

Leadership Styles & Relational Energy in High Quality Mentoring Relationship

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High-quality mentoring relationship and relational energy (RE) developed during the interaction between leaders and subordinates are major determinants of desirable employees' work outcomes. There are two unanswered questions about relationships involving these variables; how do different leadership styles affect relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship? What role does relational energy play in the relationship between leadership styles and high-quality mentoring relationship? Cross-sectional study involving 210 participants from 4 organizations in Nigeria, indicate that servant leadership is related to RE and quality of mentoring relationship, while autocratic and transactional leadership styles are not related to any of the variables. The results also confirm the critical position of RE in the development of high quality mentoring relationship.

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Mentoring & Relational Energy

Mentoring is valuable because of its effect on the performance and career development of employees (Allen & Eby, 2003). The effectiveness of any mentoring is dependent on the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee as evidenced by the satisfaction of the mentor and mentee (Allen & Eby, 2003; Liebhart & Faullant, 2014). However, not all mentoring relationships are equally effective because the quality of mentoring relationship can either be low, medium or high (Allen & Eby, 2003) depending on how the mentee perceives the relationship with mentor. Owens et al. (2016:37) defined relational energy as 'heightened level of psychological resourcefulness generated from interpersonal interaction that enhances one's capacity to do work'. Relational energy affects many important employees' and organizational work outcomes (Cross et al.,

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2003; Amah, 2016; Owens et al., 2016). Both high quality mentoring relationship and relational energy depend on the quality of interaction between leaders and their subordinates. In a constantly changing business environment, employees are the main source of competitive advantage to organizations, and must be effectively managed. Hence, organizations must be interested in understanding how different leadership styles interact with employees. Thus, knowing the differential effects of different leadership styles on the quality of mentoring relationship and the relational energy generated will provide important information to organizations as they attempt to recruit and train leaders with effective styles to manage employees.

Earlier Studies

There are many established determinants of high quality mentoring relationship (Allen & Eby, 2003; Liebhart & Faillant, 2014). Although some of these variables refer to the leader as a mentor, no explicit mention has been made of the role of leadership style in determining the quality of mentoring relationship. However, the role of leadership style in influencing the quality of mentoring relationship can be inferred from other studies that established the role of leadership style on other work outcomes (Lyndon & Rawat, 2015). The role of leadership as energizers and de-energizers has been identified by past studies, but how different styles generate relational energy remains a gap in literature. Cross et al. (2003) found out that different interactions generated different levels of relational energy, but they did not relate this to leadership style. Thus,

the role of various types of leadership styles in generating relational energy, and in creating high quality mentoring relationship remains a gap in relational energy and mentoring research literature. This gap was alluded to by Dierendonck et al. (2014) when they advised that researchers should go beyond using correlation analysis to establish difference in leadership styles, and establish that these differences exist in the value of outcome variables produced.

The Present Study

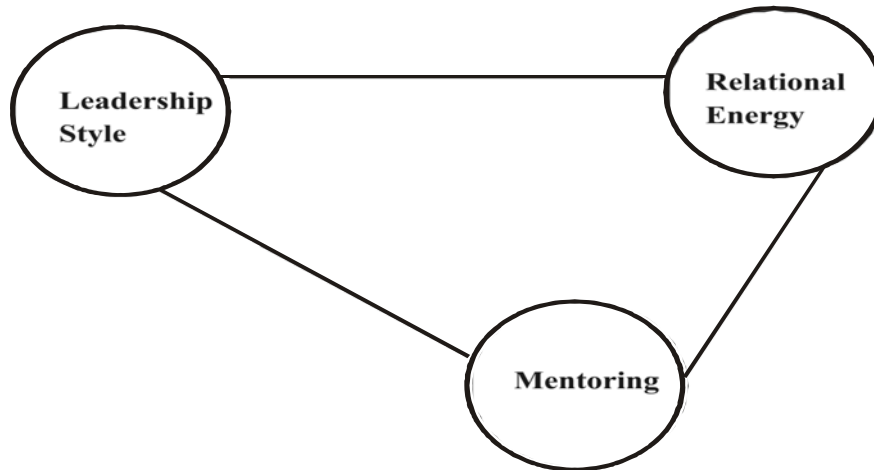
The current study answers two questions: how do different leadership styles (servant, transactional & autocratic) affect relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship? What role does relational energy play in the relationship between leadership style and high-quality mentoring relationship? The study makes the following contributions to relational energy, mentoring and leadership style literature. By establishing the direct and differential effects of different leadership styles, the study provides empirical justification for organizations to train future leaders to use effective styles in dealing with their subordinates. The study positions relational energy as a critical variable in mentoring research.

