

Why Managers Want to Be Mentors? The Role of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation and the Anticipated Costs of Mentoring for the Propensity to Mentor by Managers in Formal Mentoring in Organizations

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the research was to find out the correlation between the motivation and costs of internal or external locus of control and the propensity to mentor. Investment of time and personal energy was regarded as factors with an internal locus of control, whereas a lack of mentee's achievement, problems caused by a mentee, unhealthy or unfriendly relation, and a risk to be replaced by a mentee were regarded as factors with an external locus of control. In the case of internal factors, their locus of control is the mentor him/herself while, in external factors, their locus is outside of the mentor and lies in a situation or an environment.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional study among Polish managers.

Findings: First, the results show that uniquely intrinsic motivation relates to the propensity to mentor, while extrinsic motivation has no importance. Second, before deciding to mentor, managers estimate the costs of mentoring: the higher they are the lower the propensity to mentor. Third, the costs related to the internal locus of control – time and personal energy invested by a mentor in mentoring – are most important when deciding to mentor. The risk of destroying a mentor's reputation, problems caused by a mentee, unfriendly or unhealthy relationship and a risk to be replaced by a mentee emerged as of little importance. Fourth, previous experience as a mentor or mentee positively influences the propensity to mentor.

Value: The study contributes to existing research, theory, and practice in the field of organizational behavior in the context of mentoring. The findings shed light on decision patterns in managers' propensity to mentor and thoroughly explore the role of the anticipated cost of mentoring.

Keywords: motivational factors to mentor, cost of mentoring, cognitive patterns of deciding to mentor, manager as mentor

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Introduction

Scholars observe a growing demand for mentors in organizations as – in the last thirty years – mentoring became an HR tool to support employees in their development (Ehrlich et al., 2004, Murray, 2006). Moreover, the increasing popularity of mentoring in organizations effects from several phenomena that occur on the labor market and in society. The first phenomenon is the growing population of the precariat (Standing, 2014). As companies compete on the global market, they try to cut personnel costs, among others, by employing people for a limited time, a set project, or on a self-employment basis. This practice has many implications: “temporary workers” do not know the organizational culture of the company they work for as they are outsiders. They do not know its norms, values, behaviors, and practices, which slows them from reaching optimal effectiveness. To prevent or diminish its negative impact, employers offer “temporal workers” mentors who share organizational knowledge and practices. This creates a growing demand for mentors among managers employed in an organization.

High expectations of high-level managers’ competencies and experience in many functions, industries, and markets lead them to ask their companies for mentors at a similar or higher professional level. Thus, it creates a renewed demand for mentors among C-level managers.

Aware of current labor market tendencies – among them, the flexibility of job or employment as external specialists – employees themselves seek to accumulate as many skills and experiences as possible, just in case of a future more precarious working conditions. They actively search for professional development opportunities by asking for mentoring in their organizations. The new career context (Kram and Ragins, 2007) creates a demand for mentors.

The popularity of social mentors supporting in mentoring programs youth, women, minorities or volunteers, and mentors in education, has contributed to the good reputation of mentoring as a way of development of people in society. An additional factor that contributes to the popularization of mentoring is the fact that traditional mentoring was delivered by a wise senior person to a younger one, very often in an instructive manner, which is now being replaced by new concepts of mentoring, such as learning partnership or learning collaboration. This further supports the expansion of mentoring as a learning method in organizations.

There is yet another phenomenon observed in the twenty-first century, which contributes to the popularity of mentoring. The development of the Internet in the twentieth

century offered people easy access to information and the sharing of experiences on different forums. Thus, the Internet developed in its users a more proactive approach to learning, evident in seeking an occasion to enhance one's skills in every relation. This proactive approach of a mentee (Higgins and Kram, 2001, p. 268; Lane and Clutterbuck, 2016, p. 72) who seeks a mentor and treats mentoring as a partnership of learning further contributes to the growing need for mentors in organizations. In light of these facts and this phenomenon, finding what motivates and demotivates people in organizations to take the role of a mentor seems to be of great importance.

