

Mentoring & Performance: Implications for Business Organizations

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Mentoring as a concept and as a practice existed for long in organizations and its relevance is gaining momentum as years pass by. An extensive review of literature indicated that benefits of mentoring practice especially relating to individual performance is not empirically studied and reported. This paper explores how perceptions of two forms of mentoring support, the traditional and relational, influence protégés' role-based performance outcomes. The study tested for the variance in performance outcomes due to addition of relational mentoring support. The findings shed light on the role that protégé personal learning play as mediator in transmitting the effect of the two forms of mentoring support to his/her role-based performance.

Introduction

The linkage between mentoring roles and behaviors with performance outcomes are presently only theoretically based (Bozionelos, 2004; Kram, 1985; Dreher, 2007). There have not been enough studies to test either the process linkage or the extent of impact of mentoring process on the performance outcomes. Research so far has indicated that career mentoring adds significantly to the explained variance in rated salary progress and promotion rate over that accounted for by leader-member exchange (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). This paper, first, explores the relationship between mentoring and performance by examining outcomes beyond job performance to role-based performance. Second, it provides process explanations as to why mentoring would drive such outcomes with the help of a mediator. Third, it explores how two different forms of mentoring support, traditional and relational mentoring differentially impact performance to enable the organization focus on the right forms of mentoring support that would drive specific organizational outcomes, aligned to its business objectives and strategy.

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Research Questions

RQ1: Do traditional and relational mentoring support functions have a differential impact on protégé role based performance?

RQ 2: Do personal learning i.e., relational job learning and personal skill development mediate the relationship between traditional and relational mentoring support and performance?

Traditional & Relational Mentoring

Traditional mentoring is defined as a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of developing and helping his/her career (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1989). According to this mentoring theory (Kram, 1985), mentors help their protégés through providing career functions (i.e., sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments) and psychosocial support (i.e., role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling and friendship).

The traditional mentoring is an instrumental approach that uses a transactional frame and values the relationship for what it can *do* rather than what it can *be*. Rec-

ognizing that organizations have downsized, the traditional, hierarchical view of mentoring is changing (Kram & Hall, 1995; McManus & Russell, 1997). The traditional role of an older, wiser person guiding a younger one has been undermined in an age where experiences of the past and accumulated knowledge no longer guarantee relevance in the future.

According to the relational mentoring theory (Ragins, 2010), mentoring refers to the mutually interdependent, empathic, and empowering processes that create personal growth, development, and enrichment for mentors and protégés (Ragins, 2005). Thus, as per relational perspective mentoring is defined as a developmental relationship that involves mutual growth, learning, and development in personal, professional, and career domains. Relational perspective extends our lens on mentoring from a one-sided, exchange-based relationship focused on protégé career outcomes to a dyadic communal relationship with cognitive and affective processes that lead to mutual learning, growth, and development. A key tenet of relational mentoring theory is that the outcomes associated with relational mentoring have the capacity to transform other relationships in the individual’s developmental network.

Table 1 Difference between Traditional & Relational Mentoring

Parameters(Perceived Quality)	Traditional Mentoring	Relational Mentoring
Behaviors	Limited demonstration of Relational Behaviors	High demonstration of Relational Behaviors
Norms	Exchange	Communal
Outcomes	One Sided	Mutual

Source: Ragins & Verbos (2007)

We contribute to the literature on mentoring and performance outcomes in two significant ways. We are testing the two mentoring theories, traditional and relational for the first time to confirm whether they are in effect, existing along a continuum of perceived quality (Ragins, 2010) or are mutually exclusive sub-constructs of mentoring. Conceptually distinct traditional and relational mentoring are likely to be displayed by the same individuals in different

amounts and intensities just as it is in transactional and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985:26; Yukl, 1989). There are different types of mentoring relationships cited in research, such as peer mentoring, network mentoring, one to one mentoring, formal/informal mentoring, supervisory/non-supervisory mentoring, reverse mentoring, group mentoring that can be classified under the following broad categories of traditional and relational mentoring (Table 2).