The model tested in this study is shown in figure 1.

Leadership Styles, Relational Energy & Quality of Mentoring Relationship

There are two types of mentoring; formal mentoring established by organi-

Fig. 1 Tested Model



zational process, and informal mentoring that is voluntarily developed between a mentor and a mentee. The focus of this study is informal mentoring since the study is considering mentoring developed voluntarily between leaders and their subordinates. During informal mentoring, mentors exhibit two types of behaviors. These are career related behaviors (coaching, exposure to challenging assignment, and making mentee visible to gain in organizational benefits), pro-social support (role model, counseling and enhancement of trust). These behaviors will provide upward mobility, career satisfaction and advancement to mentees. The link between these behaviors and the perception of high quality mentoring relationship can be explained using the social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity. In the mentoring relationship, the mentees who derive benefit from the career and pro-social behavior of the mentors will see these behaviors as resources which by the principle of reciprocity they must reciprocate. Hence, they will perceive the relationship between them and the mentor as high-

quality relationship for those leadership styles that provide the benefits.

Servant leaders will be high in employee career enhancement and pro-social support behaviors.

The different leadership styles may involve in informal mentoring relationships with their subordinates, and enact the mentor's behaviors, but for different motives and in different degrees. Servant leadership is heavily focused on people, and its orientation to people is to serve them first so they develop to their full potential and then they can perform organizational goal. This orientation to the needs and development of people will likely show up in the level, intensity, and quality of the behaviors enacted toward employees. Thus, servant leaders will be high in employee career enhancement and pro-social support behaviors. Transactional leaders are transactional in their relationship with employees. Caring for employees is a currency in the exchange process, and

not an interest in employees' personal development. Autocratic leaders do not see value in developing people because they dominate employees for self-interest, and do not believe that employees can make independent valuable contribution in how work is done. Transactional and autocratic are goal directed with less emphasis on people. The transactional leader will differ from autocratic leader because the leader will show some persistence in people development during relationship. However, the autocratic leader has little patience with non-performing employees and will do the assignment for employees not measuring up and issue strict direction to those doing fine. Employees who derive high relational energy from interaction with leaders will, according to the social exchange theory, develop high quality mentoring relationship with the leader. The following hypotheses are stated:

- H1: Servant leadership styles will be positively related to quality of mentoring relationship
- H2: Transactional leadership style will be negatively related to quality mentoring relationship
- H3: Autocratic leadership style will be negatively related to quality mentoring relationship
- H4: Relational energy will be positively related to high quality mentoring relationship

Relational Energy in Social Interaction

Energy is a concept that is apparent in many organizational discussions, but is

rarely explicitly mentioned. For example, the concept of engagement and motivation implicitly contains the concept of energy in diverse forms. Energy is a valuable resource in the organization, which can be acquired, stored, and drawn upon by organizational participants in tasks that involve high utilization of resources. For example, highly engaged employees experiencing high level of work-family conflict because of the extra-role activities they engage in, can draw from stored energy to minimize the effect of engagement on work-family conflict (Amah, 2016).

Energy comes in various forms, and exhibits three main characteristics namely, quantity, direction, and intensity. Relational energy is generated through the interpersonal interaction between organizational participants. The generation and transmission of relational energy in this interaction can be explained by the interaction ritual and social contagion theories (Collins, 2004). Interaction ritual theory postulates that in social interaction people 'become more aware of what each other is doing and feeling, and more aware of each other's awareness. They experience their shared emotion more intensely (Collins, 2004:48). Since people seek to acquire and store energy for use in future activities, the theory assumes that people gravitate to interactions that elevate their level of energy, and avoid those that reduce energy. For example, subordinates will seek interactions with their leaders when such interaction enhances their level of energy or source of information that can enhance their performance. Social contagion theory is

complementary to interactional ritual theory by explaining how energy generated during social interaction is spread from one participant to the other. The theory goes beyond transference of experience and addresses 'social transference of thoughts and ideas, attitudes, and behaviors' (Owens et al., 2016:37). During this transference, the interacting individuals share these resources with each other. The two theories described above, jointly indicate that energy is generated and transmitted during interpersonal interaction between subordinates and their leaders in the organizations. Thus, organizational participants in search of means to acquire and maintain adequate stock of relational energy to be used in future, will seek and maintain interactions that contribute to their stock of energy, and avoid those that deplete their stock of energy (Amah, 2016).

