

Moderating Effects of Mentoring on Salesperson's Job stress -Job satisfaction Relationship: Study of Banking Sector in India

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring is viewed as a multifaceted construct known to have direct and indirect effects on employee outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, etc. which are stated in literature. However, research pertaining to the effects of mentoring on salesperson's job stress and its related outcomes is scanty. The aim of this paper is to examine the effects of job stress on job satisfaction among salespeople working in the banking sector. The paper also aimed at assessing the impact of mentoring on job satisfaction. Data was collected from 135 sales employees working full time in banking firm in Delhi NCR region and was analysed using multiple hierarchical regression. Results of the study reiterated the negative effects of job stress on salesperson's job satisfaction, however mentoring experience of the employees was able to buffer the harmful effects produced by job stress on satisfaction

Keywords

Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, Mentoring, Career Development, Psychological functions, Role Modelling.

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Introduction

Financial sector in India has been identified as having maximum growth potential in terms of the generating revenues, employment and contributing to GDP for the economy. Sales personnel have been identified as an asset to make this contribution (Goat & Jaramillo, 2014; Lai, 2016) in complex and uncertain conditions. But the attrition rate in this sector also tends to be alarming due to globalization, intense competition and the human intensive nature of jobs in this sector. Therefore, intersection of all these factors leads to high levels of job stress among employees in this sector. According to (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), job related stress is an uncomfortable and undesirable state experienced by an employee because of a mismatch between the expectations and resources placed by work on the individual (Parker & Decotiis, 1983). The menace of stress at work has taken its toll across a variety of occupations alike having deleterious effects on employee's physical and mental well-being including their productivity, job performance, high turnover, job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Ngo, Foley, & Loi, 2005; Kahn & Byosiore, 1992; Newton & Jimmieson, 2009; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). But stressors that affect one type of job may not affect other. In other words, a different job role may attract different kind of stressor or a particular factor that may act as stressor for one individual may not do so for others (Sager, 1990). This is because of the personal and environmental resources such as emotional competencies, self-esteem, social support, perceived organizational support amongst other factors that the individual possesses in that situation which may assist him in coping with stress.

Mentoring and counselling can be thought of as one of such

resources that organizations can extend to their employees.

whether formally or informally to deal with stress at work. Lately, mentoring is being viewed as a proposed solution to rising job stress among personnel in any profession. Large amounts of research have been undertaken on the effects of mentoring on employee outcomes of organizational advancement, career mobility (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992), job success (Stumpf & London, 1981); salaries, work effectiveness (Kram, 1985), etc. Thus, it has been suggested that mentoring can boost employee morale and motivate them thereby increasing overall organizational effectiveness and reducing employee stress and turnover. Research has evidenced the fact that employees having regular interactions with their mentors have reported greater number of promotions, higher productivity, rising income levels, and enhanced job satisfaction (Dreher & Ash, 1990). Literature on mentoring suggests that mentors extend psychological support (which refers to the interpersonal support provided by the mentor such as counselling, acceptance, emotional well-being); demonstrates role modelling and career guidance behaviours such as career counselling, coaching, motivating the protégé, protecting him/her from harmful influences, etc. (Allen T. *et al.*, 2008). Further, mentoring has been reckoned to enhance job satisfaction and has been assistive in integrating individual and organizational goals (Hartmann, *et al.* 2016; Ismail & Ridzwan, 2012). As per the stressor-strain model, mentors assist in relieving work stress of their proteges by providing them with emotional cushion and teaching them stress management skills. This process involves reducing emotional and psychological pressure that the employees might be feeling upon themselves and empowering them to better adaptation of the situation (Jex & Beehr, 1991) and build

resistance to strain.