The purpose of the current study is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of mentors' behavioral patterns, thus finding their motivation to mentor and the important factors, which may be regarded as the possible costs connected to this role. The research scrutinized the phenomenon of the propensity to mentor on a cohort of managers with the assumption that – in a formal mentoring program – they would mentor mentees with whom they have no direct hierarchical dependency. Previous mentoring or mentee experience was not a requirement.

The study examined whether managers want to be mentors, considering the many tasks and obligations that they have and the general claim that they are overworked, which often is the reason for a low propensity to mentor. Two variables measured the propensity to mentor: the willingness to mentor and the declared engagement in mentoring.

The research had two main goals. First, to evaluate the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the willingness to mentor and the engagement in mentoring (part one of the study). Second, to find which factors called “costs of mentoring” are connected with the role of the mentor and how important are they for managers (part two of the study). First part results were meticulously discussed in the article published in the *Journal of Management and Business Administration. Central Europe* (Małota, 2017), while the role of anticipated costs of mentoring and the propensity to mentor is the subject of the current paper.

The goal of the current study into the costs of mentoring was to examine two main hypotheses; that (1) the higher the anticipated costs of mentoring, the lower the propensity to mentor; and, that (2) costs of mentoring of an internal locus of control are more important than the costs of an external locus of control. Furthermore, the paper explores the role of previous experiences as a mentor or mentee in the propensity to mentor and how a managerial position moderates the perception of costs of mentoring.

In order to understand the results of the current study, this paper presents some results from the first part of the study on the propensity to mentor.

Theoretical Background

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188; 2005, p. 119) argues that intention is often the best predictor of future behavior. To evaluate managers' propensity to mentor, the study asked them to access their declared willingness and engagement in mentoring.

The role of the mentor is traditionally voluntary, with no financial gratification, so every prospective mentor is driven by certain motives. In her seminal research on mentoring relationships, Kram observes that mentors' motivation in the development of others "is stimulated by both instrumental and psychological needs" (1985, p. 89). Newby and Heide (1992) discuss intrinsic (cooperation, challenge, increased competence) and extrinsic (monetary gains, assistance with job-related tasks, enhanced organizational reputation) reinforcements that influence the propensity to mentor. The current study categorizes motivational factors into two types – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation – based on Kram's categorization and the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Assuming the claim of the latter that intrinsic motivation is more important for deciding than the extrinsic one, the current study planned to gather more insight into the intrinsic motivation of mentors when evaluating two kinds of intrinsic motives based on a concept by Allen et al. (1997): self-benefits and others-benefits motives.

The social exchange theory assumes that people enter a social relation, in which benefits exceed costs, and they undertake and continue the activities that bring more benefits (Homans, 1961, p. 13). Scholars often define mentoring relations as undertaken under the principle of the social exchange theory because, before entering a mentoring relationship, both mentor and mentee consider its anticipated costs and benefits (Allen, 2004, p. 470; Young and Perrewe, 2004, p. 105).

The role of a mentor may bring benefits or costs (Turban and Lee, 2007, p. 23). The anticipated costs may contribute to the fact that mentoring may be seen as a relation that causes more problems than benefits (Ragins and Scandura, 1999, p. 498). Among the potential benefits of mentors are the development of new skills and advanced competencies, the enhancement of professional qualifications, the building of a network of mentees who support the mentor, and personal satisfaction and gratification (p. 23).

The potential costs that a mentor may experience are: the time required for mentoring sessions, personal energy invested in the relationship, neglectful success of a mentee that may impact mentor's reputation (Ragins, 1997, p. 92), a dysfunctional relationship, and a risk of being replaced by the mentee (Halatin and Knotts, 1982, p. 27).

The mentoring literature mentions previous experience as a mentor or as a mentee as a motivational factor to mentor. Kalbfleisch formulated the mentoring enactment theory, which proposes that a person experienced in mentoring will more willingly assume this role in the future (2007, p. 501). Moreover, this behavioral pattern may be justified through the model of behavioral consistency (Wernimont and Campbell, 1968), which allows past behaviors to constitute reliable predictors of future behaviors.