Leadership styles & Relational Energy

It has been established that interpersonal interaction between leaders and their subordinates has the potential to generate relational energy that can enhance subordinates' performance. What has not been sufficiently established is whether different leadership styles generate different levels of relational energy or if some leadership styles actually de-

Interpersonal interaction between leaders and their subordinates has the potential to generate relational energy that can enhance subordinates' performance.

energize subordinates. Possible differences in the level of relational energy generated by leadership styles can be explained by the regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998). Self-regulatory focus is necessary in shaping peoples' motivation and behavior (Higgins, 1998). Leaders have various motives to lead and exhibit various leadership behaviors (styles). Thus, the fact that the theory shapes these two concepts may point to possible difference in the level of relational energy generated and transmitted during the interpersonal interaction. Self-regulatory focus follows two motivational pathways namely; promotion focus and prevention focus. These foci differ in what they believe and the process taken to achieve set goals. People with promotion focus utilize problem-solving and can energize others who interact with them to achieve set goals (Friedman & Forster, 2001). Promotion focus individuals assume that nothing is impossible and see success instead of failure. Prevention focus sees a lot of obstacles to success and is de-energizing to others who interact with them. People with prevention focus see failures and emphasize the power of obstacles instead of the will to succeed.

Thus, self-regulation is the process by which people align their behavior and identity of self to goals and standards (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Higgins (1998) proposed that the driver of self-regulation is the value held by leaders which has relationship with leadership styles and effectiveness. Two opposing leadership values have also been identified as openness to change, self-direction on the one hand and conservative, safety and con-

formity on the other (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007:505). The authors concluded that differences in the use of promotion and prevention foci will 'emerge in a person's value profile', such that those who hold the openness to change value will subscribe to promotion focus, while those with conformity and traditional value will subscribe to prevention focus. Thus, linking this with the conclusion from Friedman and Forster (2001), leaders with promotion self-regulatory focus, will see opportunities even in challenges and utilize problem-solving and energize their subordinates to do the same. Leaders with prevention self-regulatory focus will see obstacles and yield to it, they will therefore be de-energizing to their subordinates. Thus, unless all the various leadership styles subscribe to promotion self-regulatory focus, there will be differences in the level of relational energy generated and transmitted when different leadership styles interact with their subordinates.

Kark and Van Dijk (2007) postulated that there is a possible relationship between the two self-regulatory foci and leadership styles, such that some leadership styles will adopt the promotional self-regulatory focus, while some will adopt the prevention self-regulatory focus based on the motive of leadership. Servant leadership differs from transactional and autocratic leadership styles based on the motive for each leadership style. Transactional involves 'exchange of reward for compliance' and autocratic is a monitoring style where followers are treated as not valued contributors to goals but are meant to follow orders. Servant

Servant leadership's primary motive is to serve followers so they develop their highest level of personal growth.

leadership's primary motive is to serve followers so they develop their highest level of personal growth, and then contribution to organizational goal follows this drive. Dierendonck (2011:1232) states that 'servant leaders empower and develop people; they show humility, are authentic, accept people for who they are, provide direction, and are stewards who work for the good of the whole and is always positive about employees'. In doing this, servant leader cares about people and provides all they require to develop to their highest potential. Servant leaders emphasize people as the highest priority. Consequently, servant leadership will adopt the promotional self-regulatory focus, while transactional and autocratic leadership styles will adopt the preventive self-regulatory focus. Hence, there should be difference in the level of relational energy generated by each leadership style.

