

## An Analysis of Mentoring's Effect on Career Development

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### Abstract

The past decade has seen a renewed importance in the impact of mentoring on employee's career development. The scope and analysis of this paper is to investigate through a case study the effect of mentor's methods, role, features and functions that contribute to employees' career development with non-dependent work relation. The research part of this paper includes a special questionnaire which is based on CAS model. Obtaining data were derived from questionnaires and administered online to 164 employees in the company. For the purpose of the study, descriptive data analysis and One-way ANOVA command were applied to extract useful information and test the hypotheses using the SPSS software. The empirical examination revealed the perceived usefulness of mentoring on employee's career development. According with descriptive analysis, the company proves that uses a very remarkable system of mentoring and there is a relationship between mentoring and employees' career development. Through hypotheses testing, it was concluded that there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication with mentor's characteristics and functions and what employees think about the institution of mentoring. Finally, it is proved that there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their career development and there is no relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and the institution of mentoring.

**Keywords.** Mentoring, Career Development, Mentoring Programs, Non-Dependent Work Relation.

### 1. Introduction

In the last few years there has been a growing interest in the concept of mentoring. However, a small number of firms provide an effective mentoring program for employees in order to improve their career development. However, mentorship is an important and useful tool for companies which want to develop their employees (Nankivell & Shoolbred, 1997).

Over the years, mentoring has been linked to career development in various professions. In order to provide career development, mentoring programs should be established and implemented by mentor (Foster & MacLeod, 2004). Professions map is constantly changing, jobs require knowledge, multiple and complex skills,

teamwork, initiative and creativity (Chalikias et al., 2014). It is recommended that companies should utilize mentoring function as a human resources development tool. This will improve employee's knowledge, skills and abilities as well lead to the realization of career goals and objectives.

It is therefore necessary in many cases for new employees to receive mentoring in order to successfully cope with new challenges through career development (Ktena et al., 2018). The role of mentoring is assumed by mentor. Mentor is a person who supervises the career development of mentee through teaching, counselling, psychological support and protection.

The objective of this research is to determine the effect of mentoring on career development. The research provides new insights regarding the benefits and reasons for undertaking the mentoring programs in companies.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. The relationship between mentor and mentee**

A number of theories have been utilized to explain the relationship between mentor and mentee. In general, mentor is a person who oversees the career development of another person-mentee, who is typically smaller at age (Zapantis et al., 2017). Mentor also contributes through professional development and the development of mentee's personality. Mentor can actually achieve this goal through teaching, counseling, providing psychological support and sometimes offering support and sponsorship. Mentors provide appropriate support and guidance.

In 1985, Kram conducted a research which included data collection and analysis from interviews. The results of this study proposed two functions that are implemented by most researchers and can be applied today: (1) Career functions and (2) Psychosocial functions. It is important to be noted that Career functions are related to specific support actions and increase the chances of mentee to experience success in his career (Doughery et al., 2007). In this context, mentor provides the following functions (Russel & Adams, 1997):

- Sponsorship
- View and exposure
- Coaching
- Protection
- Participation and assistance in demanding work

Mentor's action depends on the organization and the role he wants to play in it. Mentoring process would be successful if mentor should have the ability to respond to any need and it's important to have intelligence, integrity, professional skill, right attitude, enthusiasm, role modelling and share the accumulated knowledge (Buddeberg-Fischer & Herta, 2006). Furthermore, a mentor should also be flexible

and willing to accept any decision that can take his mentee (McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1993).

On the other hand, mentor's psychosocial functions can give mentee a balanced social and psychological state, while these functions will help him to develop a sense of competition and the recognition of itself as an integral part of the company (Kram, 1985; Seibert, 1999). According to this context, mentor takes care of the following (Seibert, 1999):

- Offers his attention, time and assistance to the mentee
- Gives support, feedback and encouragement
- Shares personal aspects of his life, where relevant
- Provide both career-related and psychosocial support

## **2.2. The importance of mentoring on career development and counselling**

Mentoring offers a number of benefits and this is why various companies offer employees the opportunity to learn from mentors through mentoring programs. Mentoring in its simplest form indicates the aid that generally a person provides to another person (Barton, 2001). Also, mentoring is a continuous relationship between a more experienced person and a less experienced person, which aims for a success of a long-term career path. Summarizing all the above definitions, the characteristics of the mentoring process are the following (McDonald, 2003):

- Experience plays a key role, because mentor is a person of greater experience who guides a person of lesser experience.
- Mentoring relationship seems to be dynamic, flexible and evolving because both sides participate actively.
- The purpose of this relationship is to help student (trainee) to gain knowledge and experience.
- Mentoring relationship doesn't have the same orientation with respect to the relationship between teacher and student.