Respondents and Procedure

The research was conducted from September to October 2014, both online and paper, among managers in Poland. Information about the online survey was emailed to different business organizations with a request for a response from their members and published in an online HR magazine. To ensure a common understanding of the research questions, it defined the following notions in the introductory part: organizational mentoring, formal mentoring, mentoring process, and the lack of reporting dependency between mentor and mentee. A selection criterion for respondents was employed to consider organizations that employ more than 50 people as formal mentoring in small and medium organizations in Poland is not a common phenomenon (www.parp.gov.pl. Mentoring w praktyce polskich przedsiębiorstw, 2014). The respondents were 166 managers (80 females and 86 males) who work in organizations with more than 50 people.

Previous experience as a mentor was not a condition to participating in the survey as it measured the declared willingness to mentor. The distribution of respondents at managerial levels was: 95 line managers (57.3% of all respondents), 53 managing other managers (31.9%), and 18 general directors (10.8%). 30 managers (18.1%) worked in an organization with 50–149 people; 22 (13.3%) in those with 150–249 people; and 114, the majority (68.8%), in companies with more than 250 people. 65 had previous experience as a mentor (39.2%) and, among them, 64 (98.5 %) were satisfied with their role. 61 managers (36.7%) had experience as a mentee, and 90.2% (n = 55) was satisfied with this experience.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The propensity to mentor was measured by two variables: willingness to mentor and declared engagement in mentoring. This construct was designed to check the congruity of the propensity to mentor and, eventually, to track the bias of a positive declaration of willingness when compared with a second variable, the engagement in the mentoring process.

The willingness was measured with one item: “What would be your answer if offered the role of a mentor in a formal mentoring process?” The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher score indicated the greater readiness to mentor. This item was placed as first in the survey.

The engagement was measured by four items on a similar scale as the willingness item. The questions about willingness were intentionally placed at the end of the survey, assuming that answers would be more conscious after the questions about the cost of mentoring (Małota, 2017); “1. As a mentor, I am ready to spend with my mentee at least four hours a month; 2. I am ready to be a mentor for two mentees in the same period of time; 3. I am ready to mentor an employee whom I do not know; 4. I am ready to share the knowledge; I am one of a few experts” ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Independent Variables

Intrinsic Motivation

The study examined the relationship between two kinds of motivation – extrinsic/intrinsic and the propensity to mentor – with 59 items. The responses were recorded on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). Intrinsic motivation ($\alpha = 0.93$) was divided into self-benefits ($\alpha = 0.90$) and others-benefits motivation ($\alpha = 0.83$). Self-benefits motivation included four factors: development of professional competencies ($\alpha = 0.75$), personal learning ($\alpha = 0.80$), development of network ($\alpha = 0.81$), and satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.77$). Others-benefits motivation consisted of two factors: contribution to people’s lives ($\alpha = 0.78$) and contribution to an organization ($\alpha = 0.70$; Malota, 2017).

Extrinsic Motivation

The study examined extrinsic motivation ($\alpha = 0.91$) in two categories: HR strategy ($\alpha = 0.86$) and administrative support ($\alpha = 0.90$). HR Strategy consisted of six factors:

mentor's gratification ($\alpha = 0.87$), high position of a mentor in an organization ($\alpha = 0.68$), mentor's competency regarded as leadership competency ($\alpha = 0.69$), strategic importance of mentoring in an organization ($\alpha = 0.84$), and additional remuneration alongside ethical aspects of mentoring ($\alpha = 0.83$).

The ethical aspects of mentoring were measured with two items: "1. When deciding whether to mentor, how important is the organization's recognition that a lack of mentee success will not influence your reputation as a manager? 2. When making a decision to mentor, how important is the possibility that a mentor or mentee could exit the mentoring relationship with "no guilt?"

Administrative support ($\alpha = 0.90$) consisted of four factors: mentors' selection system ($\alpha = 0.86$), mentor and mentee matching system ($\alpha = 0.52$), trainings for mentors ($\alpha = 0.86$), and support in the administration of the mentoring process ($\alpha = 0.71$; Małota, 2017).