Based on the above explanations the following hypotheses are postulated:

H5: Servant leadership behavior is positively related to relational energy

Because of the less emphasis placed by transactional and autocratic leadership style on people's needs and development, the following will hold:

H6: Transactional leadership behavior will be negatively related to relational energy

H7: Autocratic leadership style will be negatively related to relational energy

Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional survey methodology in which participants were recruited to fill out questionnaires containing measures for various study variables. Four organizations in Nigeria without formal mentoring programs were approached for participation. The four organizations agreed, and the human resources group in each organization was mandated to coordinate the study in their organization. Using only organizations without formal mentoring did not bias our sample since formal mentoring programs are designed to leverage on the effectiveness of informal mentoring programs (Allen & Eby, 2003). Data was obtained between the last quarter of 2016 and first quarter of 2017, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling techniques.

The first part of the questionnaire contained demographic data of age, tenure in the organization, gender, and educational level. To test the dynamic nature of relational energy and quality mentoring relationship mentioned by Liebhart and Faullant (2014), participants were asked to mention the number of years they had been interacting with the leader being rated. The second part of the questionnaire captured the servant, transactional, and autocratic leadership styles, relational energy, and quality of mentoring relationship. Participants in each organization were selected randomly using the phone list of each organization. Six hundred partici-

pants were selected across the four organizations, and questionnaires mailed to them in a sealed envelope. Information on the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study. It also guaranteed confidentiality since the filled questionnaires were returned in another sealed envelope put in a locked box. Participants were also assured that no information would be given to their organizations in a form that would reveal the identity of any participant. Participants were free to omit any data they did not wish to supply.

Two hundred and fifty filled questionnaires were returned, and after removing those with substantial missing data, only 210 usable questionnaires were available (35%). Participants were 60% males, of minimum tenure of eight years, average age of 35.8 years, and with 60% having college degrees. The average period of interaction between participants and their leaders is 4.5 years.

Measures

The data for servant, transactional, autocratic leadership styles, relational energy, and quality of mentoring relationship were captured using Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Servant leadership style was measured from 7-item scale adopted from the work of Liden et al. (2015). Example item is 'My manager/supervisor makes my career development a priority'. The reliability for the measure in this study is .89. Transactional leadership style was measured from a scale adopted from

Avolio et al. (1999). Example item is ‘My manager/supervisor assists based on effort’. The reliability of this measure in this study is .79. Autocratic leadership style was measured with items adapted from the work of Northouse (2009). Example item is ‘My manager believes that subordinates must be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work’. The reliability of the measure in this study is .80. Relational energy was measured from the work of Owens et al. (2016). Example item is ‘After interacting with my manager/supervisor I feel more energy to do my work’. The reliability for this measure is .81. Quality of mentoring relationship is measured with the scale taken from Liebhart and Faullant (2014) and modified to include managers in the sentences. Example item is ‘The mentoring relationship between me and

my manager has developed over time’, while the reliability of the measure in this study is .76.

Preliminary Analysis

The means, standard deviation, correlation and reliability coefficients for the study variables are in Table 1. Servant leadership style correlated positively with relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship, while transactional leadership style correlated negative with relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship. Autocratic leadership style correlated positively with both variables. This was contrary to expectation. None of the demographic variables has significant correlation with the study variable. They were therefore, not included in model estimation.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlations & Reliability Coefficients

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Gender											
2.Age			-.01								
3.Tenure			-.14	.59**							
4.Education			.16	.22*	.09						
5.Relational energy	3.49	.77	.14	.18	.17	-.08	.81				
6.Mentoring relationship	3.51	.80	-.05	.18	.19	-.05	.37**	.76			
7.Servant leadership	3.22	.78	.14	.07	.15	-.06	.50**	.35**	.89		
8.Autocratic leadership	3.52	.68	-.16	-.05	.18	-.01	.29**	.25*	.32**	.80	
9.Transaction leadership	2.71	.89	-.05	-.09	-.10	-.05	-.38**	-.29**	-.31**	-.04	.79

*p<.05; ** p<.01

Unrotated principal factor analysis extracted six factors with the first factor extracting only 19% of the variance in

all the items compared to 69% extracted by the other five factors. This shows that common method variance is not a seri-

ous issue in this study (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Confirmatory factor analysis and model estimation were carried out using analyses of moments of structure (AMOS) software with maximum likelihood estimation procedure. Model fit was gauged using the criteria set by Hu and Bentler (1999), and included comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), and root-mean-error-of –approximation (RMSEA). For a well-fitted model, the CFI and GFI were expected to be greater

than 0.9, while the value for RMSEA was expected to be less than 0.08. Two models were tested in the confirmatory factor analysis. The 3-factor model combined the leadership styles into 1 factor, while leaving relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship as separate factors. The 5-factor model left all the study variables as separate factors. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that a 5-factor structure has the best fit when compared to the 3-factor model.

