

MENTOR'S ROLE IN MENTORSHIP AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING MENTEE'S SELF-CONFIDENT IN PERFORMING A TASK

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ABSTRACT

Mentors often play two salient roles in mentorship programs: communication and support. The ability of mentors to appropriately implement these roles may have a significant impact on mentees' self-confident in performing a task. Even though

the nature of this relationship is interesting, the role of mentor as an important determinant is given less emphasized in the tertiary mentorship research literature. Therefore, this study was undertaken to measure the correlated between mentor's role in mentorship and mentees 'self-confident to perform a task using self-report administered questionnaires collected from bachelor degree business student at a public research university in Peninsular Malaysia. The outcomes of SmartPLS path model displayed two major findings: first, communication was positively and significantly correlated with mentees 'self-confident in performing a task, secondly, support was positively and significantly correlated with mentees' self-confident in performing a task. The result confirmed that mentor's role in mentorship does act as an essential determinant of mentees 'self-confident to perform a task in the studied organization. Further, discussion, implications and conclusion are elaborated.

Keywords: mentorship, communication, support, self-confident to perform a task

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an ancient Greek literature, mentorship is first highlighted in the epic story of 'The Odyssey' written by Homer. In this story, Odysseus tells his loyal and experienced friend, namely, Mentor (a person who has great wisdom and trustworthy) to teach his son, namely, Telemachus (a mentee or protégé who has less experience) about the tips for handling challenging lifestyles before he goes to the Trojan War (Edlind & Haensly, 1985; Ismail et al., 2005, 2006; Merriam, 1993). Mentorship has transcended this classical story and has become an important field of education (Little et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 1991) and/or counseling (Gregson, 1994; Zuraidah et al., 2004) whereby mentors are represented by the elderly who have wisdom, experiences and can be trusted to educate young men who have little experience and knowledge (Little et al., 2010; Mohono-Mahlatsi & Tonder, 2006; Johnson et al., 1991; Russell & Adams, 1997; Wanguri, 1996). The traditional concept mentorship has been given new interpretations by contemporary educationists, social psychologists and management scholars in order to be in line with the current organizational development and challenges (Dennison, 2000; Ismail et

al., 2005, 2006; Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012; Oliver & Aggleton, 2002).

In today's organizations, mentorship is generally defined as an experienced employee who serves as a role model and provides support and direction to a protégé. Mentorship provide feedback regarding career plans and interpersonal development and are committed to helping the protégé succeed in the adult working world (Kram, 1985; Anderson & Shannon, 1988). It also acts as an instrument to develop group and/or individuals' potentials in carrying out duties and responsibilities, learn new techniques, and well-being of mentees (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Little et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 1991; Long, 2002; Noe et al., 2002). According to Kram (1985), mentorship 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 modelling, counselling, friendship and acceptance (Kram, 1985).

There is no one best mentorship program model to fit all organizations, because it has to be designed and implemented according to the uniqueness of

organizational contexts in terms of beliefs, policy, orientations, stresses, strengths and weaknesses (Irving et al., 2003; Ismail et al., 2005, 2006; Santos & Reigadas, 2002, 2005). These factors have influenced organizations in the designing and administering of the various types of mentorship program, especially informal one (e.g., specific demands, spontaneous and adhoc) and/or the ones dealing with formal relationship (e.g., structured and coordinated relationship between mentor and mentee, using standard norms, continuously action plans, time frame, and particular objectives). In organizations, formal and informal mentoring programs are viewed as equally important, but informal mentorship programs are often implemented to complement and strengthen formal mentorship programs in order to achieve organizational strategies and goal (Friday & Friday, 2002); Hansford & Enrich, 2006; Hansford et al., 2003; Ismail et al., 2005, 2006).

Among the areas that applied mentorship program include are health profession (Byrne & Keefe, 2002; Ljungberg et al. 2011), corporate and organizational settings (Lyness & Thompson, 2000) and academic context (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). According to

Byrne and Keefe (2002), mentorship is an effective strategy in various discipline including health profession, the aim which are to develop skills, expertise and leadership. In addition, mentorship program is used to help and facilitate patients to face and overcome psychosocial challenges in their lives (Ljungberg et al., 2011). In the other hand, in an academic context, student that undergo mentorship program obtain better academic achievement, complete more units completed per semester and show lower dropout rate than those who are not involved in mentorship program (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). Result of the studies show that many mentorship programs have been applied in various settings to help individuals in need.