The Cost of Mentoring

To assess the role of costs in the internal and external locus of control and to confirm the hypotheses, the study measured the following six items and statements: 1. Time commitment to mentoring (Mentoring takes too much time); 2. Personal energy engaged (Mentoring demands an investment of a great number of personal energy); 3. Risk of negative reputation (Lack of mentee's achievement may destroy a mentor's reputation); 4. Mentoring as the source of a problem (Mentoring brings more problems than benefits); 5. Mentoring relationship (Mentoring relation may be unhealthy and unfriendly); 6. Threat from a mentee (Mentee may take my position). The first two items (time and energy engaged) are the costs of internal locus of control, whereas items three to six show costs of the external locus. These questions appeared after questions regarding motivation.

Results

The propensity to mentor and types of motivations

The first part of the study evaluated the willingness and engagement in mentoring. 83.7 % respondents ($n = 166$) declared the willingness to mentor: 90% among women and 77.9% among men. Next, the study examined the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the propensity to mentor. The results (Table 1) indicate significant differences in the correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation both for the willingness to mentor and the engagement in mentoring. The propensity to mentor is influenced to a higher extent by intrinsic than extrinsic motivation.

Table 1. Correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the level of willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring

	Intrinsic motivation		Extrinsic motivation		Test	
	r/ ρ	p	r/ ρ	p	Z	p
Willingness to mentor	0.434**	0.001	0.189**	0.007	3.10**	0.002
Engagement in mentoring	0.518**	0.001	0.251**	0.001	3.52***	0.001

r – correlation coefficient r Pearson; ρ – correlation coefficient ρ Spearman; p – one sided statistical relevance; ** – $p < 0.01$; *** – $p < 0.001$

To find out managers' motivational pattern to mentor, the study examined the correlation of each factor of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation along with the willingness and an engagement to mentoring (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation ρ Spearman between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the willingness to mentor along with Pearson correlations coefficient between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the engagement in mentoring

Variable	Willingness		Engagement	
	ρ	p	r/ ρ	p
Development of professional competencies	0.310**	0.001	0.358**	0.001
Learning	0.338**	0.001	0.390**	0.001
Networking	0.257**	0.001	0.246**	0.001
Satisfaction	0.352**	0.001	0.372**	0.001
<i>Intrinsic self-benefits motivation</i>	0.411**	0.001	0.421**	0.001
Contribution to others life	0.374**	0.001	0.404**	0.001
Contribution to an organization	0.368**	0.001	0.249**	0.001
<i>Intrinsic others-benefits motivation</i>	0.409**	0.001	0.359**	0.001
INTRINSIC MOTIVATION	0.434**	0.001	0.518**	0.001
Gratification	0.180*	0.010	0.129*	0.049
High position of the mentor	0.256**	0.001	0.148*	0.029
Recognizing mentor competencies as leadership competencies	0.260**	0.001	0.179*	0.010
Strategic importance of mentoring in an organization	0.257**	0.001	0.206**	0.004

Additional salary	0.024	0.378	-0.019	0.402
Presence of an ethical code of conduct	-0.148*	0.028	-0.055	0.239
<i>HR Strategy</i>	0.198**	0.005	0.128	0.051
Recruitment system	0.157*	0.022	0.247**	0.001
Matching system	0.171*	0.014	0.088	0.130
Training for mentors	0.194**	0.006	0.119	0.063
Administrative support for the mentor	0.108	0.083	0.113	0.074
<i>Systemic support</i>	0.188**	0.008	0.174*	0.013
EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION	0.189**	0.007	0.251**	0.001

ρ – correlation coefficient ρ Spearman; p – one sided statistical relevance; r – Pearson correlations coefficient; * – $p < 0.05$; ** – $p < 0.01$

The study shows a significant and statistically positive correlation between the willingness to mentor, all factors of the intrinsic motivation, and the engagement in mentoring. Moreover, it reveals a weak positive correlation of most extrinsic factors with the willingness to mentor, except for the existence of the ethical code of conduct (factor of HR strategy), which correlated negatively. There appeared no significant correlation for additional remuneration and administrative support.

