

Mentoring and Same Gender as a Predictor of Individuals' Psychosocial Behaviour: Case Study of a Malaysian University

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Abstract: Most human resource development literature depicts formal and informal mentoring as the main components of a mentoring programme, and most findings of extant research have shown that the effects of mentoring programmes on individuals' psychosocial behaviour are indirectly affected by same gender mentoring. However, the nature of this relationship is less emphasized in most mentoring models and as such, this article contends that if a mentoring programme is properly implemented, there is potential for enhancing individuals' psychosocial behaviour. Results from stepwise regression analysis from 153 usable questionnaires gathered from a collection of former employees of a public university in Sarawak showed two important findings. First, there is a high significant relationship between same gender and formal mentoring in relation to individuals' psychosocial behaviour and second, there is a significant correlation with individuals' psychosocial behaviour in terms of the relationship between same gender and informal mentoring. These results reveal the effects of same gender as the mediating variable in the mentoring model of the organizational sample.

Keywords: mentoring, psychosocial behavior, same gender

JEL classifications: C92, D03, I21, I23

1. Introduction

The idea of mentoring was portrayed in an ancient Greek literary piece, the epic story "The Odyssey" written by Homer. In this story, Odysseus asked his loyal and experienced friend, Mentor (a trustworthy person and of great wisdom) to teach his son, Telemachus (a mentee or protégé who is less experienced) on how to withstand life's challenges before he goes to the Trojan War (Edlind and Haensly, 1985; Merriam, 1993). From the story, it was perceived that mentoring is traditionally an important field of education

(Johnson *et al.*, 1991) and/or counseling (Gregson, 1994) whereby mentors are trustworthy old men with so much wisdom to educate young men who are less experienced (Johnson *et al.*, 1991; Kram, 1985; Russell and Adams, 1997; Wanguri, 1996). This trend has inspired organizational development scholars to translate the concept and practice of mentoring into various programmes within contemporary organizational settings (Dennison, 2000; Northcott, 2000; Oliver and Aggleton, 2002). The remaining outline of this paper consists of literature review, research methodology, findings, discussion and implications of the study.

2. Literature Review

In most contemporary organizations, mentoring is often perceived as a method of training and development that can be employed to enhance group and/or individuals' potentials when executing particular duties, familiarizing with new techniques, and upholding caution in all aspects of the mentee's assignments (Johnson *et al.*, 1991; Long, 2002; Zey, 1989). Mentoring models vary and there is no single model for all organizations. They have been designed and administered based on differences and uniqueness of organizations in relation to their respective beliefs, orientations, stresses, strengths and weaknesses (Irving *et al.*, 2003; Ritchie and Connolly, 1993; Ritchie and Genoni, 1999). These factors have affected the implementation of either formal or informal mentoring activities in organizations (Chao *et al.*, 1992; Murray, 1991; Ragins, 1997, 1999; Ragins and Cotton, 1993, 1999).

A formal mentoring programme is often regarded as the structured and coordinated relationship between mentor and mentee using standard norms, continuous action plans, time frames, and particular objectives (Bahniuk and Hill, 1998; Hansford *et al.*, 2003; Noe *et al.*, 2002). Specifically, this type of mentoring programme has some salient characteristics as follows. First, a mentor is defined as a more knowledgeable and experienced individual such as a senior staff, while a mentee is defined as a less knowledgeable and inexperienced individual such as a junior staff (Kram, 1985; Dreher and Cox, 1996; Noe *et al.*, 2002). Second, mentors should act as role models, teachers, sponsors, motivators, counselors, admonishers and best friends to mentees. These acts serve as leverage for additional knowledge, up-to-date skills and positive attitudes (Anderson and Shannon, 1988; Kram, 1985; Levinson *et al.*, 1978). Also, mentors are regularly assigned to encourage group and/or individual activities within a defined period of time (Ritchie and Connolly, 1993; Ritchie and Genoni, 1999).

Conversely, informal mentoring is simply the process or mechanism through which the relationship between mentors and mentees is built toward striving hard to achieve specific demands either spontaneously or *ad hoc*.

This type of mentoring approach is basically implemented to complement and strengthen an existing formal mentoring programme (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; Ragins, 1997, 1999). Both mentoring approaches are important for the realization of organizational strategies and goals (Friday and Friday, 2002; Ismail *et al.*, 2007; Lindenberger and Zachary, 1999; Irving *et al.*, 2003).

Whitely *et al.* (1991), Scandura (1992) and Turban and Dougherty (1994), concur that the ability of managers to properly design and implement mentoring programmes in organizations, can have significant impacts on individuals' advancement, especially with regards to psychosocial behaviour. Psychosocial mentoring is often seen as a way of helping individuals through confidence building, overcoming pressures and strains, assisting individuals in their personal endeavours, listening to and respecting opinions, sharing dreams, providing feedback and teaching with examples (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988, 2005; Noe *et al.*, 2002; Lyon *et al.*, 2004). In a mentoring programme, the ability of mentors to establish and sustain good rapport with mentees contributes strongly to providing mutual benefits and a tendency toward considerable enhancement of individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Cox and Nkomo, 1991; Ismail *et al.*, 2007; Scandura, 1992; Chao *et al.*, 1992; Ragins and Cotton, 1993, 1999).