Table 2 Classification of Types of Mentoring in to Traditional & Relational Mentoring

Traditional (Kram, 1985)	Relational (Ragins, 2010)
One to one mentoring	Peer Mentoring
Supervisory Mentoring	Network Mentoring
Formal Mentoring	Informal Mentoring
	Non-Supervisory Mentoring
	Reverse Mentoring
	Group Mentoring

Mentoring & Performance

We present here the concept of role-based performance as the dependent variable, which integrates both individual and organization related outcomes through the use of both role theory and identity theory that provide a holistic measure to assess the impact of mentoring integrating both the individual and organizational outcomes. Role theory provides an explanation for why work performance should be multidimensional. Identity theory suggests how to determine which dimensions to include in a model of work performance. By utilizing these two theories, role-based performance measure has been developed that includes five different roles namely job, career, innovator, team member, and organization citizen (Welbourne, 1997)

Hypothesis 1: Relational mentoring support leads to higher protégé role-based performance than traditional mentoring.

Hypothesis 2: With traditional mentoring controlled, relational mentoring will be positively related to protégé performance.

Personal Learning as Mediator

Kram (1996) defined personal learning as the acquisition of knowledge, skills or competencies that contribute to an individual's personal development. A person who is adept at personal learning can actively and continuously benefit from others regardless of his or her rank or career stage (Lankau & Scandura, 2007). The literature reviewed suggests that there are two important types of per-

sonal learning. One involves learning about the context of work to see the self in relation to others (Kegan, 1994; Merriam and Heuer, 1996). This type of learning is labeled “relational job learning” and is defined as increased understanding about the interdependence or connectedness of one’s job to others. The second type of personal learning emphasized in the literature relates to interpersonal skills (Kram, 1996). Employees need to be able to communicate effectively, listen attentively, solve problems, and be creative in developing relationships with others in the organization. This is labeled as “personal skill development” and defined as acquisition of new skills and abilities that enable better working relationships.

Personal Skill Development as Mediator

Lankau (1996) found that mentoring functions significantly impacted personal learning. Hall (1996) suggested that the ability to regularly grow and change by learning will become indispensable for successful careers. Development will involve more self-direction, self-reliance, ability to connect with one’s co-workers, and ability to think through organizational issues. Employees today need to expand their awareness of the links between actions and outcomes, listen to others’ viewpoints, and build competencies through working with others (Gherardi, Nicolini & Odella, 1998; Goleman, 2001). Employees who have developed communication and problem-solving skills may feel more competent and may receive feedback about the value of their contributions. Such feelings and feedback may foster job performance.

Relational Job Learning as Mediator

Protégés may feel more confident and valued as organizational members when their mentors share their learning needs with them and when they perceive themselves as being successful in responding to those needs. Mentees may feel more valued as organizational members when they learn the latest developments in specific fields from mentors and when they successfully respond to the protégés’ learning needs through providing them with career and psychosocial mentoring support (Kram, 1983).

Both mentors’ and protégés’ self-esteem and self-efficacy will increase if they experience reciprocal support during mentoring.

Given our focus on the relational mentoring perspective, we argue that both mentors’ and protégés’ self-esteem and self-efficacy will increase if they experience reciprocal support during mentoring (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). This increased the self-worth as organizational members can inspire both mentors and protégés to extend learning of their team members. Having derived their self-esteem from responding to their mentors’ developmental needs, protégés may feel more confident about assisting team-members in problem solving efforts and subsequently may be more likely to extend work-related help to others. Personal learning helps employees cope with challenges arising in the workplace through the understanding of a coherent

body of knowledge and skills and by the application of such knowledge and skills to new situations and settings (Guberman & Greenfield, 1991)

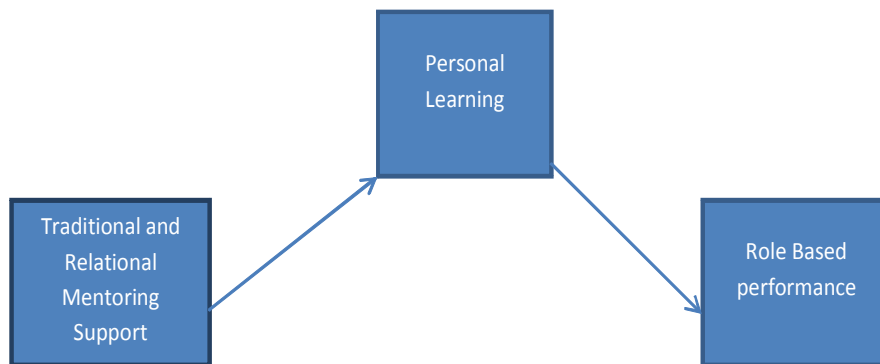
and traditional mentoring and role-based performance