The level of correlation between the willingness/engagement to mentor and two kinds of intrinsic motivation – self-benefit and others-benefit motivation – were respectively = 0.411 and $\rho = 0.409$ for willingness and $r/\rho = 0.421$ and $r/\rho = 0.359$ for engagement. This indicates that the managers apply the same importance to both kinds of intrinsic motivation when deciding to mentor. The results support a contention of motivational pluralism (Batson and Show, 1991).

Anticipated Costs and the Propensity to Mentor

To examine the hypothesis that the higher the anticipated costs of mentoring the lower the propensity to mentor, the author calculated a correlation between anticipated costs, the willingness to mentor, and the engagement in the mentoring (Table 3).

The hypothesis was supported by the statistically significant negative correlation between the anticipated costs of mentoring, the willingness to mentor, and the engagement in mentoring. The results confirm the claim of the social exchange theory

(Homans, 1961, p. 13), which states that people engage in activities after assessing their cost and benefits, in which the latter exceeds the cost.

Table 3. Correlation between anticipated costs, the willingness to mentor, and engagement in mentoring

	Costs of mentoring	
	r/ ρ	p
Willingness to mentor	-0.286***	0.001
Engagement in mentoring	-0.311***	0.001

r – correlation coefficient r Pearson; ρ – correlation coefficient ρ Spearman; p – one sided statistical relevance; ** – $p < 0.01$; *** – $p < 0.001$

Previous Experience as Mentor and the Propensity to Mentor

Noteworthy, previous mentoring experience that enabled one to gain insight the into real costs of mentoring influences future decisions to mentor (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation between having and not having previous experience as a mentor and the willingness/engagement to mentor

	Costs of mentoring			
	Not having experience as a mentor		Having experience as a mentor	
	r/ ρ	p	r/ ρ	p
Willingness to mentor	-0.228*	0.011	-0.169	0.089
Engagement in mentoring	-0.245**	0.007	-0.262*	0.017

r – correlation coefficient r Pearson; ρ – correlation coefficient ρ Spearman; p – one-sided statistical relevance; * – $p < 0.05$; ** – $p < 0.01$

The study shows a statistically significant negative correlation between the anticipated costs of mentoring and the engagement in mentoring in both groups of respondents. Moreover, it shows a statistically significant negative correlation between anticipated costs of mentoring and the willingness to mentor, however only in the group of managers without previous experience in mentoring. The results may indicate that managers without previous experience as mentors may estimate the cost of mentoring higher,

which negatively influences their propensity to mentor, whereas the managers with previous experience in mentoring have a realistic insight into the costs, so they do not estimate them too high or view them as a factor preventing from taking this role in the future. These results aligned with the claim of Kalbfleisch's mentoring enactment theory (2007).

Do Anticipated Costs of Mentoring Discourage Managers from Mentoring?

The study calculated the average value of the costs so as to evaluate whether the respondents who declared the willingness to mentor gave the anticipated costs of mentoring higher values than those who did not declare their willingness to mentor. The respondents unwilling to mentor have an average of 18.37 with a standard deviation of 6.54 while the respondents willing to mentor have an average of 16.88 with a standard deviation of 4.91. The T-student test for independent samples shows that the divergence is not statistically relevant. The average value of costs is higher for a group "unwilling to mentor," but the difference is too small that it could be recognized as statistically relevant, considering the huge disproportion in the quantity of both groups. Thus, one cannot conclude that a level of anticipated costs is the reason for the "unwillingness to mentor."

How Does Previous Experience as a Mentor or Mentee Influence the Assessment of Anticipated Costs?

Previous experience in the role of a mentor occurred among 39.2% of respondents ($n = 166$). 98.5% of that group was satisfied with their experience. Mentee experience declared 36.7% of respondents, with 90.2% among them satisfied with the role. Tables 5 and 6 show the correlation between previous mentor/mentee experience and the propensity to mentor.

