

Personality fit between mentor and protégé and its impact on effectiveness of formal mentoring of freshers

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Abstract: *The focus of this research was to study the personality fit between mentor and protégé and its impact on the effectiveness of mentoring of fresher in information technology companies hiring fresher in erode zone. The focus of the study was to understand the impact of personality fit and effectiveness of mentoring process. The research was designed to collect data from fresh engineering graduates and their mentors working in software companies in erode. The questionnaires were made available online to collect data. The data was collected using standard questionnaires by using simple random sampling. The analysis results show there was not much difference in the personality traits of mentor and protégé. The effectiveness of mentoring is viewed in similar manner by both mentor and protégé. It is found that there is significant relationship between personality fit and effectiveness of mentoring. Significance of the study is that in the future when companies hire fresher and attach them with a mentor for grooming they attached based on the mentor and protégé personality since it will result in effective mentoring process. This study is limited to fresher and information technology companies based out of erode zone. This cannot be generalized to other geographies and other industries.*

Introduction

In the business ecosystem we can observe that business activities are getting complex and need someone to explain for better understanding. In human resource perspective, for a fresher to learn his trade fast he has to be attached with an experienced person. This model is successful as well as unsuccessful but when it is successful its impact is huge. With system perspective in mind, we can visualize the possible factors that can influence the effectiveness of mentoring. The factors such as personality traits of mentor and protégé, mentoring activities undergone in a mentoring relationship, effectiveness of mentoring in mentor and protégé perspectives, demographic profile, industry circumstances, company profile, etc. are the possible influencers however this list is not exhaustive. So for mentoring to be effective one need to understand the factors that can impact the mentoring relationship and its effectiveness and work accordingly. Henceforth an attempt was made to study the influence of the personality profile of mentors and protégés who are fresh engineering graduates on the effectiveness of formal mentoring relationship in Information Technology Service provider located Erode.

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Mentor is person with advanced knowledge or experience which he uses to help protégé with less knowledge and experience develop his skills for career development (Kram. K. E., 1985). It is found that the personalities of the mentor and the protégé, specifically agreeableness, openness, and extroversion, were significant predictors of protégé – mentor agreement about the provision of psychosocial support (Waters, L, McCabe, M., Kiellerup, D., & Kiellerup, S., 2002).

Mentoring is common in IT industry particularly for fresher. In case of fresher it is new culture and technologies about which they need to be orient to. The essence of mentoring is that it should help the protégé to develop himself in the areas of his interest supported by more experienced person. In information technology companies, the technology is the core of all operations. As we know technology is highly prone to obsolescence as the new technological innovations are emerging fast. So the subject matter experts act as mentors to those people who are new to the subject. Currently, mentor and protégé are getting attached based on the human resource requirements in specific technology while their personality is not taken into account before attaching. This results in unsuccessful succession planning attempts in a business scenario.

This study is extension of my previous study along with Dr. Manju P. George, S. Sivarama krishnan, Dr. Sebastian Rupert Mmpilly (2013), published in For East Journal of Psychology and Business on the title Personality fit between mentor and protégé dyads and its influence on the effectiveness of formal mentoring in a pmmm level 4/5 company in chennai, India.

Literature Review

Mentoring

Mentoring is a dyadic relationship in which mentor furthers the professional and personal development of the protégé providing information, assistance, support and guidance (María Torres-Guzmán and A.L. Goodwin, 1996). While (Kram. K. E., 1985) sees mentoring as a set of role activities, including coaching, support, and sponsorship, those upper-level managers provide to protégés. So mentoring is a process where the senior or experienced college share knowledge, guides, counsels, coach, guard, etc. with a junior college who is trusting on the senior college to train and develop him for the future roles in the professional as well as social and personal life.

Mentoring is mean to enhance work outcomes and career development (Kram. K. E., 1985). Mentoring programs have application in wide range of fields, business and professional (Weinstein, Gerald P., Schuele, Karen, 2003), Mentoring has been examined at demographic, experiential and personality point of views and the possibility of their influence on willingness to mentor (Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Elizabeth Lentz, 2006). Age, gender, and educational level, as well as prior experience as a mentor or protégé are the demographic factors found to be related to the willingness to mentor (Ragins, Belle Rose, John L. Cotton, and Janice S. Miller, 2000). Mentors have two key functions such as career development functions such as sponsorship, advice, coaching, protection, visibility and exposure, and challenging assignments and psychosocial support such as role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Kram. K. E., 1985).

