

EMCC Research Review

Issue 2: Outcomes for mentees



Introduction

Dear Reader,

The first issue of EMCC Research Review addressed which positive outcomes mentors could expect from being a mentor. Therefore, it seemed logical to devote this issue to the effects that mentees can expect. In order to do so, we begin with a meta-analysis of the effect mentoring has on mentees in three different fields, namely youth mentoring, academic mentoring and workplace mentoring. It shows that mentoring has positive, small to moderate effects on a large number of outcomes across the domains in question.

With the following article, we take a trip to China with a brand new study published in 2019, which investigates the effects of workplace mentoring on employees' life in general. Interestingly, it shows that workplace mentoring positively affects the well-being of employees in the private sphere as well.

Finally, we visit an old but interesting study on the effect of peer mentoring on stress and socialisation among newcomers to a full-time MBA programme. Interestingly, newcomers felt that more mentoring significantly reduced their stress levels while improving their socialisation into the new environment.

We round of the review by summarising the positive effects of mentoring while adding some cautionary remarks on the limitations of the studies.

I hope you find the it interesting and illuminating.

Sincerely
Content writer
Leo Smith, EMCC Denmark

Mentee outcomes: a meta-analysis

Study: "Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals"

By: Lillian Eby, Tammy Allen, Sarah Evans, Thomas Ng and David DuBois

Published in: Journal of Vocational Behaviour, Vol. 72, 2008, pp. 254-267

Introduction

Mentoring is one of the most frequently used buzzword in businesses today. It has also been rather extensively researched the past 3 decades, and this study seeks to demonstrate quantitatively what the actual effect of mentoring is across three different fields: youth mentoring, academic mentoring and workplace mentoring. Their overall conclusion was that mentoring does have an effect on mentees, in particular in the case of academic and workplace mentoring.

What did the researchers do?

The researcher conducted a meta-analysis of 116 mentoring studies on either: youth mentoring (n=40), academic mentoring (n=23), or workplace mentoring (n=53).

Due to the differences inherent in the three fields of mentoring under investigation, the authors measured a large number of different outcomes as described below:

- *Behavioural outcomes:* Performance (e.g. scholarly achievement, sales performance, GPA), Withdrawal behaviour (e.g. school dropout, organisational turnover, absenteeism) Withdrawal intention (e.g. Intention to quit), Helping others (Mentoring others, organisational citizenship behaviour, community service), and Deviance (e.g. suspension, aggressive behaviour, stealing)
- *Attitudinal outcomes:* Satisfaction and attachment (e.g. job satisfaction, commitment, sense of community), School attitudes (e.g. attitude towards research, perceived value of school) and Career attitudes (e.g. career satisfaction, career expectations, perceived employment opportunity)

- *Health Related outcomes*: Substance use (e.g. drug use, alcohol use), Psychological stress and strain (e.g. depression, anxiety, work stress), and self-perceptions (e.g. self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy)
- *Relational outcomes*: Interpersonal relations (e.g. Parent trust, positive peer evaluations, relationship quality)
- *Motivational outcomes*: Motivation/involvement (e.g. Hours worked, time spent on educational pursuit, time spent on homework, aspiration, career commitment)
- *Career outcomes*: Career recognition and success (e.g. Academic rank, pay, promotion) and Skill/competence development (e.g. socialization, problem-solving skills, work knowledge, goal setting)

Main Findings

- Mentoring had significant effects on all the outcomes.

Effect sizes, however, were small to moderate. This means that we can be quite certain that mentoring across the three fields correlated with positive outcomes for mentees, even if the magnitude of the effect was not overwhelming.

- The largest effects were seen on attitudinal measures

Mentoring generally had a greater effect on mentee attitudes than behaviours and other more tangible outcomes. Intuitively this makes sense, as attitudes are more amenable to change as a direct result of mentoring, whereas the more tangible outcomes are influenced by a number of contextual factors.

- Mentoring had comparatively smaller effects among youths

Of the three areas of mentoring included in the analysis, youth mentoring had the smallest, albeit still positive, effects. As the authors explain, youth mentoring often involves at risk youth growing up in unfavourable situations. Given the wide array of potential negative influences in such an environment, such as peer pressure and family problems, it makes sense that mentoring in itself cannot solve all the issues. Another factor influencing the comparatively lower effect sizes is self-selection bias in the other



two areas. The problem arises because studies of youth mentoring have been more rigorous in randomising youths in mentored and non-mentored groups, whereas studies on academic and workplace mentoring rarely do this. Thus, mentees who report large effects of mentoring in the two latter areas might do so, because they were more proactive in general and thus more likely to excel with or without mentoring.

Why is this interesting?

The study is interesting because it includes and compares of large number of studies from three areas of mentoring. It is also shows that although mentoring generally works, it is not the panacea that some consultants claim. Indeed, including troubled youths in a formal mentoring program might be step in the right direction, but it is most likely not enough to produce impressive results.

How can you put this into practice?

- Mentoring is likely going to work and produce some desirable outcomes
- However, do not expect a revolution. The effects are likely small to moderate
- Following another meta-analysis (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008), the degree of embeddedness of the mentor programme within the institution is most likely an important factor in terms of generating the desirable outcomes.

Drawbacks

The study is a meta-analysis and thus relies on the quality of the studies included. One particular problem in this regard is the fact that the vast majority of studies on mentoring are based on cross-sectional, non-experimental research designs. Therefore, we cannot assert that mentoring *causes* the effects mentioned above. Indeed, if we look at academic mentoring, it could be that the most promising and ambitious students are more likely to seek out mentors. These students would in all likelihood do well even without a mentor.