Table 5. Mean value of the willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring in a group, with and without previous mentor experience

	Experience in the role of a mentor				Test		
	no		yes		t/Z	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Willingness to mentor	3.18	1.06	4.00	0.92	-4.88***	166	0.001
Engagement in mentoring	13.46	3.09	15.26	3.11	-3.65***	164	0.001

M – mean value; SD – standard deviation; t/Z – test statistic; df – degrees of freedom; p – one-sided statistical relevance; *** – $p < 0.001$

Table 6. Mean value of the willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring in a group, with and without previous mentee experience

	Experience in the role of a mentee				Test		
	no		yes		t/Z	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Willingness to mentor	3.26	1.06	3.92	1.01	-3.90***	166	0.001
Engagement in mentoring	13.51	3.22	15.29	2.89	-3.56***	164	0.001

M – mean value; SD – standard deviation; t/Z – test statistic; df – degree of freedom; p – one-sided statistical relevance; *** – $p < 0.001$

Both situations (Table 5 and 6) show statistical relevance in intergroup differences, which confirms the claim that managers with a previous mentor or mentee experience declare higher willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring than managers who lack such experience.

Which Factors of Costs Seem the Most Important for Managers?

The managers who execute the role of a mentor may experience its different negative aspects, burdens, and sacrifices. Thus, Table 7 shows the importance of the most common factors of costs on the propensity to mentor, selected from mentoring literature.

Table 7. Correlation ρ Spearman between the willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring and the importance of costs of mentoring of individual factors

Costs	Willingness to mentor		Engagement in mentoring	
	ρ	p	ρ	p
Mentoring takes too much time	-0.356**	0.000	-0.389**	0.000
Mentoring demands investment of a great deal of personal energy	-0.306**	0.000	-0.434**	0.000
Lack of mentee's achievement may destroy a mentor reputation	-0.193*	0.013	-0.200**	0.010
Mentoring brings more problems than benefits	-0.239**	0.002	-0.198*	0.011
Mentoring relationship may be unhealthy and unfriendly	-0.083	0.288	-0.138	0.076
Mentee may take my position	-0.056	0.470	-0.092	0.237

ρ – correlation coefficient ρ Spearman; p – two-sided statistical relevance; * – $p < 0.05$; ** – $p < 0.01$

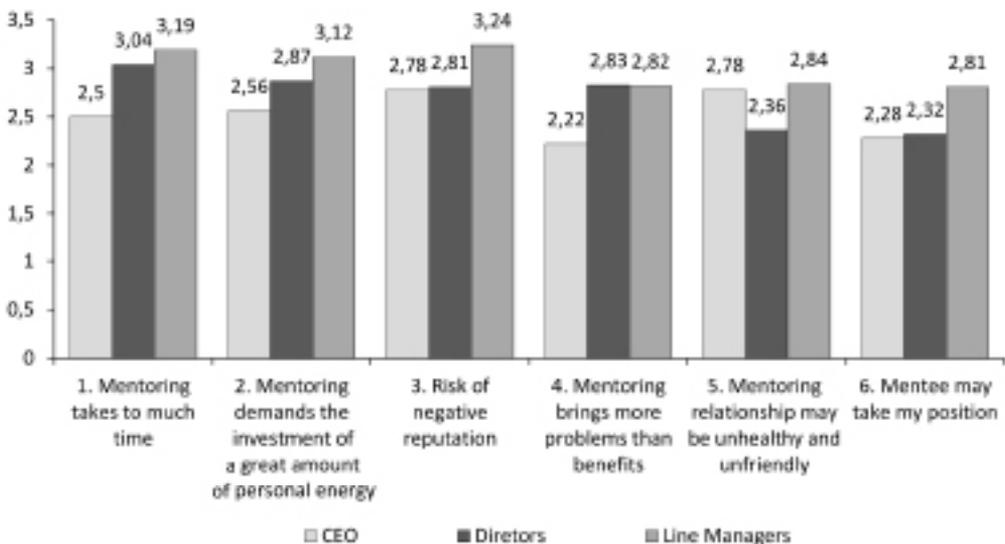
The strongest negative correlation with the willingness to mentor and engagement in mentoring appears toward the investment of time and personal energy. Both elements are the greatest influencers in the decision to mentor. These two costs may be called “factors of internal locus” as their locus is placed in the mentor him/herself. Other four costs may be called “factors of external locus” as their locus of control remains outside of the mentor. The low importance of external costs’ factors in the propensity to mentor may indicate that managers have a positive perception of mentoring relationships, and they do not see them as a burden, or they know how to handle them, even when they become troubling. The author recommends further research regarding the perception of the factors of external locus.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis that, for managers, the costs of internal locus of control are more important than the cost of external locus of control.

