

Evaluating Mentoring Alternatives : A Comparative Study of the role of Peer and Subordinate Relationships in Career Development in Nigerian Public Sector.



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Name of the Author (S):

Dr. Joy, Nonyelum Ugwu ¹,

Dr. Esther, Nneka Maduagwu ², &

Dr. Nnadi, Chikezie Sunday Onoh ³

¹ Department Of Business Administration/Entrepreneurship
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

² Department Of Business Administration
Enugu State University Of Science And Technology, Nigeria

³ Department Of Business Administration,
Enugu State University Of Science And Technology, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined mentoring alternatives; the role of peer relationships in career development. The study took a descriptive survey approach and data was sourced from the 50 completed and returned five point likert scale questionnaire administered on the junior and senior staff of Ministry of finance and Office of the accountant General in Enugu state who has gone through mentorship programme. The data gathered was analyzed with One-Way ANOVA using the 17.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Peer mentorship (PM) was compared to Superior mentorship programme (SP). The result as obtained led to the conclusion that peer mentorship has a great influence on the career development of employees in ministry of finance more than superior mentorship programme. This is associated with the free flow of communication and unhindered exchange of ideas between peers. It was recommended that organizations should include peer mentorship in their career development programme mix.

Keywords: Career Development, Job Security, Mentoring Alternatives, Peer Relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations in pursuit of their corporate goals hire employees from diverse background who equally has personal goals to achieve. To ensure that their employees are equipped with requisite skills that can make them consistently significant in the fulfillment of the task for which they are hired, organizations in most cases provides skill based training and development opportunities to their employees. Be that as it may, the quest to elicit and sustain performance driven motivation in the employees requires that those innate goals and expectation which individual employee has on the organization through their job be met. Part of these innate goals and expectation are job security and growth prospect; this defines career development. The employees in order to settle into their new roles without environmental conflicts and sustained focus require a platform of consistent interaction that can reassure them, keep them focused and aptly address their fears. While organizations have adopted mentoring to fill this gap, indications have shown that it has often been in the mode of superior-subordinate mentorship. Mentoring has accumulated many definitions throughout the literature. The distinctions that have been made between coaching and mentoring, although valuable, have little impact on the discussion and were set aside. D'Abate et al., (2003), defined mentoring as developmental interactions that involve exchanges between two or more people with the goal of personal or professional development.

Statement of Problem

The quest to get the best from employees has led managers into the application of diverse motivational tools including the use of negative incentives such as threat and fear. While this action does not defile academic and business sense, it however has created fear and sense of insecurity among the workers. This may have created the lack of commitment to duties as employees cannot guarantee their long stay in the organization and may regard any act of commitment as unrewarding. Again, the abuse mentoring relationship through sexual and other immoral exploitation has made it difficult for mentees to trust their mentors, thereby creating friction in the relationship which at the long run frustrates productivity. The problem of this study therefore is to examine the impact peer mentorship on career development of the employees.

Objectives of the Study

The core objective of this study is to compare peer relationship and superior-subordinate relationship and their influence on career development of employees.

Research Question

Do peer relationships play a more significant role than superior-subordinate relationship on the career development of employees?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: Peer relationships do not play a more significant role than superior-subordinate relationship on the career development of employees

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Conceptual Review Mentoring

Mentoring relationships have traditionally been defined in terms of age and hierarchy whereby a senior or elder imparts some important knowledge, guidance, and friendship to someone who is younger and less experienced (Rosser, 2006). The meaning of the word “mentor” and the mentoring relationship can be traced back to Homer’s (1992) *The Odyssey*. Researchers

remind us that in *The Odyssey*, the protagonist Odysseus entrusted the development and learning of his son Telémakhos to a friend and trusted elder named Mentor (Komives & Collins-Shapiro, 2006). Mentoring relationships in a twenty-first century context are much more complex and undefined than the relationship of Telémakhos and Mentor. Centuries after *The Odyssey*, mentoring relationships are still ambiguous and multifaceted. During the past three decades there has been a tremendous growth in attention toward mentoring and an evolution in definition, purpose, structure, and outcomes of mentoring relationships (Zachary, 2006). The original paradigm of a wise elder training a young protégé does not begin to encompass the many types of mentoring that occur in higher education. This paradigm does not take into account some of today’s mentoring relationships consist of mentors who are not necessarily “senior” to their mentees. Moreover, there are many types of personal associations that can constitute mentoring relationships. These relationships can be informal or formal; they can include intentional/non-intentional dynamics related to age, gender, race, socio-economic status and organizational position (Givres, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005).