Hypothesis 3: Personal learning mediates the relationship between relational

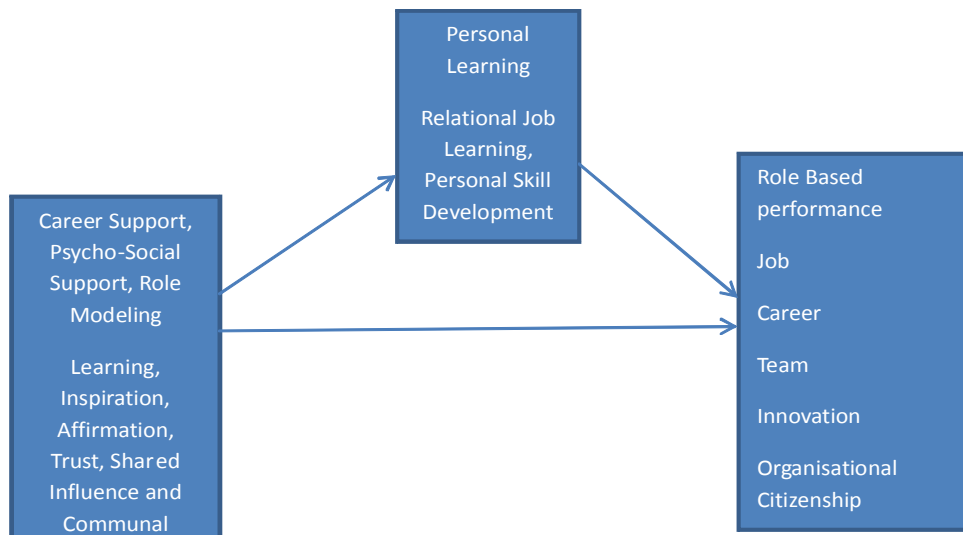
Hypothesis 4: Relational job learning mediates the relationship between relational mentoring and performance, whereas personal skill development

Figure1 Relationship among Traditional and Relational Mentoring Support in Mentoring, Personal Learning & Role-based Performance of Protégé

BASIC MODEL:



EXPANDED MODEL



mediates the relationship between traditional mentoring and performance.

Methodology

The organization under the present study had a legacy of senior leaders mentoring their juniors in an informal way in its long years of existence. However, since 2002 when the organization underwent a major restructuring initiative, it felt the need to reinforce the thrust towards people development and from October, 2009 it undertook a drive to impart training to all its executives in senior and middle level on mentoring and coaching skills to foster a culture of development within the organization. The study targeted managers at the middle management levels (single hierarchical level but from several functional areas like manufacturing, marketing, IT), where, by virtue of their business leadership position in the organization, respondents expressed a felt need for being mentored, particularly those who had moved into new roles and positions within and across their functions. The respondents were largely belonging to eastern India and their average age was 40 years. Respondents were asked specific questions as to who they thought were their ideal mentors. The answer to this question was content analyzed to support the empirically derived findings. The study focused only on subordinates mentoring experiences (n=151). The subordinates selected for the study were those who attended the training program on mentoring. As nomination to the training program was random, there was no sampling bias in the system and the researcher could obtain 100% response rate.

The mentors self-rating of mentoring behaviors was not within the purview of this study. Mentors and protégé have different perspectives and because previous research has shown poor convergence between mentor and mentee descriptions of mentorship (Field & House, 1990; Craen & Scandura, 1987; Scandura et al., 1986), we treated the items from the mentorship scales administered to the mentees as empirical indicators of separate but correlated constructs (latent variables).

Results

Among the protégés (n =151) 94% stated that their superiors were their mentors; 2 % were females and 98% were males. About 86.2% were in the age range of 28- 49, 79.4% having a bachelor's degree or higher, and 43.9% worked for their current organization for less than or equal to 3 years. In order to control for uniform understanding of the mentoring concept for appropriate identification of roles undertaken by their mentors, only those participants who had undertaken training on mentorship were invited to participate in the survey. As qualification/ competence of managers as well as years of experience in their current position and duration of their mentoring relationship may influence performance of the respondent, it was decided to control for these variables.