Based on this backdrop, the objective of the study is two-fold: to examine the impact of job role stressors on job satisfaction among sales personnel in banking firm and to examine whether mentoring can aid in reducing the impact of job stress on job satisfaction. The current study contributes in several ways. First, potential negative repercussions of job stress on employee outcomes of performance, turnover, and satisfaction well indicate its significance to organizations that are constantly operating under high selling pressures to survive. Further, the construct of job stress has been widely studied as a concept, yet empirical research is very limited therefore obstructing its generalizability. Further, literature accounting for the role of mentoring in reducing employee's job-related stress has been scanty. Lastly, no studies could be found that examined the direct effects of mentoring at workplace on employee's job satisfaction. While some research has found that mentoring can reduce significant levels of job-related stress (Kim, S., Im & Hwang, 2015) other studies, however, have reported reverse findings. This ambiguity shows how the relation between mentoring and stress is much more complicated than it has previously been talked about.

The study is divided into 4 sections, section 1 and 2 begin by providing a framework and justification for the proposed relationships among the main constructs of the study.

In the sections that continue, research methodology is explained, and data analysis along with results are reported. Finally, discussion and conclusion have been explicated along with directions for future research.

Literature Review

Job Stress and Job satisfaction

The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the past few decades and due to the increasing competitions, businesses employee aggressive strategies to survive and make profit. In a period of soaring global competition, corporate reconstruction, rapid technological change, and strained resources, organizations are seeking for alternatives to do more with less. The pressure that arises due to the interaction of all these factors is ultimately trickling down to human resources resulting in stress. Thus, the common challenge faced by the employees at their jobs is stress.

Stress is "a condition perceived when the task given to perform threatens to exceed individual's capabilities and resources for meeting it, and where there is expectation of difference in rewards and costs compared to meeting the demand as against not meeting it" (Mcgrath, 1976). Therefore, stress directly alters and individual's performance and efficiency. According to Beehr, 1995, job stress is "a situation in which some characteristics of the work situation are thought to cause poor psychological or physical health, or to cause risk factors making poor health more likely." Studies show the negative impact of job stress on various work-related outcomes such as job performance (Bashir and Ramay 2010) (Arshadi and Damiri 2013), job satisfaction (Hartmann, *et al.* 2016), employee productivity (Naqvi, *et al.* 2013), commitment (Ekenabor, 2016) and positive relationship with turnover intentions (Qureshi, *et al.* 2013).

Managers and researchers concern for job stress among sales personnel and their consequent attrition is on the rise ever since. Salespeople as compared to other employees in any other department of the organisation are more prone to job stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995) since it is them who are the link between the partners and the customers; it is their interaction with the clients that determines the revenues of the organization. Sales personnel often express the pressure and stress experienced by them due to this nature of their job. This proneness can be due to various factors such as boundary spanning role, contractual nature of position (Sager & Wilson, 1995), increasing marketplace complexity, ever changing customer demands (Hartmann, *et al.* 2016), workload, role ambiguity, and role conflict Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Salespeople operate in an environment where their work and progress are continuously and closely monitored.

Since stress influences the performance of the employee and job satisfaction is regarded as the important individual outcome which drives performance (Kakkos, Trivellas and Fillipou 2010), it becomes crucial to study the impact of stress on it. Several studies have examined the negative impact of job stress on job satisfaction of employees (Ahsan, *et al.* 2009; Chung and Kowalski, 2012) however, Draper, *et al.* (2004), on the contrary reported the positive impact of job stress on job satisfaction. Research is scarce where studies have been undertaken in the sales environment. Hence, taking clue from the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Higher job stress leads to lower job satisfaction among sales personnel.

Mentoring

Mentoring involves the relationship where a more experienced employee (mentor) guides, motivates and helps lesser experienced employees (protégé) in acquiring new knowledge and skills (Kram, 1985). Mentoring also helps in facilitating personal and career development of the protégé (Noe, 1988). Successful mentoring helps protégés enhancing their work-related outcomes (Allen T., *et al.* 2004). Mentoring even benefits mentors and organizations by positively impacting various work-related and career-related outcomes (Ghosh & Reio, 2013) such as compensation, promotion, career satisfaction, job satisfaction intention to stay (Allen T., *et al.* 2004), and in lowering levels of job stress (Qian, *et al.* 2014). Mentoring can be formal where the path and process is defined by the organization or informal, with little or no intervention of the organization. The study includes both types as organizations such as banks and broking firms rarely employee such assistive measures for their employees, thus the authors consider if the employees have come to experience formal or informal mentoring.

