Influence of Mentor Power, Dyadic Trust and Length of Relationship on Mentoring Quality

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Quality mentoring assures beneficial outcomes to all stakeholders in the relationship but scanty research in this area has stalled the development of models that facilitates this objective. The present study examines the influence of mentor power, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship on mentoring support quality. Data were collected through the questionnaire method from 257 bank employees who are protégés. Results showed that highest educational attainment ($\alpha = .27, p < .001$) and marital status ($\alpha = -.17, p < .01$) are significant demographic factors in mentoring quality. Simple multiple regression analysis revealed that mentor power ($\alpha = .12, p < .01$), dyadic trust ($\alpha = .72, p < .001$) and length of relationship ($\alpha = .14, p < .01$) had significant positive relationships with mentoring support quality, jointly accounting for sixty percent ($p < .001$) of its variance. The only significant interaction effects was found between dyadic trust and length of relationship, $F(1, 249) = 15.015, p < .001$. It is recommended that management intervention should aim at sustaining relationships and altering negative perceptions of both mentor power and dyadic trust to foster quality mentoring. Future research should utilise concrete measures and examine if the variables of study relate differently for men and women.

Key words: Mentor power, dyadic trust, mentoring, length of relationship, quality support.

Introduction

Mentoring is a close, developmental relationship between two people in which a partner willingly avails him/herself of the full range of superior experience, knowledge, skills or status of the other partner in all spheres of human endeavour (Okurame, 2011a). Partners in the relationship, which is either informal or formal, are individuals with superior practice known as mentors and their inexperience partner called protégé. Informal mentoring evolves spontaneously from mutual attraction when mentors see their potential protégés as 'veiled gold' and protégés in turn recognize mentors as competent models. The formal version of mentoring involves the assignment of protégés to mentors by management (Ragins & cotton, 1999; Chao, 2009). Mentors in both forms of the relationship provide career development and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). Career development functions include coaching, sponsorship of protégé, assigning challenging duties, and providing visibility and protection. Psychosocial tasks of a mentor involve providing friendship and counselling, giving support, offering acceptance and serving as a role model.

The fact that all stakeholders gain from a successful mentoring relationship is strongly documented in the literature. Good mentoring affords protégés a rare opportunity to acquire and use practical skills that accelerate personal and professional development (Payne, 2006; Kammeyer-mueller & Judge, 2008; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Chao, 2009; Cureton, 2009; Cureton, Green & Meakin, 2010). Empirical findings reveal that the relationship
reduces a protégé’s career stress and creates a favourable environment for career growth and enhanced promotions/income (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lenz & Lima, 2004; Beevers & Bea, 2010). Mentors in the relationship enjoy a number of benefits, including recognition from peers, self-rejuvenation from protégé’s creative energy, availability of a competent protégé to delegate duties to, and satisfaction from passing on skills to younger employees who value them as a trusted guide and adviser (Kram, 1985; Ramaswani & Dreher, 2007; Beevers & Bea, 2010). The organisations in which the relationship thrives benefit from greater retention of knowledge, stronger link in hierarchical levels, better working relationships and reduced employee turnover (Hall & Smith, 2009; Beevers & Bea, 2010; Foster, Shastri & Withane, 2011). Further, mentoring enhances the well-being of an organisation’s workforce, making them a committed well-groomed succession pipeline (Cull, 2006; Payne, 2006; Johnson & Anderson, 2010; Kwan, Liu, Liu, & Hong-Kit Yim, 2011).

Outcomes of mentoring are not always positive or beneficial; especially when quality of mentoring is poor and a relationship is not successful (Weng, Huang, Tsai, Chang, Lin & Lee, 2010). Evidences of the consequences of poor mentoring quality are bound in the literature (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2010). Protégés have reported career frustration, diminished self-esteem and poor work performance arising from inadequate mentoring support (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Others have declared that the relationship has not been a source of career and personal development (Okurame, 2008). A bad mentoring relationship ultimately leads to mutual exploitation, envy and destructive interpersonal crisis, backstabbing, mentor disappointment at their inability to ensure career progression for protégé or a protégé’s failure to meet mentor expectations, and a waste of valuable time for mentoring partners (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2008).