In the last thirty years, researchers have begun to explore the role and purpose of mentoring and how to define it. In considering the concept of mentoring relationships, it is important to clarify a working definition of the role and purpose of mentors. Recent characterizations of mentoring have focused on Kram’s (1985b) definition of mentors as people who intentionally assist other individuals’ growth and connect individuals to opportunities for career or personal development. This study utilized Kram’s definition of mentoring. Within the general research on mentorship in college, few researchers have focused on peer mentoring associations which are mentoring relationships that consist of participants who are closer in age to one another or belong to similar peer groups (Smith, 2008). To date, the majority of studies on mentoring can be simplified into three categories: mentoring in the corporate world, mentoring between faculty or student affairs professionals in higher education, and mentoring between faculty and students in higher education (Gibson, 2006)

Mentoring Alternatives

Literature informs that many organizations acknowledge the value of mentoring relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985). There is much discussion on mentoring and how relationships are formed either selected by a third party or by self selection. Within the realm of literature research on mentoring types, two types are defined as formal or appointed mentoring and the informal of self-selected mentoring.

❖ *Formal Appointed Mentoring:* A formal mentoring program pairs a new employee with an experienced employee within the organization. Organizations formalize mentor assignments either by random assignments to matching personnel files or related areas of work. Hegstad (1999) describes an ideal mentor assignment as one where the organization appoints two individuals with similar job interests and characteristics to a non-intrusive learning environment with open communication. This relationship is typically quick to develop and remain successful because the mentee as well as the mentor have similar interests. Within a formal mentor assignment, the appointed time is typically for one year (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999). The mentor and mentee are provided reference manual or specific elements to accomplish within the assigned period. The formal mentoring relationship ends after the one year, but a continued rapport is not uncommon because of the working relationship that was formed during the mentorship. Wilson and Elman (1990) discuss the importance of choosing the right mentor. The selection of an appropriate mentor would provide for open meaningful communications within a safe environment free of conflict of interest or presumed judgmental aspects. An immediate supervisor or

manager of a new employee could be an awkward placement because of the power structure in certain instances. A mentor should still be a person who is close to the mentee or has similar interest so to draw from experiences that can create a positive working relationship for the two individuals (Bell, 2000). Organizations committed to a formal mentoring approach are interested in their new employees obtaining organizational socialization; understanding the culture and vision of the organization; and providing career development opportunities for a new employee to be successful (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2008). If a new employee is committed and feels connected to the organization, then it is perceived that employees can be retained as a valued employee.

❖ *Self-Selected or Informal Mentoring:* An informal or self-selected mentoring relationship can be defined as a relationship free from formal intervention within the organization (Fagenson–Eland, Marks & Amendola, 1997). The informal mentoring relationship tends to be a lasting relationship but often takes some time to develop or occur. Rosser and Egan (2003) describe an informal mentor relationship as not identified by a third party but rather by a similar interest that can happen spontaneously or without prompting. Kram (1983) said mentors should see themselves in a new employee and want to “shepherd” the new employee to better understand the organization, much like they experienced. The new employee often sees this experienced employee as a role model. Informal relationships usually focus on career goals and how a new employee can move up within an organization. The mentor in an informal relationship typically keeps the interest of the new employee as priority to help identify long-term goals. Mentors are able to position new employees with opportunities to begin to strive and achieve their goals. In doing so, mentors provide new employees with the necessary developmental objectives and skills to be more satisfied in their jobs with vision toward their goals. (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000).