This is not to suggest that mentoring does not work. Based on the results it most likely does. However, it would ideal if mentoring were investigated using more rigorous designs.

Mentee outcomes outside the job context

Study: The role of mentoring in protégés' subjective well-being"

By: Peng Wen, Cheng Chen, Longzhu Dong, and Xiaobing Shu

Published in: Journal of Career Development, Vol. 46(2), 2019, pp. 171-183

Introduction

In this study, the researchers aimed to investigate whether organisational mentoring has a positive effect on mentees' general well-being. Interestingly, this turned out to be the case. The core mechanism, through which the effect was brought about, was an increase in "psychological safety", which they defined as "an individual's perception of being himself and taking interpersonal risks without fear of negative consequences." In addition, they investigated the role of perceived mentor status.

What did the researchers do?

The study builds on a sample of 253 respondents working as line workers in Chinese manufacturing industry companies. All respondents participated in formal mentor programmes and filled out two questionnaires, six months apart. In the first questionnaire, they were asked about the extent of mentoring support they were receiving as well as how they perceived their mentor's status, that is, how influential the mentees considered their mentors to be. In the second questionnaire, they were asked about their perceived psychological safety, demographic variables, and the type of mentoring they were receiving.

Main findings:

- The extent of mentoring support was positively related to mentees' general satisfaction with life, positive affect, and negatively related to negative affect. Simply put, more mentoring support correlates with higher levels of mentee well-being.

- Psychological safety was shown to be an important mechanism through which the effect was brought about. In other words, it is largely due to increased psychological safety that mentoring has a positive effect on mentee well-being.
- The higher the perceived status of the mentor, the higher the effect of mentoring was on the subjective well-being of the mentee.

Why is this interesting?

The study is interesting for two reasons. First, it is interesting that organisational mentoring has positive ramifications for mentees' general well-being. That is, even though mentoring at work is work-related, it has a positive effect on the mentee's life outside of work because of the increase in psychological safety. Second, the study is interesting because it is conducted in China, and thus contributes with interesting non-American data.

How can you put this into practice?

First, it is interesting for managers to know that formal mentorships can have a positive effect on employees' general well-being. This adds to the list of positive outcomes that one could expect from a mentor programme. Moreover, since psychological safety operates as the main mechanism through which the effect comes about, managers might want to initiate other initiatives that support the psychological safety of their employees.

Finally, companies should rely on high-status mentors for their mentor programmes, as these have the largest positive effect on mentees.

Drawbacks

Although the study collected data at two different points in time, it is still cross-sectional in nature. This means that we cannot make the claim that mentoring caused the increase in subjective well-being. We can however say that mentoring correlates with higher level of subjective well-being. On a more technical note, the authors highlight the potential issues pertaining to the use of scales developed in Western cultures in an Eastern culture.

Mentoring and stress

Study: "Newcomer socialization and stress: Formal peer relationships as a source of support"

By: Tammy D. Allen, Stacy E. McManus, and Joyce E. A. Russell

Published in: Journal of Vocational Behaviour, Vol. 54, 1999, pp. 453-470

Introduction

This study examines the role of mentoring in reducing stress among first-year MBA students. The mentorships under investigation in the study were formal and peer-to-peer, as the first-year students were formally matched with second-year students. The mentoring included a combination of group- and one-to-one sessions.

What did the researchers do?

The sample for the study comprised 64 full-time, first-year MBA students. After their first academic year, the students answered a questionnaire concerning addressing the following elements: The function of their mentor, how well they had been socialised, stress levels, and a number of demographic questions like gender, race etc.

Regarding mentor functions, the mentees were asked to evaluate the degree to which their mentors provided psychosocial support (e.g. role modelling, friendship, and acceptance) and career-related support (e.g. sponsorship, exposure, and visibility).

Main findings:

- Mentors provided significantly more psychosocial mentoring than career mentoring
- More mentoring was positively related to the degree of socialisation
- The greater the level of psychosocial and career-related mentoring, the greater the likelihood was that the mentee felt that their mentor had helped reduce their stress level
- On the other hand, they found no relationship between actual stress and mentoring



- They also found that more mentoring was related to improved socialisation, which was related to stress

Why is this interesting?

The study is interesting because it addresses a common and serious issue in organisational life, stress. It also deals with a particularly important and uncertain period in employees' life, namely being socialised into a new organisation. Mentoring, it was shown, can help alleviate some of the challenges associated with both.

How can you put this into practice?

The study shows that it might well be worthwhile investing in a formalised mentoring programme as a constituent of an onboarding programme. This has been shown in other studies as well (e.g. Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993)

Drawbacks

As it is often the case, the study is based on cross-sectional data, which means that causal inferences about the relationships cannot be asserted. In addition, the study participants were MBA-students from a nationally ranked university, meaning that the sample is hardly representative.



Conclusion

The studies in the present review showed that mentoring can have a number of positive effects for mentees, ranging from domain-specific outcomes, over general well-being to reduced levels of stress and improved socialisation in new domains. While the positive effects were statistically significant, the effect sizes remained small to moderate, meaning that mentoring is not the panacea it is often claimed to be. With that in mind, it certainly seems like a good idea for organisations in particular to invest some resources in establishing a mentoring programme for newly hired employees.