Mentor was defined as "an influential person in your work environment who had advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to provide upward mobility and support to one's career". Informal mentoring relationship was de-

defined as relationships that evolve naturally rather than through formally assigned mentoring that requires organizational intervention (Chao, Waltz & Gardner, 1992). 60-70% of the respondents had been in mentoring relationship for more than 2 years. 30% of the respondents had been in mentoring relationship for less than 2 years. Each measure used in this study is a self-report measure based on the respondent's perceptions, not actual behaviors. Results from the scale were calculated by summing item responses. The Cronbach alphas for each scale are presented in Table 3.

To gather data on the demographics of the participants, the survey included five items that asked the respondents to provide information on

their organizational tenure, and the duration of their mentoring relationships. Examples of some of the demographic questions are: What is the duration of your mentoring relationship? How long have you been employed in your current organization? We used the most consistently used 33 item Ragins and Mc Farlin (1990) mentoring scale developed to measure the respondents' level of perceived traditional mentoring support. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We used the 21 item relational mentoring Index scale developed by Ragins (2010). The scale assesses the extent of mutual perceived support on six dimensions of affirmation, communal norms etc.

Table 3 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Variables under Study.

	Reliability	Factor Loading	Communalities
TM	.952		
PSYCHO-SOCIAL NEED		.956	.915
CAREER SOCIAL NEED		.951	.904
ROLE MODELING		.898	.807
RM	.946		
PERSONAL LEARNING and DEVELOPMENT		.822	.675
INSPIRATION		.839	.704
AFFIRMATION		.866	.750
COMMUNAL NORMS		.636	.405
SHARED INFLUENCE and RESPECT		.747	.558
LEARNING	.823		
RELATIONAL JOB LEARNING		.823	.678
PERSONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT		.823	.678
ROLE BASED PERFORMANCE	.854		
JOB PERFORMANCE		.170 .808	.681
CAREER PERFORMANCE		.088 .847	.725
INNOVATION		.604 .369	.501
TEAM PERFORMANCE		.895 .096	.811
ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP		.857 .067	.739

We used Lankau and Scandura (2002) 12 item scale developed to measure the respondents' level of personal learning on 2 dimensions of personal skill development and relational job learning. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We used Welbourne (1997) 20 item scale on role-based performance comprising 5 dimensions namely job performance, team performance, career performance, organization citizenship and innovation performance.

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to verify the dimensionality of the measures of relational mentoring with

the organizational sample (n=151, CR>.7 and AVE >.5) thereby indicating convergent validity. The data also supported discriminant validity.

Correlation & Regression Analyses

We computed the correlation between all the variables under study. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test Hypotheses 2 by determining the incremental variance in the performance measures accounted for by traditional mentoring over relational mentoring and vice versa (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Table 4 Research Variable Inter-correlation for Protégés

	Mean	Std. Deviation	TM	RM	RBP	RJL	PSD
Traditional Mentoring	113.92	21.46	1				
Relational Mentoring	76.53	13.65	.79**	1			
Role Based Performance	80.68	8.69	.31**	.34**	1		
Relational Job Learning	22.69	2.57	.23**	.19*	.27**	1	
Personal Skill Development	24.14	3.72	.35**	.31**	.21*	.35**	1

For examining Hypothesis 1, protégés' hierarchical regression analyses were undertaken, wherein first traditional mentoring and then relational mentoring were entered to test:(1) their total indirect effect on the relationship between protégés' perceptions of reciprocal support in mentoring and their role-based performance and (2) the specific indirect effect of each mediator. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 3. The total variance in performance caused due to the differential impact of TM and RM was statistically significant.

R2 change value in row 2 is .034. This means that the inclusion of relational

mentoring after traditional mentoring is explaining an additional 3.4% variance in the role based performance. Before inclusion of relational mentoring, traditional mentoring accounted for 90.6 % variance in role-based performance. R2 change value in row 6 is .160. This means that the inclusion of traditional mentoring after relational mentoring is explaining an additional 16 % variance in the role-based performance. Before inclusion of traditional mentoring, relational mentoring accounted for 78 % variance in role-based performance. Change in F was found to be significant. However, considering the high overall correlation coefficients with performance, it also seems that the sub-

Table 5 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Table 5 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis		Role -Based Performance												
Predictor		JOB PERFOR-MANCE					CAREER PERFOR-MANCE		INNO VATION MANCE		TEAM PERFOR-		ORGA-NIZATI ON CITIZEN-SHIP	
		R ²	Δ	R ²	Δ	R ²	Δ	R ²	Δ	R ²	Δ	R ²	Δ	
Traditional Mentoring		.011*	.234**	.04*	.18	.032**	.012*	.064	.012*	.096	.019*			
Traditional Mentoring , Relational Mentoring		.008		.026**		.012*		.009		.017*				
Relational Mentoring		.019*	.876	.066	.031*	.067	.482	.067	.009	.105	.612			
Relational Mentoring , Traditional Mentoring		0		0	*	0		.006		.007				

* P<.05

**P<.01

ordinates did not distinguish between traditional and relational mentoring.