Surprisingly, a thorough review of such relationships reveals that the effects of mentoring on individuals' psychosocial behaviour are indirectly affected by same gender during the mentoring process (Ragins and Cotton, 1993, 1999; Scandura and Williams, 2001). Theorists such as Ragins (1997, 1999), Ragins and Cotton (1993, 1999) and Young *et al.* (2006), identify "same gender" as referring to the interaction either between male mentors and male mentees, or between female mentors and female mentees in the course of mentoring (Allen and Eby, 2004; Hegstad and Wentling, 2005; Lyon *et al.*, 2004). This mode of interaction is often practiced through building good contacts, exchanging personal and work problems in friendly situations and supporting the development of individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Baugh and Scandura, 1999; Hansford and Ehrich, 2006; Hansford *et al.*, 2003; Lyon *et al.*, 2004). Most scholars believe that formal and informal mentoring, same gender and individuals' psychosocial behaviour are distinct constructs, though highly interrelated. For example, properly implemented formal and informal mentoring programmes will encourage comfortable interaction between same gender in mentorship (e.g., communication openness and active participation), which in turn leads to improved individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Halgas and Stoner, 2007; Lyon *et al.*, 2004; Ragins and Cotton, 1993, 1999).

In spite of numerous studies carried out on mentoring, little is known about the mediating role of same gender within mentoring (Allen *et al.*,

2005; Scandura and Williams, 2001). Most scholars have discovered that interactions between people of the same gender within mentoring processes have been less emphasized in previous studies due to there being so much emphasis on a segmented approach and a direct effects model for analyzing mentoring programmes, as well as less attention to the significance of gender perspective in developing mentoring models. As a result, findings from such studies have not captured dynamic gender views in mentoring and this absence has considerably served as a deterrent to the provision of sufficient guidelines for developing competent human capital in complex organizational settings (Allen *et al.*, 2005; Hegstad and Wentling, 2005; Niehoff, 2006; Okurame and Balogun, 2005). To make up for the deficiencies identified in these findings, this study specifically sets out to examine the effects of mentoring via same gender, on individuals' psychosocial behaviour. The study was carried out in a public university in Sarawak, Malaysia. Both formal and informal mentoring processes were examined in the study.

Most studies in this field so far, have made use of the direct effects model to examine mentoring in general and arrived at a conviction that, properly implemented, mentoring could have significant impacts on individuals' psychosocial behaviour. For example, two surveys on mentoring based on a sample of 510 first-line bank managers (Okurame and Balogun, 2005) and 194 practicing veterinarians (Niehoff, 2006) showed that good relationships between mentors and mentees (e.g., friendship, social support, role modelling, acceptance and participation) in the course of formal and informal mentoring has been an important determinant of individuals' psychosocial behaviour. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between formal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behaviour.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between informal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behaviour.

Other recent studies used the indirect effects model to analyze mentoring programmes and arrived at a significant discovery that the effects of mentoring on individuals' psychosocial behaviour are indirectly influenced by same gender. For example, two surveys on formal mentoring based on a *Fortune* sample of 500 companies in the US (Hegstad and Wentling, 2005) and 600 members of a professional women's business association in the US (Allen and Eby, 2004) found that the ability of same gender mentors to implement good interaction styles in formal mentoring (e.g., match, no communication barriers and active participation) led to an increase in individuals' psychosocial behaviour in the organizations (Allen *et al.*, 2005). Several studies on informal mentoring programmes were conducted in the US and most organizations involved found that the willingness of same gender

participants to implement comfortable interaction styles in informal mentoring activities (e.g., creating a match relationship, no interpersonal communication barriers, cooperation and active participation in decision making, helping the protégé learn, advising the protégé, providing support and feedback) has been the major determinant of individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Halgas and Stoner, 2007; Ragins and McFarlin, 1990).