Organizations have increasingly realized that mentoring can play an indispensable role in assessing the gap that may exist between the organizations and their employees needs and thus strategize their efforts to integrate them. This way, employees can be motivated enough to fulfil their task-based responsibilities and work towards other career related aspects. Kram's (1985) research on mentoring indicates that mentoring extends 2 basic functionalities: career development and psychosocial support. The psychosocial component of mentoring can prove to a tool in reassessing stressful situations as an opportunity for growth and development.

Mentoring function is based on social support theory which states that individuals tend to seek out and intend on building relationships to avoid, reduce, or cope up with conflicts or stress (House, 1981). Thus, it is implied that employees involved in mentoring would be less prone to job stress or handle job stress situations in a tactful manner.

Literature has evidenced that mentoring whether formal or informal, results in job satisfaction among employees (Lo, Thurasamy, & Liew, 2014). Formal mentoring is a deliberate effort of the organization, wherein it appoints a mentor to supervise the employee and guide, coach or counsel him/her. On the other hand, informal mentoring involves developing relations with a person who looks favourable to the employee (Hansman, 2000) and agreeing to enter into a mentoring relationship with him. Thus, it can be implied that informal mentoring relationships arise as a result of mutual interactions or attractions (Hu, *et al.* 2016). In a study by Ragins & Cotton (1999), it was found that proteges in informal mentoring experienced greater career mobility and psychosocial functions than those in formal mentoring.

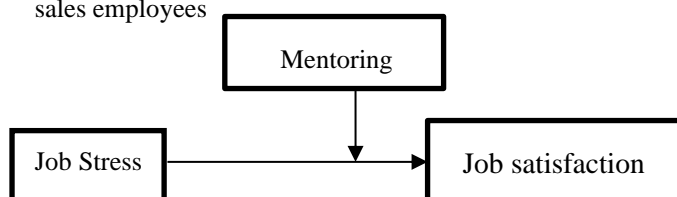
If we closely examine the mentoring process, the mentor provides in depth clarity and understanding of organizational goals to the mentee and his responsibilities attached to those goals to achieve them which is a way to eliminate job and role ambiguity in turn enhancing employees job satisfaction in the process (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015; Allen, Russell, & Maetzke 1997).

A remarkable number of studies have seen mentoring as a process to erase the ill effects produced by a certain state of mind. This state of mind may be stress, exhaustion or may even be conflict/dispute at workplace. A study carried over by (Srivastava, 2011) analyzed the moderating effects produced by mentoring on job burnout-satisfaction relationship among Indian managers. It was found that mentoring plays a significant role on reducing the harmful effects of job burnout (which happens to be a direct outcome of stress) on job satisfaction. Further, it was also observed that mentoring was positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction.

Previous research has shown that mentoring helps in the improving performance of a salesperson (Brashear, *et al.* 2006) and in lowering his/her turnover intentions. So even though a few studies have examined the role of mentoring in a sales setting, its impact and nature has been widely studied across different contexts and backgrounds (Ghosh & Reio, 2013). Thus, the impact of mentoring on salesperson's job satisfaction and its contribution in reducing the negative effects of job stress calls for more research (Dahlstrom & Nygaard, 2016).

H2: Mentoring would minimize the negative effects produced by job stress on job satisfaction among sales employees.