Hypothesis 1 is not proved, as traditional mentoring had a stronger impact (90.6%) on performance whereas relational mentoring has an impact of (78%) on performance. The variance in performance caused due to relational mentoring is 3.6% only, indicating the dominance of traditional mentoring roles on performance. Also with the existence of relational mentoring support, traditional mentoring support contributes 16% difference to performance outcomes.

The researcher also analyzed the incremental variance in the five dimensions of role-based performance (Table 6) and found that both traditional mentoring and

Mentoring has been found to be significantly related to OCB and less significantly to job performance.

relational mentoring impacted organizational citizenship behavior by 9.6 % and 10.5% respectively and again both traditional mentoring and relational mentoring impacted job performance the least by 1.1% and 1.9% respectively. The results of our analysis confirm previous research on the subject where mentoring has been found to be significantly related to OCB and less significantly to job performance. The contribution of our research is that it provides us with differentiated results across other three performance dimensions that have not been studied career, innovation, and team performance where the contribution towards performance is 4% and 6%, 3% and 6%, 6% and 7% respectively.

Table 6 Mediation Results for Traditional Mentoring

Mediating variables	Effects Traditional Mentoring on Mediator	Effects of Mediator on Role Based Performance	Effects of TM on Role Based Performance
Relational Job Learning	.233	.276*	.314*
Personal Skill Development	.350*	.210	.314*
LEARNING (RJL + PSD)	.389*	.359	.952*

*P<.05

Note.TM is traditional mentoring support in mentoring. RM is Relational Mentoring.

RJL is Relational Job Learning and PSD is Personal Skill Development .n_ 151 * p _ 0.05.

Personal Learning as Mediator

Hypothesis 3. With regard to Hypothesis 3, mediation analysis was run as per Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure.

Results showed that personal learning does not mediate the relationship between traditional mentoring and role based performance. Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

TABLE 7 Mediation Results for Relational Mentoring

Mediating variables	Effects Relational Mentoring on Mediator	Effects of Mediator on Role Based Performance	Effects of RM on Role Based Performance
Relational Job Learning	.194	.276*	.342*
Personal Skill Development	.317*	.210	.342*
LEARNING (RJL + PSD)	.344*	.359*	.883

Note.TM is traditional mentoring support in mentoring. RM is Relational Mentoring. RJL is Relational Job Learning and PSD is Personal Skill Development .n_ 151 * p _ 0.05.

*P<.05

Hypothesis 4. With regard to Hypothesis 2, mediation analysis was run as per Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure. Results showed that personal learning mediates the relationship between relational mentoring and role based performance. Hypothesis 4 is supported.

(www.talentmanagement.com). Secondly, with increasing cross border movements of expatriates and repatriates in a fast globalizing environment, mentoring engagement may have significant implications for success of business organizations (Ensher, 2004). Clear evidence of performance-related benefits of mentoring is likely to influence not only the decision of organization to establish mentoring systems , encourage the mentor to undertake mentoring role, but may also motivate the mentee to seek a mentor in the performance driven business environment .

Discussion

Globalization, technology and social networking have created a shift where learners or the mentees drives the mentoring engagement

Considering the high overall correlation coefficients with performance, it also seems particularly noteworthy that the subordinates did not distinguish between traditional and relational mentoring. Although there are many potential explanations for this finding, one that seems particularly plausible to us is that the subordinate is only inferring their supervisors' intentions and may not be very clear on the same. Future researcher may assess whether this distinction can be made clearer through a study of formal mentoring programs. The results obtained in this paper seems to support the link between traditional mentoring and performance but showed no augmenting effect for relational mentoring, implying that higher perceived quality of mentoring relationship may not result in higher performance outcomes.

Mentoring relationship may not result in higher performance outcomes.