A review of current literature on higher education of student development program literature highlights that effective mentorship programs have two important dimensions, i.e., communication and support (Bernier et al., 2005; Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012). In the context of university mentorship program, communication is generally defined as mentors openly delivering information about the procedures, content, tasks and objectives of the mentorship programs, conducting discussions about tasks that should be

learned, giving detailed explanations about the benefits of attending mentorship programs and providing performance feedback (Allen et al., 2005; Fox et al., 2010; Ismail et al., 2005, 2006). Conversely, support is broadly defined as mentors providing mentees emotional support (e.g., acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and guide them to properly apply in daily life) and instrumental support (e.g., assist mentees to adapt campus environments) at varying times (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Davis, 2007; Fox et al., 2010; Zuraidah et al., 2004).

Surprisingly, recent studies in university/faculty mentorship programs reveal that the ability of mentors to appropriately implement such mentorship characteristics may have a significant impact on positive mentee outcomes, especially self-confident (Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012; Rayle et al., 2006). From an adult learning perspective, self-confident is generally interpreted as individuals' beliefs and confidence about their abilities to perform certain functions (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007). For example, individuals who have high self-confident tend to learn, transfer learning, and put greater effort to overcome difficult situations and continuously improve his/her performance. Conversely,

individuals with low self-confident tend to exhibit minimal effort, tend to give up hope easily and have no confidence to deal with difficult situations (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007; Kozlowski et al., 2001).

The nature of this relationship is interesting, but the role of mentorship program as an important predictor of mentees' self-confident in performing a task is little explained in the research literature of higher education mentorship program (Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012; Santos and Reigadas, 2005). Many scholars argue that this situation is due to many factors. Previous studies have much emphasized on the mentorship program characteristics, employed a simple survey method to explain different respondent perceptions toward the types of mentorship program, used a simple correlation method to determine the strength of association between specific mentorship program and global mentee outcomes, and ignored the magnitude and nature of the relationship between mentorship program and mentees' self-confident in performing a task. Consequently, the studies have provided insufficient information to be used as guidelines by practitioners in understanding the complexity of mentorship program, and formulating strategic action plans to

improve the management of mentorship programs in dynamic institutions of higher learning (Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012; Rayle et al., 2006; Santos and Reigadas, 2005). This gap has motivated the researchers to uncover the nature of this relationship.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study has three major objectives: firstly, is to determine the levels of communication, support and mentees' self-confident in performing a task. Secondly, to examine the correlation between communication and mentees' self-confident in performing a task. Finally, is to examine the correlation between support and mentees' self-confident in performing a task.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several recent studies have used a direct effects model to discover mentorship activities based on different samples such as perceptions of 21 Malaysia teachers (Lyne M, 2013), perception of 39 big brothers/big sisters and undergraduate students mentors at an American university (DuBois and Neville, 1997), perceptions of 65 college students in a Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) at a four-year institution in the United States (Santos and Reigadas, 2005), and 527 female undergraduates in

Southwestern University (Rayle et al., 2006). The results of these studies reported that the readiness of mentors to appropriately implement communication and provide support in formal and/or informal mentorship relationships had motivates mentees to improve their self-confident in the respective organizations (DuBois and Neville, 1997; Rayle et al., 2006; Santos and Reigadas, 2005).

The empirical studies support the notion of adult learning theories. For example, Bandura's (1986, 1997) self-confident theory explains that individuals who believe in their capabilities will serve as a self-regulating agent for their behaviour and motivation such as effort, perseverance and resilience to be put on a task. According to the social cognitive view, self-confident is not a static trait, it is dynamic, directly changeable, and is linked to particular performance domains (Bandura, 1986; VanVianen, 1999). Self-confidence beliefs are usually determined and modified by four informational sources: performance attainment (personal accomplishments), vicarious experience (modeling), verbal persuasion, and physiological states and reactions (VanVianen, 1999). Application of these theories in institutions of higher learning shows that the readiness of mentors

to appropriately provide meaningful communication and adequate support in formal and/or informal mentorship relationships may lead to enhanced mentees' self-confident in organizations (DuBois and Neville, 1997; Rayle et al., 2006; Santos and Reigadas, 2005) does it was hypothesized that:

H1: There is a positive correlation between communication and mentees' self-confident in performing a task

H2: There is a positive correlation between support and mentees' self-confident in performing a task

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional research design where it allowed the researchers to integrate the mentorship program literature, the pilot study and the actual study as a main procedure to gather its empirical data. Using such methods may gather accurate data, decrease bias and increase quality of data being collected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Zikmund, 2000). This study was conducted to assess the relationship between mentorship program and mentees' self-confident in performing a task at a research university in Malaysia. For confidential

reasons, the name of the organizations used is kept anonymous. At the initial stage of data collection, the survey questionnaires were drafted based on the information gathered from the mentoring program literature. After that, a back translation technique was employed to translate the survey questionnaires into English and Malay languages in order to increase the validity and ensure the reliability of research findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Zikmund, 2000).

