Leader's Mentoring and Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

Mentoring is a crucial in developing mentor. This study investigates the relationship between mentoring and perceived knowledge sharing. Data from 48 leader's mentors was investigated. The result shows that mentoring has a positive relationship with perceived knowledge sharing for, both tacit and explicit knowledge. Specifically, career support function and role modeling function of mentor has a positive relationship with perceived tacit knowledge sharing. In contrast, psychological support function does not have the significant relationship with perceived knowledge sharing. These findings advance our understanding of mentoring in the dyadic relationship.

Keywords: leaders, mentoring, knowledge sharing

Introduction

Organizations use mentoring to grow and develop leader in all level in their work [14]. Even though mentoring can be a powerful leadership development activity [7,12] the effectiveness of mentoring varies. Unless organizations make better use of mentoring as leadership development activity, however; tacit knowledge and organizational memory may be lost [32].

One approach to retaining tacit knowledge within an organization is mentoring [32, 25]. Mentoring might be defined as a one-to-one relationship among executive level employees where one is more experience also known as mentors and one is less experience known as mentees [21]. Knowledge refers to information, ideas, expertise, and suggestions relevant to a task performed by leaders [4]. The process to distribution knowledge from mentor to mentee happened via the specific process called knowledge sharing [32]. Knowledge sharing refers to an activity of delivery of task information, relevant ideas, suggestion, know-how, and expertise to benefit and collaborate from mentor to mentee in order to enhance mentee to solve problems, develop ideas, or implement policy or procedure [4]. Despite knowledge sharing is the main purpose of mentoring functions to help mentee learning from a mentor [33]. The previous study showed that mentoring might be an important management of knowledge within organizations and become a critical activity approach to transferring knowledge from mentor to mentee [18, 34]. However, mentoring literature paid little attention to knowledge sharing, yet important.

A useful study from Wang, Zhang, Chen, and Duan [37] illustrated a dynamic of mentoring to knowledge sharing aspect by highlighting the effect of mentee's impression on mentor's tactics affect to knowledge sharing behavior of mentor. More specifically, Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima [2] showed that a magnitude of benefits depends on the types of mentoring provides. However, little theoretical progress in the critical aspect of whether or

not differences of three mentoring functions (career support, psychological support, and role modeling) exert an impact on perceived knowledge sharing of a mentee. Tacit knowledge refers to practical, action-oriented knowledge or know-how based on practice, acquired by personal experience, seldom expressed openly; often resemble intuition [15]. For example, previous research of Smith [32] and Swap, Leonard, and Mimi Shields [35] highlighted the importance role of mentoring to leverage tacit knowledge within the organization. However, there are lacking pieces of empirical evidence to investigate a relationship between mentoring function and tacit dimension of knowledge. As a result, to facilitates a deep understanding and progress mentoring theory, this study aims to examine the relationship of three mentoring functions (career support, psychological support, and role modeling) and the perception of mentee on mentor's knowledge sharing behavior (tacit and explicit knowledge sharing).

This study addresses mainly contribution by shed a light on mentoring literature. Types of mentoring function are important and might affect to different outcomes, yet mentoring scholars still lacking considering this issues. This study further suggests the impact of mentoring function might vary depending on the distinctive manner of three types of mentoring function, as a result; mentoring scholar should investigating mentoring function separately. Moreover, this study also contributes to a knowledge management conversations that one efficiency approach to enhance tacit knowledge management among leaders is a mentoring relationship. Additionally, this study also bounces theoretical contribution to leadership development literature as follow. Mentoring serves as leadership advancement social practice which contributes valuable cross- generation leaders within the organization. More specifically, tacit knowledge management serves as a destination of mentoring.

Discussion and Hypothesis

Mentoring functions: key determinant of knowledge sharing

Three board categories of mentoring functions are career support, psychological supports, and role model [16]. Firstly, career support refers to mentor enhance career advancement of mentees by providing challenging assignments, protection mentee from adverse forces, and fostering positive visibility [27]. Career support functions comprising of four underlying different functions. One, sponsoring is mentor actively supporting mentee for lateral transfers and promotions. Two, protection is mentor shield mentee from damaging contact with key senior figures in the organization. Three, contacting is mentor give mentee assignments that provide contact with key senior figures. Four, the mentor gives challenging assignments to help mentee prepare for greater responsibility by providing challenging work and feedback that encourages skill development. Five, mentor coach mentee by sharing advice, information, and ideas that help mentee attain objectives and achieve recognition [36]. Secondly, psychosocial support refers to mentor helps personal support, friendship, acceptance, counseling to mentee [27]. Psychological support functions: comprising of five underlying different functions. One, the mentor gives friendship to mentee by sharing informal social experiences. Two, mentor acts as counseling by using active listening to enable an employee to explore personal concerns about self and career. Three, the mentor provides acceptance and confirmation to conveying positive regard to the mentee. Four, mentor provide a social network for mentee by participating mentee in informal social activities one-on-one outside of work. Five, mentor act as parent by taking the relationship as a parent/child relationship [36]. Thirdly, role model functions refer to mentor involves identification of mentees [3]. Role model functions: mentor serves as role modeling for the mentee to emulate [36]. Allen and Eby [1] found that when mentors perceive similarities between them and their mentor, occurrence of cloning effect or a process of molding and