Mentor

The term 'mentor' was defined as a member of an organization who is experienced, knowledgeable and committed to providing personal and/or professional developmental support to the protégé', a common definition within the literature as well as in practice (Kram, K. E., 1985). The mentor is often thought of as an advisor, counsellor or role model (Geiger DuMond A. H., 1995). So mentor is a person in a senior position in an organization with considerable amount of experience which he uses to guide a junior colleague by modes such as sharing knowledge, guides, counsels, coach, guard, etc. so as to help develop junior colleague for current and future roles.

Protégé

Protégé refers to the less experienced, junior person in the mentoring relationship (Anne L. Davis, 2005). The protégé is sometimes referred to as the mentor or the mentee. So protégé is a person in junior position willing to learn the tricks of trade from a senior colleague by ways of knowledge sharing, guiding, counselling, coaching, etc.

Formal Mentoring

Formal Mentoring refers to mentoring that is part of a formal mentoring program where both individuals are usually from the same organization. These mentoring relationships are formed with assistance from the organization (Anne L. Davis, 2005).

Personality

Personality pertains to the way behaviours of others are interpreted, to the way individuals react to actions of others, as well as to individuals' pro-active behaviour in the social environment. The Big-Five is a taxonomy that parsimoniously and comprehensively describes the human personality sphere, and consists of the following traits: neuroticism; extraversion; openness; agreeableness; and conscientiousness. Neuroticism encompasses tendencies to worry, pessimism, self-consciousness, reserved approach to others, irritability and a sense of vulnerability. Extraversion is associated with gregariousness, assertiveness, orientation towards action, ambition, excitement-seeking and a positive outlook of situations. Openness includes the characteristics of creativity, imaginativeness, inquisitiveness, and receptivity of novel viewpoints and ideas. Agreeableness is associated with altruism, forthrightness, trust towards others, and humility. And conscientiousness encompasses diligence, orderliness, self-discipline, achievement orientation and dutifulness. Extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were positively correlated with participation of a mentor in the mentoring process (Brian P. Niehoff, 2005). Personality fit between mentor and protégé does have a positive on the mentoring process in information technology companies based out of Chennai, India (Dr. Manju P. George, S. Sivaramakrishnan, Dr. Sebastian Rupert Mmpilly, 2013).

We define personality as a combination of five traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experiences, neuroticism and extraversion.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

Mentoring in the workplace has only relatively recently claimed recognition as a powerful HRD intervention that assists employees in career advancement, serves as a form of on-the-job training and helps create learning organizations (Cummings and Worley, (1997); Kram and Hall, 1989).

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We define effectiveness of mentoring as one which helps the protégé to achieve his goals through a mean that is considered valid as per the code of conduct of the organizations. There are six dimensions being measured by the questionnaire for effectiveness of mentoring such as Relationship Emphasis, Information Emphasis, Facilitative Focus, Confrontive Focus, Mentor Model and Student Vision. Inventory II and Inventory III are used for data collection from protégé and mentor respectively. Relationship Dimension in the early phase and the key concept is trust. It deals with the following behaviours such as empathetic listening, raising open ended questions, descriptive feedback, non-judgemental responses. Informative Dimension is in the middle phase and the key concept is advice. It deals with the following behaviours such as question about present, reviewing of background, directive commenting, restatements, reliance on fact, etc. Facilitative Dimension is in the later phase and the key concept is alternatives. It deals with the following behaviours such as raising hypothetical questions, uncovering assumptions, multiple viewpoints, examining commitment, analysis of reasons and reviewing of preferences. Confrontive Dimension is in the later phase and the key concept is challenges. It deals with the following behaviours such as careful probing, open acknowledgements, verbal discrepancies, selective behaviours, attention to feedback and comments about potential. Mentor Model Dimension is in the last phase and the key concept is motivation. It deals with the following behaviours such as offering thoughts feelings, selecting related examples, realistic belief in ability, confident view of risk and statement about action. Employee Vision Dimension is in the last phase and the key concept is initiative. It deals with the following behaviours such as reflection on present future, questions about change, review of choices, comments about strategies, expression of confidence, respect for capacity and encouragement about dreams.