4.2 Participants

The target population of this study is undergraduate students in a research university in Malaysia. A convenient sampling technique was employed to distribute 150 survey questionnaires to undergraduate students in the organization. This sampling technique was chosen because the management of the organizations had not given the list of undergraduate students and this situation did not allow the researchers to randomly select respondents for this study. From the total number, 136 usable questionnaires from participants were returned to the researchers, yielding 90.7 percent of the response rate. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consents and on

voluntarily basis. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, showing that it may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Zikmund, 2000).

4.3 Measures

The survey questionnaire used in this study had three sections. Firstly, communication was measured using 4 items that were adapted from mentoring communication system literature (Foxon, 1993; Sullivan, 2000; Yamnill & McLean, 2001; Young & Cates, 2005). The elements used to measure communication are knowledge, understanding and information. Secondly, support was measured using 7 items that were adapted from mentoring support system literature (Tsai & Tai, 2003; Chiaburu & Takleab, 2005; Langhout et al., 2004; Rayle et al., 2006; Vieno et al., 2007). The elements used to measure support are motivation, opinion, praise and help. Thirdly, self-confident was measured using 9 items that were adapted from undergraduate student performance literature (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Butler and Winne, 1995; Rayle et al., 2006). The elements used to measure self-confident are belief and confident with the mentoring

program. All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 7-item Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree/dissatisfied” (1) to “strongly agree/satisfied” (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on undergraduate business student attitudes.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Sample Profile

The respondents' characteristics shows that majority of the respondents were female (80.1 percent), their ages varying from 19 to 21 years (73.5 percent), the highest education level amongst the respondents was matriculation certificate (75.0 percent). These respondents were third year students (77.2 percent), studying in the School of Management (54.4 percent), and who achieving CGPA between 3.33 to 3.66 (50.7 percent), and students who study in School of Management (54.4 percent).

5.2 Validity and Reliability Analyses

The confirmatory factor analysis was employed to assess the psychometric of survey questionnaire data. Table 1 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses. All constructs had the

values of average variance extracted (AVE) larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Henseler et al., 2009). Besides that, all constructs had the values of AVE square

root in diagonal were greater than the squared correlation with other constructs in off diagonal, showing that all constructs met the acceptable standard of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2009; Yang, 2009).

Table 1. The Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses.

Variable	AVE	Communication	Support	Self-confident
Communication	0.7997	0.8942		
Support	0.7222	0.57642	0.8498	
Self-confident	0.7348	0.66227	0.7590	0.8572

Table 2 shows the factor loadings and cross loadings for different constructs. The correlation between items and factors had higher loadings than other items in the different constructs, as well as the loadings of variables were greater than 0.7 in their own constructs in the model are considered adequate (Henseler et al., 2009). In sum, the validity of measurement model met the criteria. While, The values of composite

reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha were greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in this study had high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2009; Nunally & Benstein, 1994). These statistical analyses confirmed that the measurement scales met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Results of Factor Loadings and Cross Loadings for Different Construct.

Construct/ Item	Cross factor Loading	Composite Reability	Cronbach Alpha
Communication	0.887-0.899	0.941	0.917
Support	0.809-0.875	0.948	0.936
Self-Confident	0.830-0.879	0.961	0.955

5.3 Analysis of Constructs

Table 3 shows that the mean values for the variables are between 5.3 and 5.7, showing that the levels of communication, support and academic performance are ranging from high (4) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the

independent variable (i.e., communication and support) and the dependent variable (i.e., academic performance) are less than 0.90, showing the data are not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al, 2006).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation analysis (r)		
			1	2	4
1. Communication	5.7	.81	1		
2. Support	5.3	.99	.57**	1	
3. Self-Confident	5.6	.87	.66**	.76**	1