Certainly, poor relationships scuttles the opportunity for benefitting from mentoring and decreases the likelihood that mentoring serve the anticipated role of being a panacea for addressing human resource problems such as poor performances of ‘new entrants’ and the depletion of capable hands in the succession pipeline of organisations. These problems, which are thought to be amenable to correction through mentoring, had spurred management in Nigerian workplaces to foster an avalanche of mentoring relationships. However, the mere existence of the relationships does not guaranty gainful returns from mentoring – it is the quality of mentoring support delivered in the relationships. Since the link between quality mentoring support and beneficial outcomes is well established by empirical findings (e.g. Griemnan, 2007; Ramaswani & Dreher, 2007; St-Jean & Audet, 2009; Dilmore, Rubio, Cohen, Seltzer, Bryce, Primack, Fine & Kapor, 2010; RFB, 2010; Weng et al, 2010), the present study investigated factors that might influence quality mentoring support with a view to assisting organisations in their quest for beneficial relationships. Three factors that have the potential for determining the extent of quality mentoring support are a mentor’s power base, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship.

A multi-faceted perspective posits that power is ‘the influence of one person over others, stemming from an individual characteristic, an interpersonal relationship, a position in an organization, or from membership in a societal group’ (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Mentoring theory argue that power relations in mentoring is socially constructed such that, a mentor has internal influence because he or she is ‘superior’ at least by virtue of the fact that they interact with protégés in a paternalistic manner (cited in Hansman, 2002). A mentor also gains external influence because they strive for enlarged network comprising individuals within and outside the organisation. The combination of the two forms of power, which informs how protégés and mentors negotiate their relationship; confer on a mentor the capacity to provide protégés with quality mentoring support (Hansman, 2002). A mentor also gains external influence because they strive for enlarged network comprising individuals within and outside the organisation. The combination of the two forms of power, which informs how protégés and mentors negotiate their relationship; confer on a mentor the capacity to provide protégés with quality mentoring support (Hansman, 2002). Empirical investigations support the view that the presence of a mentor, compared to not having a mentor, is associated with power resources that lead to favourable outcomes (Fagenson, 1989).

The power resources which a mentor may avail him or herself with are captured by French and Raven’s (1959) sources of power. These sources which include expert, reward, legitimate, coercive and charismatic power, more often than not, enhance a mentor’s influence capacity. Mentors who possess expert power may utilise this to further their protégé’s performance and visibility within and outside organizational boundaries. A mentor’s reward, expert
and legitimate power is especially relevant for enhancing the extent to which a mentor is able to provide career development functions with profound positive impact on their protégé’s performance, career success and growth. In the same vein, a mentor who has charismatic power may have no problem exercising power to guide protégés through work and career, thereby determining successful outcomes for their protégés. These power resources would be expected to enlarge a mentor’s organizational influence making it possible for them to protect their protégés from adverse organizational forces and to deliver high quality mentoring support.

Although, it is expected that mentors who have more power in organizations should have greater ability to provide high quality support and enhance their protégé’s fortunes, the nature of power and power attribution makes it particularly susceptible to perceptions. The implication of this conclusion is that actual power may be important but a protégé’s perception of the mentor’s power is even more salient for a favourable perception of the extent of support received from a mentor. As such, how protégés perceive their mentor’s power base rather than actual power is more germane for examination. Inaccurate perceptions may not only deplete a mentor’s power in the relationship, it could also dissipate the mentor’s power in the organization thereby limiting ability to provide quality mentoring support. Consequently, the present study utilised protégé’s perception of their mentor’s power base rather than actual power of mentor. Given that the power resources of a mentor are associated with the extent to which a mentor is able to provide quality mentoring support, the study formulated and tested hypothesis 1: There would be a significant positive relationship between a protégé’s perception of mentor power and the quality of mentoring support they report.

The second factor which has generated substantial interest because of its crucial influence for social cooperation (Mollering, Bachmann & Lee, 2004) and has been implicated in quality mentoring support is dyadic trust. Trust has been defined in different ways by different organisational researchers. Some view trust as the ‘willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party’ (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). It has also been defined as ‘one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is competent, reliable, open and concerned’ (Mishra, 1996; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust, a distinct concept from care and affection, is a state of confidence and comfort in relating with another individual (Wilson & Johnson, 2001). Dyadic trust is characterised by trust in an individual’s ability and knowledge, extent of integrity and sense of honour, and is built on high levels of honesty and confidentiality, two major ingredients for creating an appropriate atmosphere for learning in mentoring (Holmes, 2003; Passmore, 2007; Kappenburg, 2008). It is a mutual phenomenon which increases or decreases overtime and is reflected in openness and frankness, a condition needed for the development of protégés (Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007).

