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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study attempted to assess the effects of the personal characteristics of career stage, job involvement, having been previously mentored, and sex on whether or not individuals act as mentors themselves and the type of mentoring support (career or psychosocial) provided to mentees. Data were collected from 140 university faculty members through the use of a questionnaire. The results of the analyses revealed a significant difference in mentoring by career stage: only 24% of respondents in the early career stage were mentors, whereas 68% of those in the mid-career stage and 52% of those in the late career stage were mentors. It was found that mentors in the early career stage provided more psychosocial support than career support, whereas mentors in the mid-career stage provided both career and psychosocial mentoring. The difference between mentoring activities by high job involved individuals and low job involved individuals was not significant. It appeared that the type of support (career or psychosocial) mentors would offer to their mentees was related to the type of support they received from their own mentors. There was no significant difference in frequency of becoming mentors by gender. These findings suggest that mentoring activities of faculty members vary by career stage but not by gender, level of job involvement, or by the presence or absence of a past mentor. Results also showed that more psychosocial support is provided to mentees than career support. (NB)

The Effects of Personal Characteristics on Mentoring Activities

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Abstract

This exploratory study attempted to assess the effects of the personal characteristics of career stage, job involvement, having been previously mentored, and sex on whether or not individuals mentor and the type of mentoring support (career or psychosocial) provided to mentees. Data were collected from university faculty members through the use of a questionnaire. The results of the analyses showed support for some hypotheses and revealed trends in the data worth pursuing with future research, particularly in the relationship between job involvement and mentoring.

Introduction

Mentoring is becoming increasingly popular as organizations learn about its potential benefits to the mentor, mentee, and the organization. However, little is known about the extent to which mentoring occurs, who typically serves as mentor, and what functions are most frequently provided to the mentee. Kram (1983) differentiated two basic mentoring functions: career and psychosocial. Career functions prepare the mentor for growth and advancement, and include sponsorship, exposure and visibility, and coaching. Psychosocial functions enhance the mentee's sense of competence and identity, and include providing acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of personal characteristics on

the extent of mentoring activity and the types of mentoring functions provided.

Method

This study investigated the influence of personal characteristics, including career stage, job involvement, having been mentored, and sex on two areas:

1. whether or not an individual acts as a mentor, and
2. the type of support, either career or psychosocial, offered to mentees.

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers to measure the extent and type of mentoring provided by the respondent. Thirty five-point Likert Scales measured 15 career and 15 psychosocial functions. The questionnaire also measured four personal characteristics of the mentor: career stage (measured by chronological age), sex, the presence or absence of a past mentor, and level of job involvement (measured by Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) 20-item scale).

The questionnaire was distributed to 696 faculty members at a mid-sized southeastern university. 140 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a 22% response rate.

Results

A profile of respondent characteristics is displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that individuals in the mid-career stage would be mentors more often than individuals in the early or late career stages. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test was computed to compare the mentoring of those in the early career

stage (n=49), the mid-career stage (n=60), and the late career stage (n=19). It was found that only 24% of those in the early career stage were mentors whereas 68% of individuals in the mid-career stage and 52% of individuals in the late career stage were mentors. This difference was significant at the $p<.001$ level.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that individuals who mentor during the early career stage would offer more career support than psychosocial support. Mentors in the mid-career stage would not differ in the amount of career and psychosocial support offered. Mentors in the late career stage would offer more psychosocial support than career support. To test this hypothesis, a paired comparison t-statistic was first computed comparing the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of mentors in the early career stage. It was found that mentors in the early career stage provided more psychosocial support than career support, which was the opposite of that hypothesized. The obtained t-value ($t=2.94$) was significant at the $p<.01$ level. Another paired comparison t-statistic was computed to compare the type of mentoring support provided by mentors in the mid-career stage. A non-significant t-value ($t=1.84$) was obtained, supporting the hypothesis that those in the mid-career stage offer both career and psychosocial mentoring support. A final paired-comparison t-statistic was computed to compare the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of mentors in the late career stage. The obtained t-value ($t=.43$) was non-significant, and thus did not support the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that highly job involved individuals would be mentors more often than low job involved individuals. A chi-square test was computed to compare the mentoring of those who were highly job involved (n=10) with those who were low job involved (n=70). Level of job involvement was determined by the average score of the 20 job involvement items. Those with an average score of less than 3.0 (AvgJ1<3.0) were considered to be low job involved. Those with an average score of 4.0 or greater (AvgJ1>3.99) were considered to be highly job involved. It was found that 60% of the high job involved individuals were mentors while 49% of low job involved individuals were mentors. This difference was not significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that highly job involved mentors would offer more career support than psychosocial support. Low job involved mentors would offer more psychosocial support than career support. To test this hypothesis, a paired comparison t-statistic was computed, comparing the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of highly job involved mentors. A non-significant t-value (t=1.83) was obtained.

Another paired statistic was computed comparing the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of low job involved mentors. It was found that low job involved mentors provided more psychosocial support than career support (m=.25). The obtained t-value (t=2.51) was significant at the $p<.01$ level. A chi-square test was then computed to compare the mentoring of those who were mentored (n=109) with those who were not mentored (n=31). It was

found that 52% of those who had been mentored were themselves mentors, while only 39% of those who had not been mentored were mentors. However, this difference was not significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the type of support mentors would offer to their mentee would be related to the type of support their own mentor made available to them. To test this hypothesis, a correlation coefficient was computed between the psychosocial mentoring items and the item assessing psychosocial support received from a past mentor. A statistically significant relationship was found between the psychosocial support which mentors received in the past and the psychosocial support which they currently provide. A correlation of .30 was obtained, which was significant at the <.05 level. Another correlation coefficient was computed between the career mentoring items and the item assessing career support received from a past mentor. Again, a significant relationship was found between the career support mentors received in the past and the career support they currently provide to their own mentees. A correlation of .28 was obtained which was significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 predicted that males would be mentors more often than women. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test was computed to compare the mentoring of males ($n=82$) and females ($n=57$). It was found that 56% of males were mentors whereas 40% of females were mentors. However, this difference was not significant at the $p<.05$ level.

A paired-comparison t-statistic was then computed to compare the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of females. The obtained t-value (t=1.79) was not significant at the $p<.05$ level. Another paired comparison t-statistic was computed, comparing the career and psychosocial mentoring behaviors of males. This obtained t-value (t=1.85) also was not significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Discussion

Results of this study show that the mentoring activity of faculty members varies by career stage, but not by gender. level of job involvement, or by the presence or absence of a past mentor. Results also show that more psychosocial support is provided to mentees than career support. This latter finding raises an important question concerning the benefits of mentoring to the mentee's career success and the organization. The purpose of most formal mentoring programs is to promote the development of younger, less-experienced individuals' careers. It is questionable whether this type of career development will accrue from psychosocial mentoring, which may simply be supportive friendships. Future research is needed to determine the differential effects of these two types of mentoring on the careers of those being mentored, and what organizations can do to promote more career mentoring.