

Mentoring and Affective Commitment: A Study among New Generation Private Sector Bank Employees



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This study explores the effect of mentoring on affective commitment of employees towards the organization. Past researches show that the emotional overtones of affective commitment enhance employees' likelihood to stay with the organization and behaviors that benefit the employers. Many organizations are invested in formal mentoring programs in order to improve employees' affective organizational commitment (AOC). The objective of this quantitative study is to examine the relationship between mentoring and AOC in selected new generation private sector banks in Kerala. Empirical data is drawn using pretested questionnaire. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: Career mentoring, Psychosocial mentoring, Affective commitment

1. Introduction

The CEO's of private banking sector in the current global scenario are facing various challenges, especially in retaining top talented employees. The average cost of replacing today's defuncting workforce is eating away the profitability of even the healthiest banking organizations. So the best and brightest pool must be selected and retained. So an effective program must be employed to foster an environment that encourages the employee to remain with the organization.

Many researchers suggested that there is a strong negative correlation between voluntary organizational turnover and affective organizational commitment (AOC; e.g., Abbott, White, & Charles, 2005; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). Since AOC is a precursor in explaining voluntary turnover intention; it is an important variable to study. Therefore AOC is the dependent variable in the study.

Mentoring is an activity that organizations can use to enhance employees AOC. Those who receive mentoring from a senior member of an organization would tend to experience higher levels of organizational commitment. Two main reasons have been put forth to theoretically explain the positive relationship between effective mentoring and organizational commitment. First, invoking the affective component of organizational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990), the mentoring process is likely to enhance the extent to which the protégé's need for affection and belonging are satisfied at work because employees perceive they are being treated with consideration, thereby strengthening their sense of attachment to the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1999; Orpen 1997). Second, satisfying mentoring relationships with important senior management may make the organization more attractive, comparatively, further increasing organization attachment/commitment (Orpen, 1997). Mentoring (Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa, 2004) is conducive to enhancing employees' AOC, which in turn indirectly affects their intentions to stay with an organization (Vecchio & Norris, 1996).

Many organizations have been offering formal mentoring programs to their employees aimed at socializing newcomers, attracting talented jobseekers, increasing job satisfaction, enhancing diversity within the management ranks, and reducing turnover intentions (Allen & O'Brien, 2007; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Spitzmüller et al., 2008; Willems & Smet, 2007). Mentoring programs are likely to succeed in those organizations whose cultures support learning and development, whose norms highlights collaboration over competition, and whose reward systems acknowledge employee development (Kram, 1985; Wanberg, Welsh, & Heezlett, 2003).

2. Significance of the Study

Common amongst many organizations including banks today is an increase in information technology along with similar performance standards that make it easier for skilled workers to move from one organization to another (Rousseau & Shperling, 2004). Affective commitment has been shown to be negatively related to protégés' actual turnover behavior and positively related to mentoring (Payne & Huffman, 2005). Many organizations are implemented mentoring program expecting to enhance affective commitment. Carrying out a formal mentoring program demands the investment of organizational resources. Financial efforts are needed for program implementation and coordination (Armstrong, Allison, & Hayes, 2002). Additionally, formal mentoring programs often require dedication from organizational members with highly regarded experience to serve as mentors (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). These are the resources needed in order for formal

mentoring programs to be developed and carried out effectively. Surprisingly this area has got not much attention, so there is a need for research aiming at understanding the effectiveness of resource-consuming interventions (e.g., Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006). So this study investigates the relationship between mentoring and affective organizational commitment among new generation private sector bank employees.

3. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Mentoring

While our interest in mentoring is relatively young, mentoring is an ancient archetype originated in Greek mythology. A figure in Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was a wise and faithful advisor entrusted to protect Odysseus's son, Telemachus, while Odysseus sailed against Troy. Moreover, while the roots of mentoring can be traced to mythology, mentoring is no myth; it is a very real relationship that has been an integral part of social life and the world of work for thousands of years. Levinson et al. (1978) were among the first researchers to explore mentoring relationships in the context of adult development. They concluded from their study of forty men that a relationship with a mentor was developmentally important to protégés focused on achieving career success (Levinson et al., 1978). Further research was conducted by Kram (1983, 1985), who interviewed mentor-protégé pairs in order to gain insight into work-related developmental relationships that provided mentoring functions. Much of the nascent research examining mentoring in workplaces indicated that mentoring plays an important role in a protégé's career success (Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978; Roche, 1979). Mentoring has been defined as a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé's career (Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978; see also reviews by Noe et al., 2002; Ragins, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2003). The definition offered by Bozeman and Feeney (2007) is whereby mentoring "is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development" (p. 731). Mentoring involves informal communication, usually face-to-face occurring over time "between someone perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protege)" (p. 731).