Of particular concern for this study is that the overall levels of explained variance in the regression models were high, particularly with respect to the dependent variable - role based performance. Perhaps not using objective data from company records to provide dependent variables and self-reports to provide independent variables accounts for this finding. Somewhat related to this perception and causality issue is the fact that, had different measures been employed, the subordinates in our study might have distinguished between traditional mentoring and relational mentoring. The current re-

search cannot address this very real possibility.

The first contribution found in the paper was that the direct reported perception of mentoring behavior was found to be directly related to the protégé self-rated performance. The second contribution is the role of socio-cultural context in shaping the relationship between mentoring and performance. Mentoring as a relationship focuses on collaboration, development and feedback. Therefore in a high- power distant culture like India, traditional mentoring would have greater impact on performance than relational mentoring. This relationship is further strengthened due to the fact that India ranks 12 in the Globe Study Scores on Performance Orientation.

In a high- power distant culture like India, traditional mentoring would have greater impact on performance than relational mentoring.

Although the results yielded partial support for the study's conceptual framework that relational mentoring denoting high quality mentoring would have higher impact on performance the results showed both statistical and practical significance. As previously explained, the conceptual framework hinges on the concept of relational mentoring and the supposition that relational mentoring emphasizes mutually growth-fostering mentoring relationships and signifying high quality mentoring relationships and would have a higher impact on performance. The results did not

seem to support the conceptual framework, as socio – cultural factors (as derivative of both the national culture as well as company culture) seem to influence the kind of mentoring support provided. Therefore, although one would have expected relational mentoring to predominate in view of the relationship driven context of India, the high power distance resulted in higher prevalence of traditional mentoring. Thus the study also has implications for mentoring between expatriates/repatriates being sent from high power distant to low power distant cultures.

The study also highlights the fact that personal learning does not mediate the relationship between traditional mentoring and performance. Thus the protégé may perform under threat, fear or intimidation without personal learning. This may result in, long term performance being jeopardized due to the impediment in the creation of learning based organization. This may lead to employee turnover and attrition. Data supports that relational mentoring would lead to increased personal learning, therefore relational mentoring support is likely to lead to increased long term performance.

Relational mentoring support is likely to lead to increased long term performance.

Limitations:

Although the direction of causality proposed in our study is theoretically sound, the cross sectional nature of the

data limits us from concluding causal links between the variables studied.

The findings of the study may not be generalizable. More than 80% of the respondents responded that their direct superiors were their mentors. The findings confirm earlier research findings that subordinates perception of career mentoring is directly related to performance rating of the direct report. (Gentry, Weber and Sadri, 2002). However, this study is different from past research as it takes into account only subordinates perception on all forms of mentoring support, traditional as well as relational and self - rated performance. The nature of mentoring relationship is such that its effectiveness can best be assessed by the individual who has been provided mentoring. As the performance rating of the subordinate had to be obtained in the context of mentoring provided by the mentor, seeking performance feedback from the mentor would have led to social desirability effect. However, as in all such self - reported surveys, common methods bias cannot be ruled out.

Since the data was collected from a single company, it is possible that different contextual and structural attributes may have influenced protégés' perceptions of reciprocal and traditional support in mentoring (Lyons & Oppler, 2004). Further qualitative research to supplement how the mentor and the protégé were matched, how frequently they were required to meet, and whether the protégé were allowed to voluntarily participate in the mentoring programs would have fur-

ther enriched the research.

Future Research

Based on the findings of the current study, there is a need for future research in several areas. Future researchers may need to identify potential mediators between traditional mentoring and performance.

Conclusion

The finding that learning does not mediate traditional mentoring and performance and indeed mediate in the case of relational mentoring and performance is significant. The perception that performance is here and now – short term outcome - that traditional mentoring seems to deliver. While for relational mentoring learning mediates performance indicating the long term perspective on performance. Culture seems to play a significant role in the mentoring – performance linkage. On a concluding note, this study advocates for a broader focus on the benefits of mentoring programs by exploring how two forms of mentoring support differentially impact performance. Furthermore, it is timely for HR professionals to focus on practices of reciprocal support for both mentors and protégés, given the prevailing rise in technological innovation and the shift in workforce demographics. These changes to the workforce create opportunities for enhanced interdependence through reciprocal support in mentoring and through opportunities for enhanced role based performance. This study takes an important step toward guiding HR profession-

als' understanding of how developmental initiatives such as mentoring can benefit both mentors and protégés and in turn can benefit the organization by leading to an increase in performance

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