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

FactorStructure	GFI	CFI	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	χ^2/df	RMSEA
3- factor	.71	.86	494.23	112	0	4.41	.134
5- factor	.91	.96	193.60	100	300.60**	1.96	.052

χ^2 =Chi-square; df-degree of freedom; GFI is Goodness of fit index; CFI is Comparative fit index; RMSEA is Root-mean-square-error of approximation;** p<.01

Liebhart and Faullant (2104) had established that relational energy generated and transmitted in a formal mentoring situation varied with time of interaction. Hence, prior to estimating the model, the mean values of relational energy and quality of mentoring relationships for the participants who had between three to five years’ interaction, and those with more from five years’ interaction with leaders were compared. There was no significant difference. From the estimated model in figure 2, servant leadership style is positively related to quality of mentoring relationship, and relational energy as hypothesized in

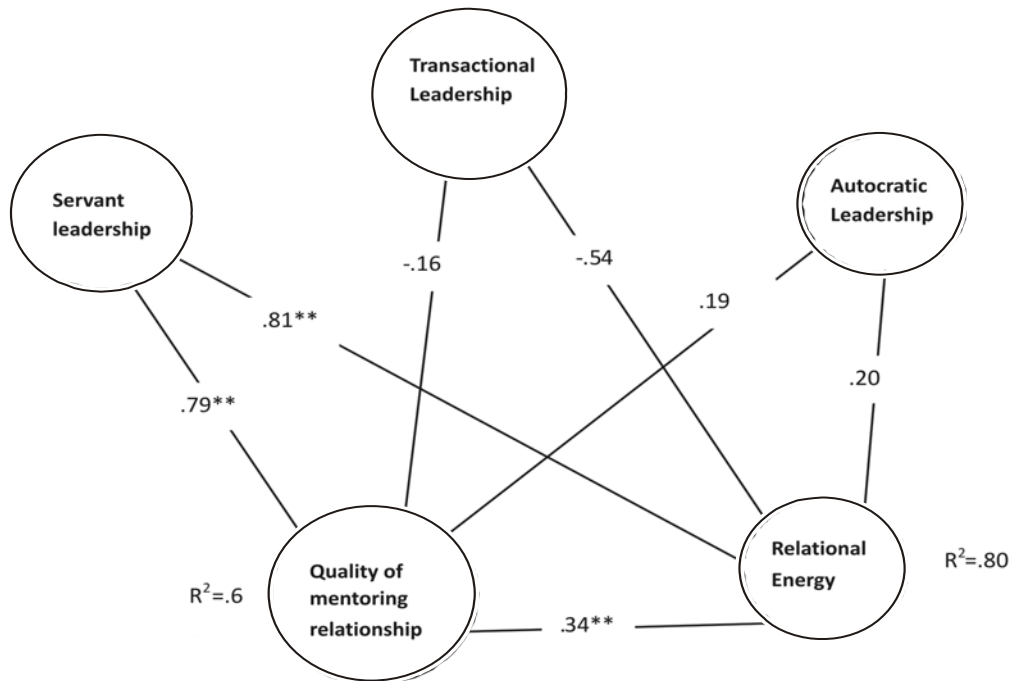
hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 5. The relationship between transactional leadership style and relational energy was negative as stated in hypothesis 6, but not significant. Its relationship with quality of mentoring relationship is also negative, but not significant. Hence, hypotheses 2 and 6 are not supported. Autocratic leadership style has positive, but non-significant relationship with relational energy, and quality of mentoring relationship. Thus, hypotheses 3 and 7 are not supported. Relational energy has positive and significant relationship with high quality mentoring relationship. Thus, hypothesis 4 is supported.

Table 3 Estimation Indices for Tested Models

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Hypothesized model	97.71	58	1.685	.92	.98	.044

χ^2 =Chi-square; df-degree of freedom; GFI is Goodness of fit index; CFI is Comparative fit index; RMSEA is Root-mean-square-error of approximation;

Fig. 2 Estimated Model



Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine how various leadership styles affect relational energy, the quality of mentoring relationship, and the role played by relational energy in the relationship between leadership style and quality of mentoring relationship. The study did not notice the dynamic trend in relational energy established by Liebhart and Faullant (2014). Their study was in a formal mentoring relationship which had only one year of interaction. The current study is in an informal setting, with longer period of interaction. Thus, relational energy must have stabilized over this longer period.