Conceptual Model

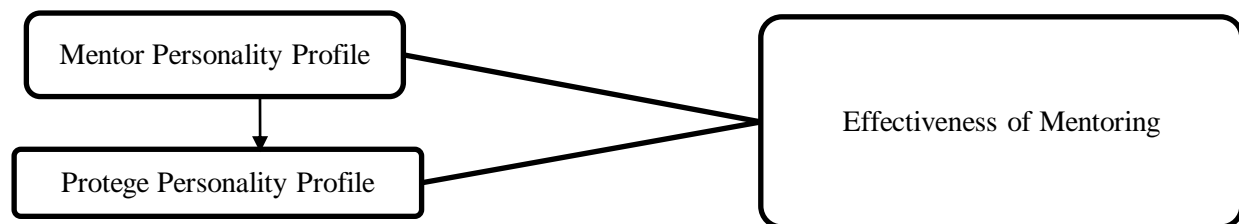


Figure 1: Conceptual Model describing Impact of Personality Traits on Effectiveness of Mentoring

Conceptual Framework

The independent variables in this study are mentor personality profile and protégé personality profile. The dependent variable is effectiveness of mentoring. Personality profile includes the personality traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, open to experience, neuroticism and extraversion. The effectiveness of mentoring includes dimensions such as relationship emphasis, information emphasis, facilitative emphasis, confrontive emphasis, mentor model and student vision. This study was conducted to explore the need to match the mentor and protégé personality profile to make the mentoring process effective. Figure 1 will give a figurative explanation of variables under study and the relationship between them.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the personality traits of mentor and protégé and determine the personality fit in IT companies.
- To ascertain the effectiveness of mentoring.
- To study the impact of personality traits on the effectiveness mentoring.

Hypothesis

H1: There is significant personality fit between mentor and protégé.

H2: There is significant relationship between personality profile of the protégé and effectiveness of mentoring.

Database and Methodology

The research was conducted in information technology companies in Erode. Our questionnaire was shared among their employees and the data was collected in two weeks. Our research design employed in the current study is descriptive in nature. The study focussed on the personality fit between mentor and protégé, effectiveness of mentoring and the impact of personality on the effectiveness of mentoring in an information technology companies with in Erode. A simple random sampling technique was employed. 36 mentor and protégé dyads covering 6 Information Technology companies participated in the survey. Survey process started with the dyads being given clear picture on the purpose of data collection and how they will be helping us increase the effectiveness mentoring process in the future. Following the orientation, questionnaires were shared and data was collected. Collected data was tabulated for analysis.

Standardized scales authored by well known researchers were used to gather information on the designated variables of the respondents. Neo-FFI Form 'S' (Adult Version) was used to obtain the personality profile of software engineers (both mentor and protégé). The instrument was developed by Paul T Costa and Robert Mc Crae in 1985. The Neo FFI factor inventory is the brief 60 item assessment of the five major dimensions of the personality such as neuroticism, openness, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. To measure the effectiveness of mentoring the investigator has used Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale (PAMS) developed by Dr. Norman Cohen in 1993. The PAMS is a 55 statement questionnaire developed for assessing behavioural mentoring functions like relationship emphasis, information emphasis, facilitative focus, confrontive focus, mentor model and protégé vision. The responses are converted into two categories such as effective and not-effective. Both the inventories employed five point likert scale rating. The reliability and validity for both these tools were found to be 0.65. Software Package for Social Science version 16.0 was used to perform the statistical analysis. Personality fit between mentor and protégé and effectiveness of mentoring were assessed separately. Later they were correlated for similar personalities and effective mentoring relationships.

Analysis and Findings

Personality Profile Fit Between Mentors and Protégés

As given in Table 1, the personality traits of mentor and protégé are not significantly varying. Neuroticism though linearly related and the relationship is weak. While extraversion and agreeableness are moderately linked they are in linear relationship. Openness and Conscientiousness are strongly bonded. Looking deep into factors it is found that they are all

Personality fit between mentor and protégé and its impact on effectiveness of formal mentoring of highly strong technical expertise which is the core of information technology but they are working out of Erode for reasons that are generalized as personal since they are not moving to bigger cities because they have other responsibilities that need their presence here. So from now on we consider the personality trait of protégé alone for analysis as the personality traits of mentor and protégé dyads are found to be same.

Table 1: Mentor and protégé Personality Fit

	Traits	Paired Samples Statistics
		Correlation
Personality	Neuroticism	0.21
	Extraversion	0.45
	Openness	0.73
	Agreeableness	0.52
	Conscientiousness	0.82

Effectiveness of Mentoring

The data pertaining to effectiveness of mentoring was collected from both mentors and protégés; the data was collected from the protégé for the purpose of cross verification. Effectiveness of mentoring was measured by employing the protégé’s opinion because the mentoring is a phenomenon used to help protégé’s reaches his goals. Protégé characteristics influenced the mentoring they receive. This being the idea suggested by the theories in the past, the researcher is also moving in the same direction by taking protégé characteristics alone for measuring mentoring effectiveness. Mentoring in the workplace has only relatively recently claimed recognition as a powerful HRD intervention that assists employees in career advancement, serves as a form of on-the-job training and helps create learning organizations (Cummings and Worley, 1997; Kram and Hall, 1989). So the presence of effective mentoring helps the organization to be agile.