The mentoring literature suggests that dyadic trust is a prominent factor of quality mentoring (Kappenburg, 2008; Wilson & Volker, 2011). Indeed, researchers (Holmes, 2003; Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003; Mertz, 2004; Hezlett, 2005) have found that trust does not only determine how partners relate with each other, it also influences the extent to which the mentoring environment is conducive for protégés to learn and for mentors to affect them emotionally. On the other hand, lack of trust leads to competitive behaviour, inability to make honest disclosure as well as an absence of interpersonal connection (Ferrin et al, 2007; Schlosser et al., 2003). Given that the literature reviewed makes intuitive sense that trust would increase interaction between a protégé and a mentor and ultimately enhance the delivery of quality mentoring support, it is expected that protégés who express high levels of trust in their mentors would report significantly greater levels of quality mentoring support. Consequently, the study stated and tested hypothesis 2: There would be a significant positive relationship between dyadic trust and quality of mentoring support reported by protégés.

A popular opinion in the literature is that quality of mentor support is also affected by the length of a mentoring relationship (Ragins & Cotton 1999; Okurame, 2007). A relationship with a long duration is thought to afford long-term career-related support.
and enough time for benefits to materialise (Kram, 1985). Long term relationship strengthens a mentor’s identification with protégé needs and enhances attention to the delivery of support (Kram, 1985). This implies that protégés in relationships with lesser number of years have limited opportunities for adequate levels of career and psychosocial support from mentors and this inhibit favourable outcomes in their relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Since mentors in relationships with longer duration have more time to provide mentoring functions to protégés (Chao, 1997), it is more probable that their protégés will experience higher levels of quality mentoring support. Consequently, the study stated and tested hypothesis 3: There would be a significant positive relationship between length of mentoring relationship and quality of mentoring support.

Although, the prospect that quality of mentoring support can be influenced by the interaction effects of study variables is not strongly reflected in the literature, it can be canvassed. Arguably, perception of mentor power may engender dyadic trust in mentoring, and vice versa. A favourable perception of mentor power would be expected to advance positive protégé-mentor interactions, which in turn may be a precursor of trust in a mentor. In a reverse manner, level of trust in a mentor may also provoke a favourable perception of mentor’s power because trust creates a fertile context for mentor roles to be fulfilled, and fulfilled expectations could foster favourable perception of a mentor’s power. Again, dyadic trust and perception of mentor power are time-related concepts because they evolve over time. As such, length of a mentoring relationship may interact significantly with each of these variables to affect quality mentoring support. To examine the perspective that study variables would interact to influence mentoring quality, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested. Hypothesis 4: There would be significant interaction effects of dyadic trust and perception of mentor power on quality mentoring support. Hypothesis 5: There would be significant interaction effects of perception of mentor power and length of mentoring relationship on quality mentoring support. Hypothesis 6: There would be significant interaction effects of dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship on quality mentoring support.

Method

Setting

The survey research involved ten banks located in Ibadan, Nigeria. They were sampled from a designated industrial development area which has a concentration of banks.

Participants

Data for the study were collected from bank employees in Ibadan-city, Oyo State-Nigeria. The respondents comprised 161 (62.6%) males and 96 (37.4%) females whose ages ranged from 20 to 45, with a mean age of 29.66 years (SD = 6.11). Participants were 130 (50.6%) clerical, 108 (42.0%) administrative cadre and 19 (7.4%) technical cadres. Majority of the respondents were single (87.9%, n = 226) - 12.1 percent were married. The average participant had worked for 4.49 years (SD = 2.96) in their banking organisation. Their educational status varied thus: 23 (8.9%) had first school leaving certificates, 58 (22.6%) held national diplomas, 24 (9.3%) held first degrees, 71 (27.6%) had postgraduate qualifications and 81 (31.5%) had combinations of university degrees and professional qualifications. On the average, length of mentoring relationships reported by participants was 3.69 years (SD = 2.20) and mentors in the relationships were either male (65.8%, n = 169) or female (34.2%, n = 88).