Challenges, Barriers and Tensions in Mentoring and Career Development

David et al., (2005), posits that mentoring is a relationship-based activity. Unlike in other relationships, irrational beliefs cause damage to the relationship and must be recognized and managed. These irrational beliefs according to Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas (2000), changes as the stage of the mentoring relationship changes, but includes mentor thoughts of always being successful, being respected and loved by protégés, that protégé efforts should equal mentor efforts, that protégés should never disappoint or leave, and that mentoring should be enjoyed all the time. Protégés must be aware that these irrational beliefs exist in the relationship in order to fully take advantage of the relationship. Focusing career development opportunities only on individuals labeled as high-potential can backfire and actually be demotivating for those individuals not among those considered to possess this high-potential. Lack of networks and experience are additional barriers that might each be overcome through an effective mentoring relationship (Kilian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005). Levin and Mattis (2006) include in the barriers to women career advancement: lack of career development and succession planning, lack of mentoring and exclusion from informal career networks, and perceptions that women’s leadership styles do not fit with corporate culture. The cost of failing to address these issues can be identified by examining the benefits of addressing diversity.

The challenges of cross-gender relationships range from nonsexual, psychological intimate relationships to the extreme of sexual harassment. Organizations must manage these concerns as they attempt to take full advantage of the mentoring relationship. Young, Cady, and Foxon (2006) also describe, from

the psychological perspective, the possible impact of sexual issues that are inherent in a cross-gender mentoring relationships. The fact that these are most often not acted upon is only a part of the issue. The larger concern is the perceptions of others within the organization may affect long-term career development. The greatest costs of failing to address diversity have been turnover, the ability to adjust to a changing marketplace, and ultimately make better business decisions. Some of the tensions connected with mentoring issues have been the level of the issues involved, exposure and vulnerability, reliance, and control. Additionally, tensions associated with the nature of the relationship include emotional intensity, power and influence, trust, and commitment (Stead, 2005). The visibility, and therefore the risks, associated with the mentoring relationship are increased in relationships that involve minorities within the organization. An example of this risk is if the protégé appears incompetent, this might reflect upon the mentor’s competence. This risk is increased with perceptions and stereotypes about performance attributed to the minority (Ragins, 1997). The fact that women are a minority within the United States Navy is comparable to this situation, and is evidenced by the historically limited roles that women were allowed to fulfill.

One specific aspect of the mentoring relationship that is affected by the gender of the members is role modeling. Male protégés receive more role modeling from male mentors, while women protégés receive more role modeling from women mentors. Informal mentoring might also result in greater reported career mentoring and role modeling. Across-gender mentoring has shown benefits in the areas of career and psychosocial development, but still appears lacking in the area of role modeling. One reason for this shortfall might be related to interpersonal relationship theory. Levesque et al. (2005) pointed out that gender differences in individual perceptions of the importance of various mentoring behaviors may create problems in a cross-gender mentoring relationships, particularly for women. The reason that this concern targets women particularly is due to the fact that women are much more likely to be involved in cross-gender relationships. Generally speaking, Levesque et al., (2005) found little difference in men’s and women’s perceived importance of different mentoring traits. The difference that occurs most frequently, however, is regarding the mentoring trait of championing – where women desire this trait in a mentor much more than their male counterparts. Mentors must realize and account for this difference to perform their roles to the fullest. Giscombe (2007) pointed out that mentoring programs that were effective were the most stringent in their selection of protégés.

D’Abate et al. (2003) described the career and psychosocial competencies of directing, tutoring, coaching, modeling, teaching, problem solving, providing practical application, providing feedback, sharing information, affirming, confidence building, encouraging, counseling, advocating, introducing, sheltering, and socializing that are achieved through these mentoring activities. Chao (1998) included the additional competencies of organizational leverage, personal growth, emotional support, and guidance as tasks performed by the mentor. The practices of effective mentors include development of protégés, models of self-acceptance, experienced and confident in their skills and capabilities; fulfill career and psychosocial functions, patience, and flexibility (Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas, 2000). This partial list further defines a successful mentoring relationship. Mentoring has been shown to help women access networks and enhance organizational performance and commitment (Gibson, 2004). These benefits outweigh the cost of the potential barriers and challenges of mentoring women in the United States Navy. With the purpose of mentoring being leadership development, the relationship between these two variables must be examined.