How Does a Managerial Level Moderate the Perception of Anticipated Costs and Their Importance for the Propensity to Mentor?

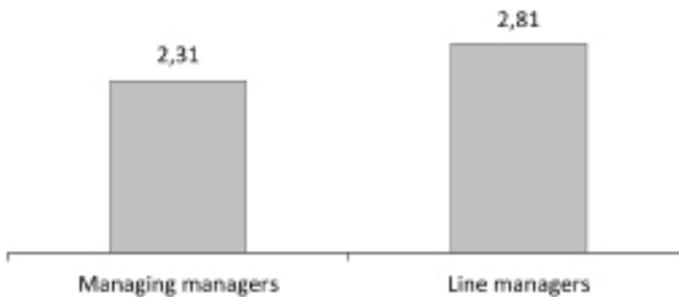
To evaluate how a managerial level moderates the perception of individual costs, the study evaluated the rank of the average value of costs by three kinds of managers. Figure 1 presents the importance of individual costs on the scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important).

Figure 1. The average value of individual costs of mentoring by three managerial levels



The data shows that – among the three levels of managers – line managers estimate the anticipated costs of all six cost factors the highest. Conventional wisdom tells us that managers do not want to assume the role of a mentor as they fear that the mentee (more skilled after mentoring) may replace the mentor in his/her position. However, the results do not confirm such claim, as this factor of costs of mentoring (Figure 1, Column 6) emerged as the lowest among all six kinds of costs. As the average value of this factor – in the case of line managers – was considerably higher than among the CEOs and directors, the study calculated the statistical relevance of the difference. The average value of this factor for line managers emerged as 2.81, with standard deviation of 1.09, and was higher than the average value for managing directors of 2.31 (a joint group of CEOs and directors, as the group of CEOs was too small), with the standard deviation of 1.23 (Figure 2). The U Mann-Whitney test shows that the given difference is statistically relevant, $Z = -3.02$, $p < 0.01$.

Figure 2. The average value of anticipated risk to be replaced by a mentee



The importance of the anticipated cost of mentoring in the risk to be replaced by a mentee was evaluated by two moderators: age of managers (under 40 and over 40 years old)² and the size of the organization (medium and large). The average value for this factor of costs in the group of managers under 40 years is 2.73, with standard deviation 1.14, which is close to the average value in the group of managers aged over 40 (2.42 with a standard deviation of 1.2). The U Mann-Whitney test shows that the given difference is not statistically relevant, $Z = -1.80$, $p > 0.05$.

The average value for this factor of costs in the group of managers employed in medium organizations is 2.73, with the standard deviation 1.17, which equals the average value in the group of large organizations (2.73 with a standard deviation of 1.16).

² The division of respondents regarding age for two groups of 20–40 years old and of over 41 years old was done in order to establish comparable group sizes (56,1% and 43,9%) and statistical relevance.

The U Mann-Whitney test reveals that this difference is not statistically relevant, $Z = -0.08$, $p > 0.05$.

Therefore, only line managers apply considerable value to this factor of costs; however, its intensity is not moderated by manager age or the size of a company. It seems that the perception of the risk of replacement by a mentee is universal for line managers regardless of their age and the company size. The explanation of this phenomenon may lie in the nature of line manager position, who possesses operational skills that compete with the broader, more general and unique competencies of directors and CEOs. This may allow the latter more feeling of security that they will not to be easily replaced.

General Discussion

The results of the current study give more insight into the cognitive pattern of deciding to mentor. The first part of the study examined the motivational factors for mentoring, while the (current) second part scrutinizes the perceived costs of mentoring and their influence on the propensity to mentor. Knowing both aspects – the kind of motivation and the role of costs – we may profile a cognitive pattern for deciding to mentor.