Procedure

Data were collected through the questionnaire method using the purposive sampling technique whose inclusion criterion was involvement in an informal mentoring relationship. Permission to carry out the study in the selected banks was obtained from their managers. Potential participants were handed study questionnaires during regular working hours with the assistance of contact persons in the organizations sampled. Employees were informed about the aim of the research and were encouraged to take part in the study. Special effort was made to encourage employees who were currently engaged in a mentoring relationship. This was done to ensure that respondents in the study have experiences relevant to the focus of the research. Participation in the study was therefore requested from employees who had mentors, and these respondents were also used to identify other potential
Participants. Respondents were told that participation in the study was not compulsory and that they could withdraw at any point in the study. They were assured that information supplied would be held in confidence and that the present research was purely for academic purposes. A total of 300 questionnaires with an attached consent page on which participants were to append their signature were handed to interested employees. Respondents were requested to fill the questionnaire at their leisure and submit the completed questionnaire to their organisation's contact person for subsequent collection. Questionnaires that had missing data on any of the measures were eliminated, resulting in 257 questionnaires with complete data for analysis. It took the researchers more than three working weeks to collect data for the study.

**Measures**

Data were collected through a questionnaire containing measures of demographic, independent (mentor power, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship) and dependent (quality mentoring support) variables.

**Demographic data:** Demographic data included age, gender of protégé and mentor, marital status, job status, work experience and highest educational qualification of respondents. Protégé gender was coded as 1 if a respondent was a male and 2 if female—the coding of their mentor’s gender followed a similar pattern. Marital status was coded 1 if a respondent was single and 2 if married while job status was coded 1 if a respondent was in a clerical position, 2 if in administrative position and 3 for technical staff. Highest educational attainment was coded 1 if a respondent had first school leaving certificates, 2 if national diplomas, 3 for first degrees, 4 for postgraduate qualifications and 5 for a combination of university degrees and professional qualifications. Age and work experience were measured as continuous variables.

**Dyadic trust:** This variable was assessed using an 8-item scale developed by Larzelere & Huston (1980) to measure trust in a one-to-one relationship. The authors reported significant construct validity using the scale with affect and cognitive based trust measures, and a significant internal consistency reliability coefficient of .80. Participants were required to specify the extent to which scale items describe the level of trust they have for their mentoring partner. Sample items include “My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises”, “I feel my partner can be counted on to help me” and “My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.” A Cronbach’s alpha of .68 was obtained for the scale in the present study. Validation evidence was derived in this study from factor analyses results which revealed significant factor loadings and a significant least item-total correlation of 0.48. Respondents expressed the extent to which they agree with each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree. This scoring format was reversed for negative items in the scale. High scores signify greater levels of trust in a mentor, while low scores signify low levels of trust.

**Mentor power:** This was assessed using an adapted scale that measures the construct of French and Raven’s (1959) bases of power. The construct has been widely used in the organisational literature as a measure of an individual’s power base (Frost & Stahelski, 1988; Rahim, Antonioni, Krumov & Ilieva, 2000). The scale required participants to indicate the extent to which scale items are descriptive of the reasons employees comply with their mentor’s directive or suggestions. Sample items from the scale include “to what extent can the mentor determine an employee’s chances for promotion”, “to what extent can the mentor assign an employee an undesirable work schedule”, “to what extent can employees rely on his (her) knowledge and advice to deal with technical problems they face” and “to what extent is the mentor well-liked as a person.” Evidence for scale validity in this study was derived from item and factor analyses results that revealed significant item-total correlations. Using a 4-point scale ranging from 4 (to a great extent) to 1 (to a little or no extent), a cronbach’s alpha of .76 was established for the whole scale in this study. High scores signify high levels of mentor power, while low scores signify low levels of mentor power.

**Mentoring quality:** This was assessed by the level of mentoring support received by a protégé using an adaption of the mentoring functions scale developed by Okurame (2011b). The 15-item scale measures the level of mentoring support that a protégé feels he or she has received from a mentor. Sample items include “my mentor assigns or nominates me for challenging
assignments that enhance my skills and facilitates my career development”, “my mentor affords me the opportunity to share personal concerns and anxieties” and “My mentor encourages and supports me in ways that build confidence in my ability to function well in my organization.” The author reported a coefficient alpha reliability estimate of .93 and significant construct validity for the scale. The scale has been used among Nigerian samples in previous studies (e.g., Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Okurame, 2011b). In the current study, the coefficient alpha for the scale was .79. The measure was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High scores indicate high mentor support quality, while low scores indicate low quality of support.