The results obtained in the model estimation clearly demonstrate that there

are differences in the relational energy generated and quality of mentoring relationship developed when different leadership styles interact with subordinates. Servant leadership style has clear edge over both transactional and autocratic leadership styles because it has positive and significant relationships with relational energy (.81), and with quality of mentoring relationship (.79). Transactional leadership style had negative non-significant relationship with both relational energy and quality of mentoring

Servant leadership style has clear edge over both transactional and autocratic leadership styles because it has positive and significant relationships with relational energy .

relationship. The negative values are indications that transactional leadership style is detrimental to the generation of relational energy, and the development of high quality mentoring relationships. The transactional basis of the relationship between the leader and the subordinate does not make room for emotional connection needed for the generation and transmission of relational energy and development of high quality mentoring relationship. Autocratic leadership style has positive, non-significant relationships with relational energy and quality mentoring relationship. The difference in the results of transactional and autocratic leadership styles may be a pointer that the latter style may have use in some situations, and with some subordinates, while the former does not (Khuong & Hoang, 2015). Relational energy is significantly related to high quality mentoring relationship, and thus, partially mediated the relationship between leadership style and high-quality mentoring relationship. This result positions relational energy as a critical variable in the leadership style and high-quality mentoring relationship. Thus, leadership styles that enhance the generation and transmission of relational energy indirectly enhance the quality mentoring relationship between leaders and subordinates.

The results obtained show that leadership styles are not equally effective in generating relational energy and creating high quality mentoring relationships. These results make valuable contribution to the search for efficiency in organization. Organizations must train their leaders to exhibit desired leadership behav-

iors such as servant leadership behaviors and avoid transactional and autocratic behaviors. This is because relational energy is an important resource in enhancing the productivity of highly engaged employees that are required in the current challenging business environment (Amah, 2016), and high-quality mentoring relationship has positive effect on desirable organizational and individual outcomes (Liebhart & Faullant, 2014).

Relational energy is an important resource in enhancing the productivity of highly engaged employees.

A major contribution of this study is the establishment of leadership styles that should be emphasized by organizations and those that should be discouraged, based on their relationship with relational energy and quality mentoring relationship. The study also establishes additional path through which leadership behaviors can affect quality mentoring relationships. In doing this, the study positions relational energy as a major organizational resource that should be provided through positive interaction with leaders with effective leadership style such as servant leadership style. Thus, organizations must be interested in how best to generate and transmit this important resource that has important effects on other important individual variables. Leadership mindset is an important contributor to the development of leadership behaviors (Dweck, 2008). For example, servant leadership has the mindset of caring for employee needs satisfaction and growth, while that

of transactional and autocratic are self-ish in nature. Thus, organizations can include as a basis for hiring or promoting leaders the possession of appropriate mindset that will drive desired leadership behavior.

Limitations & Suggestions

The study is based on cross-sectional research methodology, and so common method variance cannot be ruled out. However, the unrotated factor analysis and the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that its effect in the study is minimal and within acceptable limit. Study was based on informal mentoring relationship and participants had long period interaction with leaders. Thus, the study could not test the dynamic nature of relational energy and mentoring relationship since the long period had achieved stabilization of these variables. A future direction is to include those just entering the interaction relationship to monitor the growth in both variables. Causation can also be achieved by capturing relational energy and quality of mentoring relationship at various times in the career of the participants. Future studies should include others such as transformational, spiritual, and authentic leadership styles to get a full view of how each generates relational energy and develops high quality mentoring relationship.

Conclusion

There are many studies on each of the leadership behaviors included in this study (Amah, 2016 & Dierendonck, 2011). However, there is no study found

to have measured various leadership styles and determined the variation in the level of relational energy generated and high-quality mentoring relationship developed when subordinates interact with each leadership behavior. The current study makes a valuable contribution in the relational energy and quality of mentoring literature by expanding past studies to account for differences in the effectiveness of various leadership behaviors. This understanding will help organizations in selecting and training current and future leaders to enhance employee productivity.

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