As given in Table 2, there is no significant difference in opinion when it comes to other dimensions such as relationship emphasis, information emphasis, facilitative focus, confrontive focus, mentor model and student vision. The reason could be that the mentors and protégés share common values and they having common immediate purpose behind them. This factor is more unique to this geography as it is known for its entrepreneurial spirit and people work in companies not for a career but learn a business. Hence, such commonalities are behind this.

Table 2: Effectiveness of Mentoring

Traits	Paired Samples Statistics
	Correlation
Relationship Emphasis	0.31
Information Emphasis	0.27
Facilitative Focus	0.22
Confrontive Focus	0.27
Mentor Model	0.09
Student Vision	0.31

Impact of Personality on Effectiveness of Mentoring

This is the focus area of our study. The researcher suggests that there will be significant relationship between the personality traits and the effectiveness of mentoring. To study the relationship, the correlation between five personality traits and six effectiveness dimensions were studied. In order to have the best mentors, organizations might have to develop mechanisms to attract, select, motivate and train talented employees to volunteer for and remain in such service (Bob Garvey, Geof Alred, 2000).

As given in Table 3, there is significant relation between extraversion and relationship emphasis, Information Emphasis, Mentor Model and Student Protégé Vision. There is significant relation between openness and relationship emphasis, Information Emphasis and Student Protégé Vision. There is significant relation between conscientiousness and relationship emphasis, Information Emphasis, Mentor Model and Student Protégé Vision. So the hypothesis that there is significant relationship between personality profile of the protégé and effectiveness of mentoring is partially proved.

Table 3: Correlation between Personality and Effectiveness of Mentoring

	Protégé Relationship Emphasis	Protégé Information Emphasis	Protégé Facilitative Focus	Protégé Confrontive Focus	Mentor Model	Protégé Student Vision
Protégé t-Score for Neuroticism	-0.01	0.01	-0.09	-0.04	-0.08	-0.01
Protégé t-Score for Extraversion	0.32	0.36	0.31	0.09	0.39	0.47
Protégé t-Score for Openness	0.05	0.09	0.01	0.06	0.11	0.12
Protégé t-Score for Agreeableness	0.54	0.39	0.62	0.11	0.04	0.11
Protégé t-Score for Conscientiousness	0.54	.62	.62	.08	0.52	0.57

Personality Profile Fit between Mentors and Protégés

There is similarity in the personality traits between mentor and protégé. They are low in neuroticism, while there is moderate in extraversion and agreeableness but strongly related in openness to experience and conscientiousness.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

They are found to be low in information emphasis, facilitative focus, confrontive focus and mentor model while moderately related in relationship emphasis and relationship emphasis,

Impact of Personality on Effectiveness of Mentoring

Extraversion and Conscientiousness are found have moderate impact on the effectiveness while neuroticism, openness and agreeable are found have low impact.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The research results indicate that the personality trait of the mentor and protégé will have an impact on the effectiveness of mentoring. Personality fit between mentor and protégé and

Personality fit between mentor and protégé and its impact on effectiveness of formal mentoring of effectiveness of mentoring were assessed separately. Later they were correlated for similar personalities and effective mentoring relationships. If the mentor and protégé have similar personality then mentoring process between them were found to be more effective. Hence, the personality between mentor and protégé will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of mentoring process. So the information technology companies in Erode zone can now focus on attaching mentor and protégé based on their personality fit. Fitting the mentor and protégé dyads based on the similarity of personality traits will give the companies more probability of increasing the effectiveness of mentoring.

Information technology companies in Erode zone can now think of analysing the personality traits of fresher and the proposed mentor. If they are fitting and similar in nature then they can attach. Fit in personality traits are found have better impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring process. Alongside competence, capability and business requirements they now add personality fit for attaching a protégé with a mentor. The result of such personality fit is found to be tremendous in terms of developing a better human resource as well as an intellectual asset for the company.

Limitations of the Study and Direction for Future Research

This study is limited to fresher and information technology companies based out of Erode zone. This cannot be generalized to other geographies and other industries. This study can be further extended to other industries in Erode zone since it is flourishing city with lot service delivery and manufacturing happening and expanding at a faster pace. This study can also be extended to lateral hire for management position across service and manufacturing companies. Success Planning is one area where companies are finding lot of hardships. This study can be extended to succession planning to check whether personality can solve this problem.

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