shaping a mentee into a professional and instilling value and belief in that person. Mentor receives an award of seeing the characteristic of themselves in their protégé.

Relationship between mentoring function and knowledge sharing

Previous mentoring research also highlights the importance of mentoring to knowledge sharing aspect [35, 6, 39]. For example, Swap et al. [35] concluded that mentoring is a transfer mechanism of critical skills of employees, management systems, and norms and values. Bryant [6] concluded that peer mentoring is becoming increasingly common and may be an effective way to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing. Yang [37] concluded that mentor roles were positively correlated with knowledge sharing effectiveness. As a result, mentoring provides a way to facilitate communication and social networks which are a prominent factor to enhance knowledge sharing.

However, there is no previous research that determined the effect of mentoring function to knowledge sharing, but prior research also gives attention to other aspects of mentoring and knowledge sharing. Previous research findings indicated a relationship between mentoring and knowledge sharing might be as follow. First, mentors involved in the mentorship because they believe in something to offer to mentees in terms of proficiency, experience, and a fresh viewpoint on the organization [1]. After mentors believe, they intend to share their knowledge. Second, similarities of attitudes and mentor-focus tactics of mentees have a positive relationship to high quality of mentoring. If mentee acts interpersonal attraction behavior during mentoring such as taking attention of mentors' private life or admiring the achievements of mentors, higher quality mentoring is occurred [37], then the mentoring relationship might happen base on mentors share their knowledge to mentees. Third, Samadi, Wei, Wan Yusoff [28], they stated that higher the level of trust the greater likelihood of leaders sharing knowledge.

Moreover, according to Wanberg et al. [36] stated that different underlying functions that mentor must utilize not only their prior knowledge from past experience but including their networking and cognitive skill to the mentee. In order to do that, the mentor must participate, interaction, and socialize [23, 32] with mentee that facilitates individual learning from one to another. Mentor shares their valuable knowledge in order to support mentee with three different types of mentoring functions as follow. As a result, mutual benefits between mentor and mentee considers as a crucial factor to enhance mentor intend to share their knowledge to the mentee, moreover; knowledge sharing happens when experience, know-how, and expertise of mentor has an impact on the mentee.

In conclusion, underlying of three functions of mentoring might be driven from knowledge embedded in the mentee. Mentors share their knowledge through a communication between mentor and mentee in order to enhance a combination and exchanging existing knowledge [31]. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis1: Mentoring function is positively related to a perception of mentee on mentor's knowledge sharing

The property of knowledge

Tacit knowledge refers to knowledge which is difficult to transfer to another person because it is not codified in writing [32] such as stories, de facto career management, organizational routines, where or with whom information is located within an organization. Smith [32] reports that 90 percent of the knowledge in any organization is embedded and synthesized in people's heads, and it not easily shared through conventional instruments, such

as documents, databases, systems, and processes. Contrast to tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge consists of facts, rules, and policies that can be articulated and codified in writing or symbols and can be shared easily [40]. However, only a small part of knowledge is explicit. The most part of knowledge embodied in practice and routines is tacit.

As a result, the ability to share knowledge depends on the properties of knowledge which determine how easily to share knowledge [18]. For mentoring, three different functions impact on tacit and explicit knowledge sharing differently. This study assumes that differences mentoring functions: career support, psychological support, and role modeling determine a different perception on knowledge sharing of the mentee.

Mentoring function and tacit knowledge sharing
Naturally, without an interaction and socialization, tacit knowledge is difficult or impossible to share from one to another [37]. However, mentoring facilitates tacit knowledge (mentor's experiences) sharing by encultured embodied knowledge. Embodies knowledge is defined as action oriented, acquired by doing, and embedded in the particular context [25]. In this study, tacit knowledge is a kind of knowledge that embedded in mentor's head and mentoring offers an opportunity to share various skill such as viewpoints, backgrounds, critical thinking, planning and strategy, negotiation, and communication [20]. It could be said that tacit knowledge may be transferred via interpersonal interaction [32].