Mentoring Functions

Kram (1983), one of the pioneers on the research of mentoring has been credited with doing the most detailed work on the mentoring process. According to her studies, Mentors are generally viewed as providing two types of functions to their protégés. First, mentors may offer career functions. Career functions involve a range of behaviors that help protégés "learn the ropes" and prepare them for hierarchical advancement within their organizations. These behaviors include coaching protégés, sponsoring their advancement, increasing their positive exposure and visibility, and offering them protection and challenging assignments. Career mentoring behaviors involve task-related aspects of work and are often positively linked to more objective measures of success (Joiner et al., 2004). Benefits of career mentoring include extrinsic success factors such as compensation, promotion, and career mobility. There exists a strong link between career mentoring activities and positive employee outcomes (Allen, Poteet, Russell, & Dobbins, 1997; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008), including AOC, job involvement, and reduced turnover intention (Joiner et al., 2004; Kraimer et al., 2010; Noe, 1988). Mentors often provide their protégés with psychosocial support and opportunities for development; they add to the general satisfaction of protégés above and beyond the extrinsic rewards they can secure for their protégés (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008; Russell & Adams, 1997). Second, mentors may provide psychosocial functions. Psychosocial functions build on trust, intimacy, and interpersonal bonds in the relationship and include behaviors that enhance the protégé's professional and personal growth, identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy. They include mentoring behaviors such as offering acceptance and confirmation and providing counseling, friendship, and role-modeling. The psychosocial functions of mentoring represent a deeper, more intense mentoring relationship and often depend more on relationship quality than on career function (Allen et al., 2004). Psychosocial mentoring may improve an individual's ability and effectiveness, help to reduce work-related stress (Greiman, 2007), evolve into a strong emotional bond between the mentor and the protege (Kram, 1985), and become a positive, pleasurable interpersonal contact (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Though Scandura & Ragins (1993), in their work categorized the area of role modeling as a third dimension distinct from psychosocial support.

Affective Commitment

AOC is selected as dependent variable in this study because of the emotional reactions employee experience in response to mentoring. AOC is defined as the "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer et al., 2002, p. 21). In many studies AOC shows a positive relationship with employee beneficial outcomes such as reduced turnover intention and increased job satisfaction (Magni & Pennarola, 2008; Reid, Allen, et al., 2008) and a negative relationship with undesirable employee outcomes. (Freund, 2005). AOC is the only form of organizational commitment that exert influence on employee well-being as a result of being negatively related to both stress and work-family conflict (Meyer et al., 2002). AOC involves emotional attachment, identification, and involvement (Meyer & Allen, 1984) in response to events in the organization (e.g., mentoring events), and can occur cognitively and/or affectively. In both theory and empirical studies, AOC results from experiences or events at work and often precedes employee outcomes and enduring work attitudes (Miner et al., 2005; Pare & Tremblay, 2007; Restubog, Borida, & Tang, 2006; Rousseau, 1995; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In sum, organizations and employees may benefit from organizational initiatives that can positively influence employee levels of AC.

Mentoring and Affective Commitment

Mentoring can be used to enhance employees' emotional attachment to the organization because of the closeness of relationship between mentor and the protégé. This attachment encourages identification with and involvement in the organization. Kram (1985) suggests that some of the mentoring functions that a mentor provides to a protégé may contribute to an "... emotional bond that underlies the relationship" (p. 32). Role modeling contributes to an emotional attachment between a mentor and a protégé because the protégé identifies with the mentor (Kram, 1985). A mentor who provides counseling gives a protégé the opportunity to talk freely about concerns and problems (Kram, 1985). The friendship function also encourages an emotional attachment because a mentor interacts socially with a protégé to encourage positive informal exchanges (Kram, 1985). Employees who feel a supervisor's supportive and caring behavior may attribute such behavior to the supervisor and to the organization's general culture which would positively influence affective commitment (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001); thus, it is possible that support, protection, friendship from a mentor will foster affective commitment. Mentoring can be appraised by protégés as a positive or a negative experience (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004). Consequently, the direction and strength of the relationship between mentoring and AC are likely to be affected by the quality of mentoring. Study conducted in the public accounting arena offered evidence of positive links between mentoring and the three forms of OC, with AC being most strongly related to mentoring (Stallworth, 2003). Payne and Huffman's (2005) study of army officers found that mentees exhibited higher commitment (both affective and continuance) than officers without mentors, and that those individuals with supervisors as their mentors had higher levels of commitment than those who did not. The authors didn't identify any differences between the type of mentoring received (i.e., career, psychosocial) but acknowledge that the types of measures used may have affected that outcome.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between career mentoring and affective organizational commitment
2. To study the relationship between psychosocial mentoring and affective organizational commitment