Table 1: Results of simple multiple regression analysis predicting quality mentoring support from demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ß</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>.11***</td>
<td>4.492***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of protégé</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job status</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>4.467***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>-2.864**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-1.090</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of mentor</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-1.409</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** P < .01, *** P < .001

Length of mentoring relationship: This was measured as a continuous variable.

Results
Preliminary analysis that involved simple multiple regression statistics was carried out to ascertain the possible influences of demographic variables on quality mentoring support. Demographic data which includes age, gender of protégé and mentor, job status, highest educational qualification, marital status and work experience were entered into the equation in that order. Table 1 presents results of this analysis.

Hypothesis 1, which stated that there would be a significant positive relationship between a protégé’s perception of mentor power and quality mentoring support, was examined using simple regression analysis. The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 revealed that this hypothesis was supported. Table 2 showed that perceived mentor power is significantly and positively related to quality of mentoring support (ß = .12, p < .01). Hence, hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

The hypothesis that there would be a significant positive relationship between dyadic trust and quality of mentoring support (hypothesis 2) was also tested with simple regression analysis. Results of the analysis presented in Table 2 revealed a highly significant positive relationship between dyadic trust and quality of mentoring support (ß = .72, p < .001). Therefore,
Table 2: Results of simple multiple regression analysis predicting quality mentoring support from independent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>ß</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²**</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor power base</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>2.991**</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>130.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyadic trust</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td>17.643***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>3.397**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** P < .01; *** P < .001

hypothesis 2 was strongly supported. Similarly, results of regression analysis confirmed the postulation of hypothesis 3 that there would be a significant positive relationship between length of mentoring relationship and quality mentoring support. Results in Table 2 revealed that length of relationship is a significant positive predictor of mentoring support quality (ß = .14, p < .01). Thus, hypothesis 3 was equally supported. Acting jointly, mentor power, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship accounted for sixty percent (p < .001) of the variance in mentoring support quality.

A three-way (2 x 2 x 2) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilised to examine hypotheses 4, 5 and 6. ANOVA results in Table 3 showed that the main effects of mentor power (F (1, 249) = 5.600, p < .05), dyadic trust (F (1, 249) = 206.909***, p < .001) and length of relationship (F (1, 249) = 5.452, p < .05) were significant. The mean scores on mentoring support quality of protégés who reported more favourable perception of mentor power (M = 50.24), those with high dyadic trust (M = 56.26) and longer length of relationship (M = 52.12) were higher than that of their counterparts with less favourable perceived mentor power (M = 48.35), low dyadic trust (M = 42.49) and shorter length of relationship (M = 47.81). The main effects in ANOVA give credence to regression analysis results which supported hypothesis 1, 2 and 3.

Importantly, the 2 x 2 x 2 ANOVA examined the interaction effects of the independent variables on mentoring support quality. ANOVA results presented in Table 3 show that hypothesis 4 which stated that there would be significant interaction effects of dyadic trust and perception of mentor power on mentoring support quality was not supported, F (1, 249) = 0.037, p > .05. The postulated interaction effects of perception of mentor power and length of mentoring relationship on mentoring support quality (hypothesis 5) was not significant, F (1, 249) = 0.245, p > .05. Table 3 revealed that the interaction of mentor power, dyadic trust and length of relationship was not significant (F (1, 249) = 2.039).
2.039, \( p > .05 \) as well. However, the hypothesized interaction effects of dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship on mentoring quality (hypothesis 6) was shown to be significant, \( F(1, 249) = 15.015, p < .001 \). The significant interaction of dyadic trust and length of relationship yielded four groups of protégés whose mean scores on mentoring support were subjected to the protracted post hoc analysis. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 reveal that the low dyadic trust-low length of relationship protégé group had a comparatively low mean score that is significantly different from the mean scores of all other protégé groups. The low dyadic trust-high length of relationship group was significantly different from the high dyadic trust-low length of relationship (-8.3, \( p < .001 \)) as well as the high dyadic trust-high length of relationship protégé groups (-6.7, \( p < .001 \)). Mentoring quality in the high dyadic trust-low length of relationship and the high dyadic trust-high length of relationship groups were comparable. This pattern of interaction effect is presented in Figure 1. Mean scores on quality of mentor support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interacting cells</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low DT/low LR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-4.1a</td>
<td>-17.6a</td>
<td>-13.3a</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>41.25</td>
<td>5.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low DT/high LR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-8.3a</td>
<td>-6.7a</td>
<td>-4.3a</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46.34</td>
<td>7.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>High DT/low LR</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>56.72</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High DT/high LR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55.62</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( a = p < .001 \)