After mentor shares their knowledge to the mentee, mentees combine acquired tacit knowledge from mentors with their prior knowledge [9] and then apply to their job in order to advance their career knowledge, later advance future career success [32]. Moreover, tacit knowledge plays a key role to leverage the overall quality of knowledge [26]. As a result, mentee received more on mentor tacit knowledge might contribute more to their career success. This study focuses on the distinctive property of knowledge because tacit knowledge is substantial volume and value to the organization [34]. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: Mentoring function is positively related to a perception on mentor's tacit knowledge sharing

Mentoring function and explicit knowledge sharing
Looking for the evidence of sharing explicit knowledge through mentoring, Hansen et al., [15] stated that people also use face-to-face and "hands-on" methods to convey document about "know-what" or explicit knowledge. Morrison [19] found that some technical information is highly valuable, however; difficult to obtain. As a result, less experienced employees may be willing to ask for it. Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian, & Samuel [10] stated that mentor responds to management policy for a pass on explicit technical knowledge through mentees such as give explanations on legal processes, clients, and key partner's information, or even politics power in the organization. For career mentoring, the mentor gives many forms of explicit knowledge to mentee via sponsorship, coaching, and challenging work assignment to assist mentee in learning about organization life cycle and prepare for advancement opportunities [35]. It could be concluded that there is little pieces of evidence of the relationship between mentoring and explicit knowledge sharing. However, to clarify that conclusion the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Mentoring function is positively related to a perception of mentors' explicit knowledge sharing

Procedures for Collecting Data

A questionnaire was adopted to collect data. Face validity of the questionnaire was tested by two industry professionals and one academic professor. All scale originally in English. It has been translated to Thai. After modifying the questionnaires then the questionnaires were preliminary testing with thirty staffs from Government University in Thailand. The Cronbach's Alpha of all items was .944.

Data were collected from respondents who serve as a leader including the supervisor, manager, middle manager, and senior manager of two private organizations in Thailand during March – April 2017. Both organizations are engineering's service company. As a result, the respondents which mainly focus on leader, they have a highly engineering skill or represent a tacit knowledge embedded in each leader. Thus, leaders of engineering were an appropriate sample to test our hypotheses. A variety of sample positions aims to measure a leader's in the mentor role. One-hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to each leader by HR managers and then HR managers further sending to leaders within organizations. After two weeks, sixty surveys were returned, response rate equals 32 percent. However, twelve questionnaires were incomplete by respondents indicated that they did not have the mentor at work, or they have a mentor on a same level of work. This resulted in a sample of 48 leaders as a mentor. As a result, a response rate equals 32 percent.

Variables

The dependent variable, knowledge sharing was measured by five existing items-scales from Matzler et al. [18]. Two items-scales were measured perceived explicit knowledge sharing. The other three items-scales were measured tacit knowledge sharing. The composite reliability was 0.90, and average variance extract was 0.64. Responses were asked for "how often did you mentor share following knowledge to you? The response was provided using a Likert-type response scale from 1- never; 2- on request and to a specific person; 3- on request to everybody; 4- unrequested to a specific person; 5- un-requested to everybody. Cronbach's alpha for knowledge sharing scale for this study was 0.928.

The independent variable, mentoring was assessed by an 18-item scale [13]. The Cronbach alpha was 0.944. Nine items-scales were measured career support function of mentors. Seven items-scales were measured psychological support function of the mentor. The response was provided a Likert-types response scale from 1- not at all; 2- to a small extent; 3- to some extent; 4-to a large extent;5- to a very large extent. Cronbach's alpha for mentoring scale for this study was 0.944.

Data analysis

Correlation and multiple regression analysis were selected to test all three hypotheses. Moreover, as this study use self-report questionnaire and single key informant approach, common method variance (CMV) was investigated. This study followed Podsakoff et al., (2003), they suggested Harman's single factor test to determine common method variance that might occurred from survey questionnaire. Four factors with an eigenvalue due more than 1.0 were observed. The resulted showed that CMV was not a problem for this study.