In this way mentoring is an integral part of an effective and ongoing training. Kantas and Hatzi (1991) proposed a definition, in which career development is described as the evolutionary course of a person, regarding his orientation in the workplace and the decisions he takes for his career. This term can be used to understand that the result of a long-term evolutionary process is the main factor for a person to begin his career, not an instantaneous decision and that usually is related with individual's psychological evolution.

In the context of mentee's career development, mentor takes care of the following (Bernard, 1996; McDonald, 2003):

- Vision and organization's purpose
- Useful teaching skills
- Promote a sponsorship
- Transmission of information

- Job assignment
- Encouragement for self-criticism and self-esteem
- Counseling and guidance
- Provide opportunities for the individual to interact be a part with an organization

It is proved that these functions have a positive effect on mentee’s socialization and job satisfaction (Tsitmideli et al., 2016). At the same time, mentee can better understand organization’s goals, policies and strategy (Chao, 1997).

These behaviors encourage the development of an interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee, in which confidence, respect and intimacy are dominated (Seibert, 1999). According to Nathan & Hill (2006), career counseling includes the stages as presented in the following figure.



**Figure 1.** Stages of Career Counseling (Source: Nathan & Hill 2006)

### **2.3. A Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) approach to mentoring**

Besides the formal organizational structure and its procedures that are reflected in documents, an organization has also an informal network of human relationships and its dynamics. This network has proved in practice that is powerful and can protect an organization from a deficiency balance. Classic mentoring is unable to capture and explain the elements of complexity.

The CAS is defined by Palmberg (2009) as "a set of interdependent agents forming an integrated whole, where an agent may be a person or an organization". It is based on the complexity thinking and systems theory and thus it allows a complex, dynamic relationship in perceived structure. However, many researchers have tried to develop a model that will “combine” better with their experience. They have used CAS for this purpose because it can better describe the participant relationships. Mentoring relationships will never be stable and always respond and adapt to their own results as well as the imports of the wider environment. This dynamic and continuous streaming is crucial for the learning process. The goal of a mentoring relationship is to work effectively in a dynamic and emerging context (Fryer, 2011; Palmberg, 2009). Traditional models have failed and now new dynamic relationships were recognized between mentor and mentee and the impact of external factors in a binary relationship.

### 3. Research methodology

As presented in the literature review, there is a number of mentoring functions that may affect employees' attitudes and career development. This research examines a representative of the population sample in order to estimate the effect of mentoring on employees' career development. The data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire addressed to 164 employees which consists of closed questions and Likert-scale questions. The questionnaire was based on CAS model to examine the effect of mentoring on employee's career development. The questions were pre-tested in a pilot study. For data processing, transforming data collected into a form appropriate to analysis and hypothesis testing with One-Way ANOVA Method, statistical package SPSS was used.

### 4. Research results

#### 4.1. Sample demographics

This section presents the main findings obtained from the survey. Initially, respondents' demographic characteristics were presented and then the testing of the research hypotheses is taking place. As far as the respondents' gender is concerned, the majority were males (57.93%) and 42.07% were females. Moreover, in the age distribution, it appears that many of the respondents belonged to the 45-54 age range (34.76%) followed by the 35-44 age range (28.05%). Also, 0.61% are aged from 18 to 23 years old, 20.12% from 24 to 34 years old, 14.63% from 55 to 64 years old and 1.83% over 65 years old. In addition, 53% of employees working in the company of 1 to 5 years, the 13 % less than 1 year, 21% from 6 to 10 years and 13% over 10 years. Furthermore, the basic advantages of nondependent work relation are the flexible schedule (34.76%) and creativity (30.49%), followed by 18.90% for non-leadership style, freedom of expression (8.54%), ability to work elsewhere (5.48%) and other (1.83%).