Discussion
The present study investigated the influence of mentor power base, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship on mentoring support quality. The study also ascertained the potential influence of demographic variables on mentoring quality. Lack of empirical enquiry on how these variables relate among each other has hindered potential interventions aimed at improving level of support delivered by mentors in mentoring relationships. The research was guided by six hypotheses which suggested that mentor power, dyadic trust and length of relationship will have significant position relationships with mentoring support quality (hypotheses 1, 2 and 3), and that there will be significant interaction effects of these variables on mentoring support quality (hypotheses 4, 5 and 6). On the whole, findings are in line with postulations in the literature about how these variables relate to mentoring quality. The study found educational attainment and marital status to be relevant demographic factors in quality of mentoring support. It established a significant positive relationship between mentor support quality and mentor power, dyadic trust and length of relationship respectively, as well as a significant interaction effect of dyadic trust and length of relationship. Study findings set the empirical foundation for the theory that mentor power, dyadic trust and length of relationship are useful factors in mentoring quality.
Relevant inputs obtained from respondents’ such as age, protégé and mentor gender, job status, highest educational qualifications attained, marital status and work experience were examined to find out if they resulted in mentoring support differences. The results showed that only marital status and highest educational attainment were significantly related with quality of mentoring support. While marital status was negatively related to mentor support quality, highest educational attainment was positive. The negative relationship between marital status and mentoring support quality imply that when a protégé is single (marital status was coded 1 if a respondent was single and 2 if married), quality of mentoring support is high, and vice versa. This result suggests that protégés who are single are at an advantage of receiving quality mentoring support in this population. A probable explanation for this finding may be that protégés who are single seek more mentor support and/or mentors provide more support to their single protégés. Another plausible reason would be that being married makes an individual less available for mentoring activities and this result in poor mentoring support.

The positive relationship between educational attainment and quality of support imply that the more educated a protégé is, the more they obtain quality mentoring support. A likely explanation for this pattern of finding may be that high educational attainment creates better opportunities for mentoring support. Alternatively, it could be argued that highly educated protégés feel more need to seek mentoring in ways that ultimately enhances the support they receive. Yet, again, it may be that protégés with high levels of educational attainment value mentoring support and perhaps reported this with more relish compared protégés with low educational attainment. If these arguments hold sway, then management would need to tailor relationships to the needs of different categories of members of staff so that mentoring support will be valued.

Results indicate that mentor power is a significant predictor of mentoring quality. The significant positive relationship found between mentor power and quality of mentoring support implies that perceptions of favourable mentor power make mentors feel a greater need to provide their protégés with quality support. Again, it may be that a favourable perception of a mentor’s power base makes it possible for a mentor to influence people within and outside an organisation on issues concerning their protégé, thereby enhancing his or her delivery of mentoring support. Another tenable explanation could be that protégés who favourably perceive their mentor’s power base automatically go on to report favourable mentoring support outcomes. Alternatively, and since correlation is not a cause-effect situation and correlation data do not rule out the possibility of arguing in the opposite direction for variables that co-vary, it is possible that protégés who received or perceived high quality support from their mentors are much more likely to have favourable perception of mentor power. Reported quality of mentoring support can therefore be enhanced by either positively manipulating the power resources of a mentor within and outside the organisation or by ensuring that mentors are capable of providing good mentoring support.

Consistent with literature, study findings revealed a significant relationship between dyadic trust and mentoring quality. Previous studies (e.g. Holmes, 2003; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser et al., 2003; Wilson & Volker, 2011) have reported that trust strongly influence positive support and learning opportunities in mentoring. The significant relationship between dyadic trust and quality mentoring means that protégés who perceive their mentors to be trust worthy are much more able to receive greater levels of support compared to their counterparts with low levels of trust. A likely explanation for the present finding is that trust creates an appropriate interpersonal atmosphere for quality mentoring support. Alternatively, it could be that protégés who trust their mentors more often than not report favourable mentoring support in their relationship. A substitute rationalization would be that protégés who received high quality mentor support are more likely to trust in a mentor since correlation data permits plausible reverse interpretation. The fact that dyadic trust is particularly relevant for quality mentoring
support is underscored not only by the significant relationship found between the variables, but also by the large amount of variance (seventy-two percent) explained by dyadic trust. This suggests that any attempt to encourage quality mentoring support must address the issue of dyadic trust to be effective.

