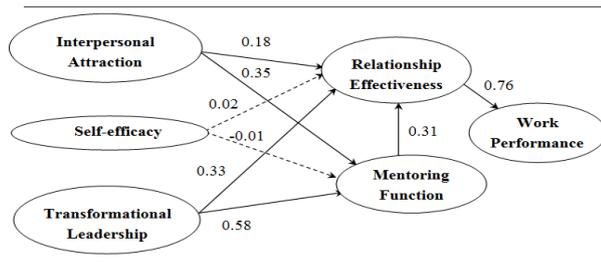


Figure 1. Research model results for work performance. Numbers are standardized path coefficients. Dotted lines indicate nonsignificant paths ($p < 0.05$).

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