At Table 1, the results describe employees' opinion about their career development and mentors, which are based on selected questions. For the first question, employees answered with a great percentage (61%) that they rarely feel uncertainty for job's result. Also, they have never (50%) and rarely (42%) felt that they don't know how they could develop themselves professionally. Furthermore, they responded that their mentor had never (75.6%) or rarely (18.9%) promised that he will do certain things and then failed his promise. It is very important to note that they never (78%) or rarely (15.2%) wished to have another mentor. Although, mentor always (44.5%), very often (28.7%) or sometimes (17.1%) presents them many useful ideas on addressing specific problems and they always (61%) communicate with mentor. Finally, when something concerns the respondents, their mentor always (53.7%), very often (18.9%) or sometimes (18.3) listens them patiently.

**Table 1.** Employees’ opinion about their career development

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I feel uncertainty for my job’s results.	0.63%	4.27%	13.41%	60.96%	20.73%
I feel I do not know how I could develop myself professionally.		1.83%	6.1%	42.07%	50%
My mentor promises me that he will do certain things and then fails his promise.	2.5%	10,00%	10,00%	77.5%	
I wish I had another mentor.	1.86%	3.02%	1.83%	15.24%	78.05%
When something concerns me, my mentor listens patiently.	53.66%	18.9%	18.29%	5.49%	3.66%
I wish my mentor have more time for me.		9.1%	16.5%	42.7%	31.7%
Mentor presents me many useful ideas on addressing specific problems.	44.51%	28.66%	17.07%	6.1%	3.66%
How often do you communicate with your mentor?	60.98%	19.51%	14.02%	3.05%	2.44%

Table 2 illustrates employee’s opinions for their mentor’s functions, which shows that more than 50% of the respondents strongly agree for each question separately. The results from the responses of employees as mentees about mentor’s items (attributes and functions) showed a positive interaction on mentorship quality and the relationship between mentee-mentor were highly productive.

**Table 2.** Employees’ opinion about their mentors

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My mentor is easily accessible.	58.54%	35.37%	4.68%	0.61%	0.68%
My mentor is characterized by professionalism and integrity.	74.39%	18.9%	4.31%	1.22%	1.18%
My mentor is suitably qualified in this field.	72.56%	21.34%	3.66%	2.44%	
My mentor is easily accessible.	58.54%	33.54%	5.12%	2.19%	0.61%
My mentor encouraged me	64.63%	29.27%	4.88%	1.22%	

in my work.					
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#### 4.2. Research hypotheses development

Through the questionnaire and literature review, the hypotheses above were created and studied in order to be accepted or rejected using One-Way ANOVA analysis. In this study the following hypotheses have been formulated:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and mentor’s characteristics and functions*

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and what employees think about the institution of mentoring*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their career development*

*H<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and the institution of mentoring*

A common parameter in the first three hypotheses is the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the fourth hypothesis examines the advantages of non-dependent work relation. The results for each hypothesis separately are presented in the following section.

#### 4.3. Research hypotheses testing

Table 3 presents the hypotheses that were tested by the One-Way ANOVA method. Table 3 shows that many variables have a strong correlation related to relationship characteristics, e.g. if there is consistency and confidentiality between mentor and mentee, faith to mentor and the institution of mentoring, a sense of trust etc.

**Table 3.** One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypotheses	Significance-Relationship	Result	Explanation
H <sub>1</sub> : "There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and mentor’s characteristics and functions"	Significant (0.002) Positive	Accepted	The p value is 0.002, which is less than 0.05; H <sub>1</sub> is rejected
H <sub>2</sub> : "There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and what employees think about the institution of mentoring"	Significant (0.002) Positive	Accepted	The p value is 0.002, which is less than 0.05; H <sub>2</sub> is rejected
H <sub>3</sub> : "There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their	Not Significant (0.657) Positive	Rejected	The p value is 0.657, which is more than 0.05; H <sub>3</sub> is accepted

career development"			
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**Table 3.** Contd.