H3: Mentoring results in greater job satisfaction among sales employees



Proposed framework: Hypothesised relationships among variables

Research Design

Data Collection and Participants

The sample consisted of sales employees working in banking and broking firms in Delhi NCR. For data collection purposes, participants were personally approached by the author to explain the objective and significance of the study. Moreover, respondents were explained the meaning of mentoring at workplace and were told, "you must have encountered a mentoring experience sometime at your workplace whether formally by your superior or informally by anyone in a position to support you emotionally, provide you with career guidance or influence your behaviour at work". They were then asked to take the survey based on the experience. A self-administered questionnaire was emailed to 200 participants. Out of the 200 participants, 40 participants never encountered a mentoring experience, and out of the remaining 160 responses that were received out of which 25 were omitted as they were incomplete. Only 135 were considered usable and were thus put to final analysis. All responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Out of the total number of respondents, 58.5% were males and 41.5% were females; about 45.2% belonged to the middle age bracket (30-50 years) and 28.9% belonged to the less than 30 years category. Remaining belonged to the above 50 years age group.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections: the first section was related to the demographic details of the respondent, the second and third section included questions related to job stress and mentoring, respectively. The last section comprised of questions relating to perceived job satisfaction.

Independent Variables

Job Stress

Based on review of previous studies, researchers used an aggregate of 4 different job stressors containing a total of 17-items to measure the construct of job stress. The stressors considered for the study included role conflict (5-items) and role ambiguity (4-items) adapted from Rizzo and House (1970); role overload being measured by 4-items taken from Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich (1986) and professional distress from Fimian (1984). Job stress was measured as an aggregate of all the four stressors. The reliability for this scale was calculated as 0.914.

Informal Mentoring

Based on previous research, this construct was measured using 15-item scale developed by Scandura (1992). The scale as discussed above consists of three sub scales relating to career development, social support and role modelling

which are considered essential elements of mentoring. Examples of items on this scale include, “Mentor has placed me in important assignments” and “I socialize with mentor after work”, etc. Previous literature has established legitimate reliability and validity (Lankau, 1996). The overall reliability for this scale was found to be 0.934.

Dependent Variable

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined as the overall state of satisfaction that is perceived by an individual. The MSQ (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire has been well accepted scale for gauging this construct (Weng, *et al.* 2010; Scandura 1997). Therefore, the 5-item scale was used to measure overall job satisfaction of a sales employee. The overall reliability of this scale was calculated as 0.911.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS 25.0 statistical tool. To study the underlying factor structure among constructs, confirmatory factor analysis was used. To appraise the hypotheses pertaining to the effects of distinct independent variable (job stress and mentoring) on the outcome variable (job Satisfaction), first a correlation analysis as reported in Table 1 calculated by way of Pearson’s correlation which is usually referred as “*r*” provides for quantum of linear association between two variables was carried out to understand the relationship among summated multi-item construct measures and then a hierarchical regression was applied as suggested by Cohen & Cohen (1983) to ascertain the causality between salespersons job stress, mentoring and job satisfaction.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique was carried out to study the factor structures among the items used to measure a particular construct using the varimax rotation method. Based on the results of CFA, all the factor loadings under 0.6 were not considered in the final analysis. **The four distinct categories for job stress loaded were role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and professional distress whereas mentoring and job satisfaction were found to be distinct factors.**

Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviation, and correlations among all the constructs used so far. The overall reliability of the complete questionnaire was calculated as $\alpha = 0.764$ (Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). To determine the adequacy of the sample, KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity were calculated. KMO was 0.893 suggesting that sample was adequate. All the items meant to representing each construct were significant as per Bartlett’s test of sphericity.

Upon studying the association among the variables part of the research, it was observed that job stressors such as role based stress and professional distress were found to be

negatively related to job satisfaction. Job stress was inversely correlated with job satisfaction indicated by $r = -0.694$ at $p < 0.01$. Also, mentoring was seen to be positively related to job satisfaction with $r = 0.49$. Before examining causal relationship among the main constructs, intercorrelations among the study variables were estimated. All the variables were found to be significantly related to job satisfaction at 1% significance level.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations among main constructs

	Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Role ambiguity	3.31	1.04	1						
2	Role conflict	3.50	0.81	.45*	1					
3	Role Overload	3.32	0.80	.50*	.349**	1				
4	Professional Distress	3.42	0.98	.58*	.496**	.49*	1			
5	Job stress	3.39	0.71	.83*	.715**	.73*	.835**	1		
6	Mentoring	3.53	0.79	-.31*	-.011	-.25*	-.29**	-.32*	1	
7	Job satisfaction	3.06	0.95	-.57*	-.52**	-.50*	-.58**	-.69*	.49*	1
	**p<0.01, two-tailed									

