



Antecedents of mentoring: Do multi-faceted job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment matter?



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationships between work attitudes, willingness to mentor and business-to-business salesperson mentoring support. Results provide evidence that individual directed organizational citizenship behavior (altruism) and willingness to mentor may not share as many antecedents as the literature conceptualizes. Willingness to mentor is a strong predictor of serving as a mentor and mentors most willing to mentor provide protégés with the greatest vocational, psychosocial and role modeling support. The findings raise concerns regarding the applicability of organizational citizenship behavior theory as a framework for understanding why employees mentor.

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1. Introduction

More than 70% of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs (Bridgeford, 2007). The prevalence of mentoring programs is not entirely surprising given that mentoring relationships are known to yield wide-ranging benefits (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). Mentoring increases protégé performance (Brashear, Bellenger, Boles, & Barksdale, 2006), increases organizational commitment (Hartmann, Rutherford, Hamwi, & Friend, 2012) and diminishes turnover intentions (Brashear et al., 2006) in salespeople. Mentoring also increases mentor performance and job satisfaction (Pullins & Fine, 2002) in salespeople. Despite the prevalence and benefits of mentoring programs, less than 20% of organizations evaluate their mentoring programs as good or excellent and in 62% of these organizations 5% or fewer employees have mentors (Institute for Corporate Productivity, 2007).

The above statistics point to a lack of reach and effectiveness of mentoring relationships. To address these issues, the purpose of this study is to focus on antecedents and outcomes of salesperson's willingness to mentor. Borrowing from organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) theory, this research examines the role of work attitudes (multi-faceted job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment) in explaining willingness to mentor. Then, the role of willingness to mentor in explaining mentoring and mentor support is examined.

Results of this study emphasize the importance of continued research focusing on explaining willingness to mentor, but encourage researchers to look beyond work attitudes.

2. Literature review and hypotheses formation

OCB is individual discretionary behavior, not formally recognized by the organization's evaluation system, which promotes efficient organizational functioning (Organ, 1990). OCB is conceptualized to be "in part a function of stable dispositions, traits, or temperament," (Organ, 1990, pg. 54). Empirical and conceptual examinations of OCB suggest that there are two categories of OCB: behavior directed toward the organization (OCBO) and behavior directed toward specific individuals (OCBI) (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Literature labels the OCBI dimension as altruism. Altruism refers to "discretionary behavior that has the effect of helping a specific other person with an organizationally relevant task," (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993, pg. 71).

Mentoring is a relationship between a more experienced individual, the mentor, and a lesser experienced individual, the protégé, intended to provide the protégé with professional and personal development (Kram, 1985). Given that both mentoring and OCB are extra-role behaviors which yield no promise of reciprocal benefits, researchers (Haggard et al., 2011; Tepper & Taylor, 2003) recommend OCB theory as a framework for understanding why employees mentor. Recognizing that both mentoring and altruism are directed at specific individuals and that salesperson OCBO and OCBI are uniquely affected by work

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attitudes (Netemeyer, Boles, McKee, & McMurrian, 1997), the application of OCB theory to willingness to mentor is examined from the perspective of altruism.

OCB theory suggests that employees reciprocate perceptions, attitudes and feelings perpetuated through experiences with one's organization by engaging, or not engaging, in OCB (Organ, 1990). Employees who maintain positive feelings about their job, favorably identify with and are highly involved in their organization are more willing to perform OCB (Organ, 1990). This approach encourages researchers to examine the role of work attitudes in predicting willingness to mentor (McManus & Russell, 1997; Tepper & Taylor, 2003) since work attitudes explain substantial variance in OCB (Netemeyer et al., 1997; Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Research often demonstrates that satisfaction toward specific work environment aspects influences salesperson outcomes uniquely but in a similar direction as does global job satisfaction (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2007; Rutherford, Boles, Hamwi, Madupalli, & Rutherford, 2009). On this premise, it is proposed that satisfaction with each aspect of the work environment and affective organizational commitment are positively associated with altruism.

H1a. The satisfaction facets are positively associated with altruism.

H1b. Affective organizational commitment is positively associated with altruism.

Sparse research examines the role of work attitudes in explaining willingness to mentor. Ostensibly, and as OCB theorists conjecture, it would seem that salespeople with higher levels of satisfaction with each work environment aspect and affective organizational commitment are more willing to mentor. After all, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment are positively associated with OCB (Netemeyer et al., 1997; Organ & Ryan, 1995). However, sales research (Pullins, Fine, & Warren, 1996) examining the relationship between global job satisfaction and willingness to mentor produces inconclusive results.