Results

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	M	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Mentoring function	3.66	.655		.974****	.961****	.813***	.583****	.591****	.516***
2. Career support	3.60	.694			.886****	.727****	.589****	.598****	.520***
3. Psychological support	3.69	.655				.751****	.502**	.501**	.456**
4. Role modeling	3.79	.798					.555***	.581****	.465**
5. Knowledge sharing	3.86	.886						.973****	.944****
6. Tacit knowledge sharing	3.85	.904							.843****
7. Explicit knowledge sharing	3.91	.949							

- *n*= 48 , One-tailed correlation
- (**** $p \leq .00001$) (*** $p \leq .0001$) (** $p \leq .001$) (* $p \leq .01$)

Table1 shows these correlations among dependent and independent variable are large in size [15], positive, and significant that providing support for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis2.

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses. Model 1shows a significant positive relationship between mentoring function and knowledge sharing (β = .789, p ≤ .001), providing supporting support for hypothesis Moreover, mentoring function explains significant amounts of the incremental variance of a perception on knowledge sharing equal 34 percent (R^2= .34). Furthermore, model2 also shows a significant positive relationship between career support function and knowledge sharing (β = .342, p ≤ .05). Model 5 shows a significant positive relationship between mentoring function and tacit knowledge sharing (β = .816, p ≤ .001), providing supporting support for hypothesis 2. Moreover, mentoring function explains significant amounts of the incremental variance of a perception on knowledge sharing equal 34.9 percent (R^2= .349). Model 9 shows a significant positive relationship between mentoring function and explicit knowledge sharing (β = .749, p ≤ .01), providing supporting support for hypothesis 3. Moreover, mentoring function explains significant amounts of the incremental variance of a perception on knowledge sharing equal 26.7 percent (R^2= .267).

Conclusions

This present study aims to empirically investigate the relationship between mentoring function and knowledge sharing. The data was collected from 48 mentees from the private organization in Thailand. All mentees are the leader in organization ranging from a supervisor, middle manager, managers, and senior managers. An important finding of the present study posited that mentoring have a positive significant relationship to knowledge

sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing. It shows that leader's mentor functions account for one-third (34 percent) of knowledge sharing. However, only career support and

Table 2: Results of the regression on knowledge sharing, tacit knowledge sharing and explicit knowledge sharing

DV.	Knowledge sharing				Tacit knowledge sharing				Explicit knowledge sharing			
Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mentoring function	.789 ***				.816 ***				.749 **	.		
Career support		.735*				.790*	d	d		.654	d	d
Psychological support			-.342			d	-.447	d		d	-.185	d
Role modeling				.362		d	d	.435*		d	d	.254
R^2	.340	.393	.393	.393	.349	.423	.423	.423	.267	.290	.290	.290
△ R^2		.0053	.0053	.0053		.0074	.0074	.0074		.023	.023	.023
F	23.65 ***	9.496 ***	9.496 ***	9.496 ***	24.656 ***	10.754 ***	10.754 ***	10.754 ***	15.735 ***	5.988 **	5.988 **	5.988 **

- $n = 48$, One-tailed correlation
- **** $p \le .0001$ *** $p \le .001$ ** $p \le .01$ * $p \le .05$
- [d] variable was treated as control variable

role modeling function have a positive significant relationship to tacit knowledge sharing. In contrast, psychological support function does not have a significant relationship with tacit and explicit knowledge. It could be concluded that a mentoring relationship is a critical approach to valuable knowledge management in the organization. More specifically, mentoring is significant for upcoming leaders because, mentoring enhance tacit knowledge sharing among senior's leaders who serves as a mentor and junior's leaders who serves as a mentee. These present findings are consistency with prior research which posited that career support, psychological support, and role model function have three distinctive manners [29, 30]. Prior research of Windeler and Riemenschneider [38] also found the significant effects only for a career support function and organization commitment relationship while psychological support function was not. As a result, this study proposes that distinctive manner of three type of mentoring function causes not significant effects of psychological support function on knowledge sharing.

Managerial implications

This study finding offer suggestions to HR manager that mentoring in the organization is significant for cross-generation of knowledge among senior leaders and junior leaders. Organizations that recognize and use their employees' steadily growing wealth of tacit and explicit knowledge to solve problems and achieve goals have a major competitive advantage. From these findings, the organization should employ a mentoring relationship to boost their knowledge management especially for tacit knowledge within the organization. Moreover, in leadership development, mentoring is much more important social activities among executives level employee. Organization should support mentoring activity both formal mentoring and informal mentoring across organization. As a result, mentoring gives two main benefits for HR manager who seek to develop their employee competency. First, mentoring develops human capital by enhancing individual's tacit knowledge, and then further contributes to tacit knowledge pool in the organization. Second, mentoring is a key approach to promoting leadership development in the organization, as a result; organization should provide places to share tacit knowledge sharing among leaders.

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