The significant positive relationship found between length of mentoring relationship and quality of mentoring support implies that the longer the relationship, the greater the quality of mentoring support reported by protégés. This finding is consistent with theoretical postulations and empirical results which suggest that quality of mentoring support is affected by the length of a mentoring relationship because it provides the opportunity for a relationship to flourish and to yield results (Ragins & Cotton 1999).

The finding that mentoring support quality is not significantly affected by the interaction effects of mentor power and dyadic trust, mentor power and length of mentoring relationship as well as mentor power, dyadic trust and length of relationship analysis is indicative that effects of these variables do not interact considerably. However, the finding that dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship recorded significant interaction effects on mentoring support quality implies that different levels of the two variables have implications for the extent of mentoring support quality. The weakest mentoring support is obtained when both length of relationship and dyadic trust are low while greater support is accessible in a situation of high trust/low length of relationship as well as high trust/high length of relationship. These findings can be interpreted to mean two things. First, low level of dyadic trust is not helpful for quality mentoring support, and second, length of mentoring relationship becomes relevant for enhancing mentoring support quality only when dyadic trust is high.

**Implications of findings for intervention**

The findings of this study are of particular practical relevance to organisations where mentoring thrives. A serious concern of many of such organisations is not only to maintain the culture of mentoring and to guarantee the continued availability of mentors for willing protégés but also to ensure that quality mentoring support is delivered in fostered relationships. If protégés do not receive quality support from their relationships, the acclaimed benefits of mentoring to stakeholders in the relationship may not accrue. This is the reason many organisations are interested in ways through which quality mentoring can be fostered. The findings of this study will therefore go a long way in facilitating the attainment of their objectives. The present results show that quality of mentoring support is amenable through intervention, making it possible for management to influence the extent of quality support offered in mentoring relationships occurring in their organisation. Results show that the more favourable the perception of mentor power, the higher the level of quality support accessible in the relationship. Similarly, higher levels of trust in a mentor lead to greater levels of quality mentoring support. Further, the longer the length of a relationship, the higher the level of quality support delivered by mentors.

It is recommended that management intervention should be aimed at altering negative perceptions of both mentor power and dyadic trust to produce relationships where quality mentoring support thrives. Mentor power, for instance, can be enhanced if management accedes to a mentor’s request regarding their protégés and by enhancing their visibility to critical networks within and outside the organisation. To the extent that mentors can manage the level of trust held by their protégés, management can also train mentors on how to foster trust in their relationship. If mentors are trained to engage in actions that communicate to protégés that they are honest, competent and credible, it would promote feelings of dyadic trust since these are the hallmark of dyadic trust. These strategies could help to make relationships last longer thereby tapping into the positive effects of length of mentoring relationship on mentoring support quality. Management would also need to recognise the fact that educational attainment and marital status are important demographic variables for fostering quality mentoring support. Being single and highly educated makes it more likely that some protégés will receive high quality support, indicating that low educational attainment and being married are indices of a potentially low quality mentoring relationship. Management would therefore need to tailor relationships to the needs of different categories of protégés so that quality mentoring will go round.

**Limitations and future research direction**

Though this study extends our understanding of the influence of mentor power, dyadic trust and length of
mentoring relationship on mentoring quality, caution should be exercised in the interpretation of results because of a number of limitations. Data for the study are subject to the usual limitations of a survey research, as they were obtained from self-report instruments. Although, there is a remote chance of under or over reporting by respondents given that reliable measures were utilised in the study, this may not be entirely ruled out. It is recommended that future research should explore the possibility of utilising concrete measures of the variables of study.

Again, while the study examined the influence of demographic data, mentor power, dyadic trust and length of mentoring relationship on mentoring support quality, it does not imply that mentoring quality is totally accounted for by these variables. Indeed, other factors not examined in this study may emerge from research as equally relevant variables for fostering quality mentoring support. A research focused on other mentoring variables that may enhance or inhibit quality of mentoring support is therefore necessary. Again, future studies should examine if the variables relate to quality of mentoring support differently for men and women. The present study is exploratory; therefore data from employees in the Nigerian banking sector may not typify organisations in general. This calls for caution in generalising study findings to include employees in other organisational contexts.

References


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