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Peer Relationships

The development of positive peer relationships is especially important for low-income children whose parents must focus on meeting their children's basic needs and often do not have the time or resources to dedicate to skill development and educational interactions (Milteer et al., 2012). Therefore, children must master these skills and experience these relationships in the classroom (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). The social skills gained by peer interactions can fall into two categories: social skills that focus on basic communication and social skills that deal with stress management, coping and more complex social interactions. Each of these skill sets creates protective factors and is crucial for long-term positive outcomes. Although parents and educators may perceive friendship as fluid and trivial for young children, friendships are significant and can influence the trajectory of a student's school career (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2012). Peer relationships are comprised of positive or negative features. Positive features of friendships include trust, communication, and a willingness to help, while negative features include characteristics such as disloyalty and rejection. These features create conflict-ridden relationships that can negatively influence a child's trajectory. Children's perceptions of early friendships and peer interactions often influence the way they perceive peer relationships throughout school (Seban, 2003). If students engage in friendships with positive features and feel accepted by their peers, they will likely continue to engage in prosocial behaviors and think positively about friendships (Spira & Fischel, 2005). Conversely, if students' friendships are characterized by negative features or if they face peer rejection, antisocial behavior is likely to begin or continue and can lead to negative perceptions of friendships and peer interactions. Furthermore, peer rejection or acceptance often remains stable and influences the skill development, academic achievement, and self-image of a child. Although this paper focuses on friendships with positive features and therefore positive outcomes, it is important to remember that negative peer relationships can be detrimental to career development.

Superior-Subordinate Relationship

Leadership studies at the micro level according to Setyo, Martani, Kusdi & Zainul (2014), emphasize one-on-one relationship (dyadic) between leaders and followers, which is known as the theory of leader-member exchange (LMX). Leadership is no longer seen as a macro-asymmetric relationship between followers and leaders, but a micro-symmetrical relationship between leaders and each follower individually. LMX theory emphasizes the fact that a superior does not always show the same behavior in treating subordinates, because bosses tend to develop relationship with varying intensity and degrees individually with their followers / subordinates (Lussier and Acua, 2004). The quality and nature of dyadic relationship in superior-subordinate relationship determines whether a subordinate is included as an in-group or out-group member. Subordinates show mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual love, mutual influence, and high exchange rate of information and feedback with superiors in high superior-subordinate relationship; otherwise subordinates tend to fulfill only normative characteristics, according to their rights and obligations set out in the formal employment contract in situation where superior-subordinate relationship is in low level (Lee et al., 2007).

Career Development: A worker improved his/her career through an unceasing attainment of managerial or proficient skills and know-how which resulted in rewards and promotion. Career development is seen as a long-term effort in which the organization helps employees utilize their full potential (Gomez-Mejia et al, 2008). Also, Gutteridge (1986) defines career development as the outcomes of actions on career plans as viewed from both individual and organizational perspectives.

He stressed that organizations adopt career development programmes in response to pragmatic human resource concerns and because they believe it will help ensure a continued supply of qualified talented personnel". Hence, these programmes provide employees opportunities to acquire necessary skills and competencies required to perform their jobs successfully. Armstrong (2001) concurred and pointed out that today's changing environment required unceasing proficient and managerial improvement. Shareholders ensured, if not already existing, a sort of structures and procedures to support the progress of the staff they needed now and for the future. Career development usually involved a detailed path of movement through the levels of a business. It was based on worth without regard for race, gender, age or ethnicity. When workers were aware that they had equal chance of making it to the top, it motivated them to do their best. Capelli and Hamori (2005) noted that insufficient improvement, for any reason, impaired a manager from reaching the top. In the business world, there were basically two groups that directed the career development course: top management and human resource personnel. Managers, for example, might be obliged to ensure the requirements of an organization concurred with the worker's career goals to attain a complete balanced work environment. Often skills, experience, and knowledge that employees needed would be identified in order to provide their best possible work. Human resource (HR) personnel were often responsible for providing career development information programs for employees (Faria, 2013). Even though career development was prevalent in most organizations; there had not been enough support from management through implemented policies to make the workforce secured. Decenzo and Robbins (2002) posit that a worthy choice of career was the career that gave room for progression and maintained the enthusiasm, urge and ability, steadiness in the work and home life and satisfaction.