Although research often shows that satisfaction with specific aspects of the work environment generally impacts outcomes in the same manner as global job satisfaction, this phenomenon is not invariable. Often some, but not all, satisfaction facets are significant predictors of the outcome of interest (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2007; Rutherford et al., 2009). Given that mentoring is an intense, involving, interpersonal and long-lasting career-oriented relationship (Haggard et al., 2011; Ragins & Scandura, 1999), it reasons that satisfaction with certain aspects of the work environment may also impact willingness to mentor by influencing mentoring's perceived benefits and costs (see Ragins & Scandura, 1999 for a review of mentoring's perceived benefits and costs). Consequently, examining the ability of satisfaction with specific aspects of the work environment to explain willingness to mentor may offer better explanatory ability than does global job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H2a. The satisfaction facets are positively associated with willingness to mentor.

H2b. Affective organizational commitment is positively associated with willingness to mentor.

Willingness to mentor refers to an individual's affinity to provide a lesser skilled or experienced individual with vocational, psycho-social and role-modeling support. Whereas vocational support focuses on advancing the protégé's career, psycho-social support focuses on furthering the protégé's emotional, mental and social development. Role-modeling focuses on providing the protégé a reference person (i.e., the mentor) from whom the protégé may emulate attitudes and behaviors (Kram, 1985). The proximate determinant of a specified behavior is an individual's intention to perform that behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Given that intention to perform a specific behavior tends to be highly associated with actual behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein,

1977), it reasons that individuals more (less) willing to mentor are more (less) likely to mentor and when mentoring provide greater (lesser) support.

H3a. Willingness to mentor is positively associated with mentoring.

H3b. Mentors more willing to mentor provide protégés with greater support (vocational, psychosocial and role modeling).

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

Business-to-business salespeople spanning a variety of organizations and industries were recruited. Given that online data gathering techniques offer advantages in accessing cross-sectional specialized samples, members previously identifying as salespeople within an online data panel (i.e., Zoomerang) were invited to participate. Overall, 2071 salespeople entered the questionnaire site. Salespeople not identifying as business-to-business salespersons ($n = 1626$) were filtered out. Listwise deletion, which removes respondents from the analysis on the basis of one or more missing values, was utilized leaving 312 respondents. These 312 respondents comprise 15.1% of the 2071 salespeople entering the questionnaire site.

The study's respondents work an average of 43.5 h weekly and possess an approximate average of 20 and 11 years of experience in sales and their current organization, respectively. Approximately 44% of respondents are female. Respondents average 51.5 years of age. Forty-four (14.1%) salespeople self-identified as currently being a mentor.

3.2. Measures

Affective organizational commitment is measured using six items from Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). Job satisfaction is assessed using the 28-item reduced INDSALES scale (Comer, Machleit, & Lagace, 1989). INDSALES is a multi-faceted (supervision, overall job, company policy and support, promotion and advancement, pay, coworkers and customers) scale developed specifically to consider salespeople's affective evaluations of the work environment. Altruism is assessed using three items from MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter (1991). Items assessing altruism focus on the voluntary helping of specific others (e.g., I am always ready to help or lend a helping hand to those around me; I willingly give of my time to others). Willingness to mentor is assessed using four items from Ragins and Scandura (1994). Mentor support is assessed using nine items adapted, to assess support provided from the mentor's perspective, from the MFQ-9 (Castro & Scandura, 2004). The MFQ-9, a shortened version of the MFQ (Scandura & Ragins, 1993), assesses mentor provided vocational, psychosocial and role modeling support using three items for each support function. All items were measured using seven point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Following Haggard et al.'s (2011) recommendation, a definition describing mentoring as a reciprocal relationship between a more skilled or experienced person, the mentor, and a lesser skilled or experienced person, the protégé, with the goal of advancing the protégé's competencies through consistent interaction was provided. On the basis of this definition, respondents were asked to self-identify as mentors or non-mentors.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model results

Given the limited number of mentors ($n = 44$), neither the dichotomous mentoring nor mentor support variables were included in the CFA. Initial CFA results indicate marginal fit ($\chi^2 = 1492.2$, $df = 734$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .058; SRMR = .06) (Hair, Black, Babin, &

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