Hypotheses

The vast majority of mentoring literature has concentrated on more objective issues such as salary or promotion (e.g., Allen et al., 2004; Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa, 2004) rather than on more intrinsic issues such as affective organizational commitment (AOC) or job involvement. But, emotional reactions and other subjective issues do matter. Researchers have noted positive correlations between one or the other of the mentoring dimensions and AOC (e.g., Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Siebert, 1999), and Joiner et al. (2004) hypothesized that AOC displays a natural convergence with both psychosocial and career mentoring. Several researchers (e.g., Joiner et al., 2004; Payne & Huffman, 2005) contend that the relationships between the two main mentoring dimensions and AOC remain under researched. In this study we examine the relationship of career and psychosocial mentoring with affective commitment

H1: Career mentoring is positively related to AOC of new generation private sector bank employees

H2: Psychosocial Mentoring is positively related to AOC of new generation private sector bank employees

4. Methods

Sample

The sample for hypothesis testing consisted of 36 employees working in new generation private sector banks in Kottayam district. Convenience sampling was adopted. Data were collected from the employees working in Axis bank, ICICI bank and HDFC bank.

Measures

All survey items came from previously validated and reliable scales, and were tested for reliability. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Career and psychosocial mentoring were measured using Mentoring Functions Questionnaire (MFQ-9) from Scandura and Ragins (1993) scale involving question like "My mentor helps me coordinate professional goals", "I share personal problem with my mentor", "I exchange confidences with my mentor". AOC was measured using 6 item scale developed by Allen & Meyer (1997) involving "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization", "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own".

Analysis and Results

The data of this study is analyzed using SPSS 21.0

Reliability Analysis

The overall alpha quotient for mentoring functions questionnaire is 0.720. The alpha quotient for affective organizational commitment questionnaire is 0.684

Correlation matrix

	Mean	1	2	3
1.Psychoocialmentoring	3.08	1	.606**	-.038
2.Career mentoring	3.88	.606**	1	-.065
3.Affective commitment	3.21	-.038	-.038	1

** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level

The mean scores of the variables psychosocial mentoring ($M = 3.08$), career mentoring ($M = 3.88$), affective commitment ($M = 3.21$) was found to be average.

The analysis of the correlation matrix shows that there is no correlation between psychosocial mentoring and affective commitment ($r = -.038$, $p = .412$). Also career mentoring and affective commitment is not correlated ($r = -.065$, $p = .352$). Thus the hypotheses H1 and H2 are rejected

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Research on the concepts mentoring and affective commitment are in the budding stage in the Indian context. The relationship between these variables were already tested and proved in the western countries. This study examined the relationship between mentoring and affective commitment in the banking sector because most of the new generation banks are investing the organizational resources in mentoring programmes in order to reap the proposed benefits like affective commitment which results in reduced turnover behavior. But the results showed that there is no correlation between career mentoring, psychosocial mentoring and affective commitment. The result is against the findings of previous studies where career, psychosocial mentoring and affective commitment are correlated (e.g., Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Siebert, 1999; and Joiner et al. 2004). Based on an experiential survey with the employees and analysis, the researcher found out that the employees are not emotionally bonded to the mentor since they are concerned about the confidentiality of the relationship. They are in dearth of proper guidance regarding the mentoring activities. Being time a constrain, the employees find it difficult to communicate with their mentors regularly during the working hours. Some employees reported unsolved agonies that they shared with the mentor and also some mentors are not physically proximate to them. This also leads to an unsuccessful mentor protégé relationship. In short there is a major problem in implementation of the mentoring programme among the new generation private banks of Kerala.

The present study has implications for the managers so that they can look deep into the issue since the organizations are investing its resources in this program expecting positive outcomes. Management should evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring relationship on a regular basis from mentor' and protégé's perspective. If fixed time is allotted instead of busy working hours for mentoring programme the mentor and protégé can utilize it in an effective manner. It is seen that most of the employees are comfortable with peers rather than superiors to establish a relationship, which make them feel the organization a better place to work. So the organizations can utilize peer mentoring as a tool to enhance AOC, prior to that organizations must ensure its compatibility in the real working environment.

The present study suffered from some limitations like small sample size and limited area of investigation, which might not be true sample of the whole population of new generation private sector banks. So before generalization, there is a need to conduct an in depth study covering larger sample broader areas of investigation. Future researchers can envisage the relationship between mentoring and turnover intention through affective commitment as a mediator. The concept peer mentoring has received little attention in the Indian context. So researchers may look into this newly seeded mentoring type.

6. References

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