The study confirms the general phenomenon that managers want to be mentors in an organization within formal mentoring programs. The first part of the study confirms that such decisions are driven by intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic motivations like external organizational incentives or gratifications are of no importance. The managers want to be mentors both for altruistic and egoistic reasons, that is, for self-benefit and others-benefit. The results indicate that managers emphasize both motives the same.

This motivational pattern agrees with the contention of the theory of motivational pluralism and constitutes a reflection on how managers adapt their behavior to a new work context. Thus, the study observes a shift from altruistic motives as exclusive motivation – proposed in traditional mentoring (Chandler and Kram, 2004, p. 12) – to motivational pluralism.

The current study confirms that the perception of anticipated costs of the role of mentor influences the propensity to mentor. The general conclusion is that the higher the anticipated costs, the lower the propensity to mentor.

Second, factors with the internal locus of control – the investment of time and energy – are regarded as the most important by managers. However, the four cost factors of external locus of control do not discourage managers to mentor; these are the negative perception of a mentor when a mentee does not succeed, possible problems in the mentor-mentee relationship, unhealthy relationship, or the risk of replacement by the mentee.

Third, the study observes a discrepancy in the perception of the risk of replacement by a mentee between line managers and managing managers. The former stress this risk much more than the latter. As the greatest demand for mentors in organizations occurs among the line managers, it is of utmost importance that we more thoroughly research the possible reasons of such cognitive pattern among the line managers, so that we know how to change this negative perception that influences the propensity to mentor.

Fourth, the study confirms that previous experiences as a mentor or mentee positively impact the propensity to mentor. Moreover, managers with previous experience as mentors or mentees estimate the anticipated costs of mentoring lower than the managers without such previous experience, thus the former influence a higher propensity to mentor.

The general conclusion from both parts of the study is that there occurs the same cognitive pattern in deciding to mentor when considering the kinds of motivation and the costs of mentoring. In both cases, managers are driven by internal factors: in the case of motivation, by intrinsic motives while, in the case of the costs of mentoring, by the costs that have the internal locus of control (the investment of time and energy). The managers who decide to mentor relate to themselves, which means to the factors that they can influence and shape themselves, as even the anticipated external burden of mentoring does not prevent them from becoming mentors.

The general conclusion from the study for organizational behavior practices is that HR departments should not ask, “Which gratification or incentives should we offer managers for them to become mentors?”; but instead ask “How can we ensure that managers as mentors develop their skills?” and “How to prepare the managers to the role of mentors so that they do not view the burden of time and personal energy as overwhelming?” In view of the research findings, HR activities that directly aim to raise managers’ external motivation with gratification or incentives may turn out to be ineffective. Instead, what may be a better solution is a strategy that addresses the factors of intrinsic motivation and the costs of mentoring with the internal locus of control.

Another practical application of the findings may be for organizations that plan to create a pool of mentors to first offer the managers to experience being mentees since former mentees have a high probability to become prospective mentors. The recognition of this cognitive pattern of deciding to mentor may help HR departments in organizations to ensure such a working environment that supports managers to become mentors.

Research Limitations

There are limitations to this study. As the majority of respondents declared propensity to mentor, the group of managers who did not want to mentor was too small for in-depth exploration with statistical significance of their motivational and behavioral pattern of not to be a mentor. As the research was conducted among Polish managers, further work must validate the results for other cultures. The majority of the respondents worked in large companies, so the results reflect the cognitive pattern of managers in the organizational culture of large companies. Future investigation should also distinguish the role of gender in the cognitive pattern.

Originality/Values

The current study contributes to existing research, theory, and practice in the field of organizational behavior in the context of mentoring. Most of the studies in mentoring address different aspects of the mentee and focus less on mentor's motivation, his/her perception of costs of being a mentor, and the cognitive pattern of deciding to mentor. Thus, the above findings – about the kind of motivation that is important when deciding to mentor and the kind of costs that may negatively impact the decision – are essential for the theory of organizational behavior and organizational practices.

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