Hypotheses	Significance-Relationship	Result	Explanation
H4: "There is no relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and the institution of mentoring"	Not Significant (0.196) Positive	Rejected	The p value is 0.196, which is more than 0.05; H4 is accepted

Based on Table 3, the results for the 1st hypothesis revealed that the highest average score was observed in employees who "never" communicate with mentor (300.12) and the lowest (-30.24) to those who communicate "very often". Since  $P=0.002$  (5% significance) the evaluation scores (frequency communication) differ statistically significant, the alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected. The differences of the averages aren't statistically significant between the frequencies "few times a year" with "never" and between the frequencies "week" and "never". According with the above (sig. =  $0.002 < 0.05$ ), there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and mentor's characteristics and functions.

The results for hypothesis H2 of this research showed that the highest average score was observed in employees who "never" communicate with mentor (173.09) and the lowest (-26.19) to those who communicate "very often". The observed differences in the frequency communication were statistically significant since  $P=0.002$ . The differences of the averages are not statistically significant between the frequencies "few times a year" with "never" and between the frequencies "every week" and "never". According with the above, sig. =  $0.002 < 0.05$ , H0 is rejected and H1 is confirmed. There is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and what employees think about the institution of mentoring.

Regarding with the 3rd hypothesis, sig. =  $0.657 > 0.05$ , H1 is rejected and H0 is confirmed. There is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their career development.

Furthermore, the results of this study for the 4th Hypothesis revealed that sig. =  $0.196 > 0.05$ , H1 is rejected and H0 is confirmed. There is no relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and the institution of mentoring.

## 5. Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the contribution of mentoring on employee's career development. The analysis and simulation indicate that methods

(frequency and process communication with mentor, complaint handling process etc) that applied during guidance, can contribute on employees' career development. According with the frequency of communication as shown by research, as long as employees feel less the need to communicate with their mentor, they become independent and can lead a group on their own. It is also noted that as much uncertainty as an employee feels for career development, he needs more motivator factors to increase productivity and improve his skills. The most important issue for employees is to be able to apply the knowledge acquired from the mentoring programs to resolve real problems at the workplace.

Within this prospect, this research examined four hypotheses: (1): If there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and mentor's characteristics and functions, (2): If there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and what employees think about the institution of mentoring (3): If there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their career development, and (4): If there is a relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and the institution of mentoring. On the one hand, the results revealed that there is a difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication with (1) mentor's characteristics and functions and (2) what employees think about the institution of mentoring. On the other hand, there is no difference between the frequency of mentor-mentee communication and (3) the feelings of uncertainty that employees feel for their career development and there is no relationship between the advantages of non-dependent work relation and (4) the institution of mentoring. From these results could be presumed that mentoring and career development are two variables that are functionally related. Also, it seems that the more rarely an employee communicates with his mentor, the observed score is higher in results, something that is apparently opposite to the theory.

This paper has clearly shown that the most desirable relationship between new business partners and their mentors is the one that combines the interactions to fulfill procedural requirements and develops a genuine partnership, based on professional and interpersonal relationship. This approach is extracted from the results of communication with mentor, where the observed differences are statistically significant. The best way to achieve this kind of relationship is to help both mentors and new partners to learn and understand the importance of a quality relationship, attitudes, behavior and interpersonal skills which are required to develop a successful mentoring relationship.

These results describe for the first time new approaches about mentor's institution. More specifically, it was stated that mentoring relationships will never be constant and always respond and adapt to their own results as well as on wider environmental influences.

Mentoring relationship programs should be designed as tools to redefine professional culture (Ktena et al., 2018). According with this approach everyone who

is involved must work for a deeper sense of mentoring relationship, dealing with it as a way to prepare new partners becoming effective agents of change. All those who involved directly or indirectly in mentoring relationship should realize the opportunity to rebuild the profession. The next few years will be a time of career redefinition and for employees who don't have dependent employment relationship. At the beginning of the new era of information that has already started, employee must act with the properties of a freelancer (Skordoulis et al., 2017). To sum up, if a company adopts an organizational method like providing emotional support to employees, employee engagement will be increased; in this way the company's strategic plan will be addressed in a more effective way (Skordoulis et al., 2015). Finally, it is obvious that a society with employees and businesses who create a level of communication will lead to a society of interdependent people for improving and maintaining high quality services and business efficiency.

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