Theoretical Review

Social Network Theory: The term mentoring has been used to include many differing processes and goals. The specific focus is on the characteristics and process of the relationship, regardless of the structure employed. Changes in organizational structures and career definitions have brought about the need for a network of multiple mentors. Knowing why, knowing how, and knowing whom are career competencies that are important in the individual's ability to contribute to organizational performance (de Janasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003). The concept of social networking allows the relationship to incorporate the advantages of each of the various types and functions. Higgins and Kram (2001) describe this developmental network through the concepts that include the relationships, the strength of the relationships, and the diversity of each of the relationships. Social networking best achieves the desired results for the protégé by including the advantages of career and psychosocial mentoring relationships while minimizing the impact of the disadvantages. The most important impact in incorporating social networking is that it best addresses the cultural and social concerns associated with mentoring relationships.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study took a descriptive survey approach and data was sourced from 50 completed and returned five point likert scale questionnaire administered on the junior and senior staff of Ministry of finance and office of the accountant general, Enugu State who has gone through mentorship programme. The data gathered was analyzed with One-Way ANOVA using the 17.0 version of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Peer mentorship (PM) was compared to Superior mentorship programme (SP)

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

ONEWAY PM BY SM /STATISTICS DESCRIPTIVES HOMOGENEITY /PLOT MEANS /MISSING ANALYSIS

Descriptives

PM

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
.00	5	7.6000	6.02495	2.69444	.1190	15.0810	.00	15.00
1.00	1	.0000	.	.	.	.	.00	.00
2.00	1	10.0000	.	.	.	.	10.00	10.00
4.00	1	6.0000	.	.	.	.	6.00	6.00
5.00	6	3.6667	5.53775	2.26078	-2.1448	9.4782	.00	13.00
6.00	2	3.0000	4.24264	3.00000	-35.1186	41.1186	.00	6.00
7.00	1	.0000	.	.	.	.	.00	.00
8.00	4	6.0000	6.68331	3.34166	-4.6346	16.6346	.00	15.00
9.00	2	7.5000	7.77817	5.50000	-62.3841	77.3841	2.00	13.00
10.00	2	2.0000	2.82843	2.00000	-23.4124	27.4124	.00	4.00
Total	25	5.0000	5.33073	1.06615	2.7996	7.2004	.00	15.00

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

PM

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.619 ^a	5	15	.007

a. Groups with only one case are ignored in computing the test of homogeneity of variance for PM.

ANOVA

PM

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	162.967	9	18.107	.523	.036
Within Groups	519.033	15	34.602		
Total	682.000	24			

V. FINDINGS

The SPSS outcome as shown in the ANOVA table shows a 0.036 output which is less than 0.05, it was therefore found by the study that peer relationship has a significant positive role to play in career development of employees.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The result as obtained led to the conclusion that peer mentorship has a great influence on the career development of employees in ministry of finance and office of the accountant general of Enugu state more than subordinate-superior mentorship programme. This is associated with the free flow of communication and unhindered exchange of ideas between peers. In line with the conclusion above, it was recommended that organizations especially public sector organizations in Nigeria should include peer mentorship as a critical program in their career development programme mix

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Corresponding Author :

Dr. Joy, Nonyelum Ugwu*
Department Of Business Administration/Entrepreneurship
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State,
Nigeria

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