Note: Significant at ** $p < 0.01$

5.4 Outcomes of Testing Hypotheses 1 and 2

Figure 1 shows the outcomes of SmartPLS path model for testing the direct effects model. In terms of exploratory of the model, the inclusion of communication and support in the analysis had explained 65 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Specifically, results of testing hypothesis highlighted two important findings: first, communication significantly correlated with

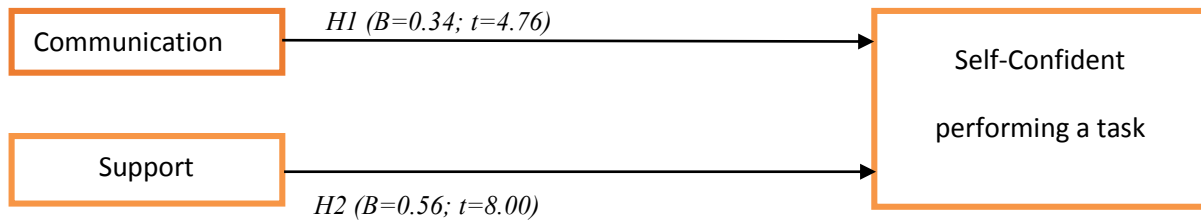
self-efficacy ($\beta=0.34$; $t=4.76$), therefore H1 was supported. Second, support significantly correlated with self-efficacy ($\beta=0.56$; $t=8.00$), therefore H2 was supported. In sum, the result confirms that mentoring program does act as an important determinant of mentees' self-efficacy in the organizational sample.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

(Mentoring Program)

R Square=0.65



Note: Significant at $t > 1.96$

Figure 1. The Outcomes of SmartPLS Path Model.

In order to determine a global fit PLS path model, we carried out a global fit measure (GoF) based on Wetzels et al.'s (2009) guideline as follows: $GoF = \sqrt{\text{MEAN}(\text{Communality of Endogenous}) \times \text{MEAN}(R^2)} = 0.70$, signifying that it exceeds the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of

R^2 . This result confirms that the PLS path model has better explaining power in comparison with the baseline values (GoF small=0.1, GoF medium=0.25, GoF large=0.36). It also provides strong support to validate the PLS model globally (Wetzel et al., 2009).

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study confirm that mentorship program does act as an important predictor of mentees' self-confident in performing a task in the organization studied. In the context of this study, mentors plan and implement mentorship activities based on the stakeholder's needs and expectations. The

majority of the respondents perceived that the levels of communication, support and self-confident is high. This situation explains that the readiness of mentors to properly implement communication and support program has enhanced mentees' self-confident in performing a task in the organization.

This study presents three major implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study highlight that communication and support have been important determinants of mentees' self-confident in performing a task. This result is consistent with studies by DuBois and Neville (1997), Santos and Reigadas (2005), Rayle et al. (2006), and Ismail and Ridzwan (2012).

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaires used in this study have met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. This may lead to the production of valid and reliable findings. With regards to practical contributions, the findings of this study may be used to improve the design and administration of mentorship programs in institutions of higher learning. Compatible suggestion would be: firstly, update training content and methods for mentors to in order to improve their competencies in teaching, counselling and guiding students who have different ability levels. Secondly, form mentorship groups according to students' academic achievement in order to ease mentors fulfilling their needs and

expectations. Thirdly, mentors who have high teaching loads and active in research, but can show high commitment in improving student studies need to be given a high priority in getting better promotions. Fourthly, plan various kinds of learning activities in order to attract students who have different interests and capabilities to be actively involved in mentorship programs. If these suggestions are given more attention this may motivate mentees to support mentorship program strategy and goals.

7. CONCLUSION

The study tested a conceptual framework based on the higher education mentorship program research literature. The confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the instrument used in this study met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. Thus, the results of SmartPLS path model showed two important findings: first, communication was positively and significantly correlated with mentees' self-confident in performing a task. Second, support was positively and significantly correlated with mentees' self-confident in performing a task. This result confirms that mentorship program does act as an important predictor of mentees' self-confident in the organizational sample. This

result also support and broadened mentorship program research literature mostly published in Western countries. Therefore, current research and practice within higher education student development program needs to consider communication and support as fundamental elements in the mentorship program domain. This study further suggests that the readiness

of mentors to practice openness communication and provide adequate support will be important factors that may induce subsequent positive mentee outcomes (e.g., commitment, career, psychosocial and ethics). These, positive outcomes may lead to enhanced the performance of higher learning institutions in an area of knowledge.

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