Results of hierarchical regression are provided in table 2. In the very first step, authors entered age as a control variable in the regression equation. In step 2, job stress and mentoring were added to the equation and lastly, the interaction term (job stress*mentoring) was added to the regression equation. To ensure that multi collinearity was not a problem. Age was not found to significantly affect salesperson’s job satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 proposed that higher job stress lowers job satisfaction. To test this, we added job stress into the equation, and it was able to explain 56% of the variation in job satisfaction. Its adverse impact on job satisfaction was confirmed by the negative beta value ($\beta = -0.599$, $p < 0.01$). Also, at this step R^2 change too was found to be significant at 1%. Further, by looking the beta value ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.01$) for mentoring at this stage, it can be concluded that mentoring enhances job satisfaction among sales employees in a financial sector firm confirming hypothesis 3.

To evaluate hypothesis 2 (mentoring buffers the negativity created by job stress on job satisfaction), we added the interaction term job stress*mentoring at stage 3 and its

effects were analysed. A positive beta value of 0.653 was found to be significant at $p < 0.05$ indicating that an intervention like mentoring can significantly reduce the deleterious effects of job stress on salesperson's perceived job satisfaction. The overall R^2 was also found to be significant at $p < 0.01$ hence supporting this study.

Table 2: Hierarchical regression results

	B	R ²	β	F-change
Step 1		0.011		0.231
Age	-0.132		-0.104	
Step 2		0.561		7.477
Age	-0.034		-0.026	
Job stress	-0.795**		-0.599	
Mentoring	0.353**		0.293	
Step 3		0.573		0.046
Age	-0.016		-0.012	
Job stress	-1.508**		-1.136	
Mentoring	-0.3256		-0.271	
Job stress*Mentoring	0.197*		0.653	

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$, two-tailed

Discussion

Overall the stated research hypotheses received significant support from the data. The statistical results have indicated negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction whereas positive direct relationship was found between mentoring and job satisfaction. The results also proved that mentoring can be used as a significant intervention in reducing the harmful effects of job stress on job satisfaction among the sales employees of insurance and broking firms, as stress is evident in a target driven job in these sectors. One of the reasons of this could be that mentors are a source of organizational information thus help the employees to know better about the organization's issues (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993) and can guide and motivate the employee to deal with a particular situation.

Since salespeople are more prone to job stress when compared to other employees in the organizations due to the nature of role they perform, the organizations must provide support and formulate intervention strategies to lessen or combating with the stress. The results of this study show that mentoring can help in reducing the negative effect of job stress on job related outcomes such as job satisfaction; Overall, findings have been in line with prior research which highlights that a mentored employee experiences lower job stressor like role ambiguity and role conflict (Specht, 2013; Viator, 2001).

Conclusion

This study makes several important contributions to the job stress and mentoring literature. First, findings provide for the identification of important stressors in the life of a typical sales employee. The consistency in reporting higher levels of stress by the respondents to our current study has well eliminate self-reporting bias suggesting the need to develop coping interventions by organizations which may save costs in terms of absenteeism, high turnover, lost productivity, low performance, etc. Second, the findings hold true that mentoring may act as conducive to a protégé's occupational stress. This way various formal and informal mentoring programs may assist in dealing with stress related outcomes. Even though literature is scanty about the effectiveness of mentoring programs on enhanced job satisfaction, yet some studies have supported this fact (Thomas & Lankau, 2009; Qian, *et al.* 2014).

Such an intervention like mentoring and its need as a coping mechanism to understand and comprehend its usefulness in an organization can be judged only via full-fledged studies and meta-analysis Examining the moderating effects of mentoring provides opportunities for mentors in exploring which among the three components (career development, role modelling and psychosocial support) provide for maximum effectiveness in improving the protégé's satisfaction and reduce stress levels.

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