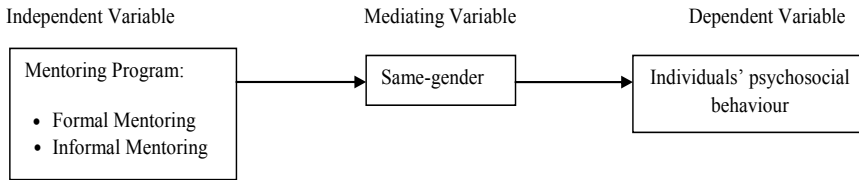
These findings correlate with the notions of organizational behaviour theories like Byrne and Griffitt's (1973) similarity-attraction paradigm, Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and Ragins' (1997) diversified mentoring relationship theory. In general, these theories arrived at the conviction that the interaction styles among individuals who have either the same or different backgrounds in carrying out activities are likely to affect individuals' advancement (Bowlby, 1969; Byrne and Griffitt, 1973; Turban *et al.*, 2002; Young *et al.*, 2006). Specifically, the similarity-attraction paradigm is often utilized within a social psychology discipline where it emphasizes more the integration of similarity, attractiveness, and liking in human relationships (Berscheid, 1994; Sprecher, 1998). Application of this theory in a mentoring context shows that individuals often work together, communicate with one another and interact more on social issues. This practice will motivate individuals to adapt to differences in perceptions and values. If such relationships are properly enshrined, it is likely to enhance individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Turban *et al.*, 2002).

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) contends that our ability to develop and maintain relationships begins at a very early age based on our attachment to a parent or primary caretaker (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978). This theory explains why some mentors and mentees feel comfortable or uncomfortable in either keeping a professional relationship and/or developing a personal bond (Young *et al.*, 2006). Application of this theory in a mentoring framework shows that comfortable interaction between same gender participants in mentoring activities may lead to improved individuals' psychosocial behaviour (Allen *et al.*, 2005; Scandura and Williams, 2001; Young *et al.*, 2006).

Diversified mentoring relationships theory (Ragins, 1997) describes identification as an important factor that increases the effectiveness of mentoring. Application of this theory in the mentoring process shows that identification will be stronger in homogeneous (same-gender) mentorship than diversified (cross-gender) mentorship. For example, interpersonal comfort in sharing experiences between same gender participants in mentoring programs may increase individuals' advancement such as psychosocial behaviour (Halgas and Stoner, 2007).

The literature has been used as a foundation for developing a conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Same Gender Mediating the Effects of Mentoring Programme and Individuals' Psychosocial Behaviour



Based on the framework, it can be hypothesized that:

- H3: Same gender positively mediates the relationship between formal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behaviour.
- H4: Same gender positively mediates the relationship between informal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behaviour.

3. Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional research design that allowed the researchers to integrate a literature review, in-depth interviews, a pilot study and survey questionnaires as the main procedures for gathering data. The use of these combined methods of gathering data is perceived by most researchers as an approach to gather accurate and less biased data (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran, 2000). The location of this study was Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Malaysia. It is the first public university in East Malaysia that officially launched a formal mentoring programme at the university level since its establishment in 1994. This mentoring programme has been implemented for sixteen years within every division and/or department as a means of increasing employees' motivation to support the grand university's vision, namely to be a university of choice and an exemplary university in South East Asian and Asian regions. At the initial stage of data collection, in-depth interviews were first conducted involving four experienced employees, namely two experienced human resource staff, and two experienced academic staff who work in the target organization of study. They were selected based on a purposive sampling where the employees have sufficient knowledge and experiences in mentoring programmes since they have worked for more than seven years in the organization. Information gathered from such employees helped the researchers to understand the nature of a mentoring programme, the role of same gender in mentorship and individual psychosocial behaviours, as well as the relationship between such variables in the studied organizations.

For example, formal and informal mentoring programmes are actively implemented at academic and non-academic division levels in the studied organization. In order to understand the nature of a mentoring programme, in-depth interviews were conducted involving two human resource staff and two academic staff before and during the pilot study. Information gathered from these interviews shows that the mentors were senior management while the mentees were junior supporting staff. Relationships between mentors and mentees in this organization are often developed through group discussion (i.e., department/teamwork meetings) and/or individual discussion (i.e., individual assignment and performance appraisal). Mentors frequently used open communication and participatory styles as major instruments for delivering messages, sharing knowledge and experience, encouraging teamwork and promoting collective decisions.

Most employees perceived a properly implemented mentoring activity as leverage for enhancing their psychosocial behaviour in the workplace. Furthermore, careful examination of interview results reveals that the effects of mentoring activities on individuals' psychosocial behaviour are not direct, their impact being indirectly influenced by same gender relationships. For example, the willingness of participants of the same gender to practice comfortable interactional styles in formal and informal mentoring activities has been a major predictor of individuals' psychosocial behaviour.

The nature of this relationship is interesting, but little is known about the mediating effect of gender type in the mentoring model of the studied organization (Khian Jui, 2008). Information gathered from such interviews was refined, categorized and compared with the related literature reviews. After that, the triangulated information was used as a guide to developing the content of survey questionnaires for a pilot study. Next, a pilot study was conducted by discussing the contents of the questionnaires with the interviewed participants in order to verify the content and format of questionnaires for the actual survey.

A back translation technique was used to translate the content of questionnaires in Malay and English in order to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument (van Maanen, 1983). The survey questionnaires had four sections. The first related to formal mentoring with 9 items modified from mentoring management literature (Bisk, 2002; Hansford and Ehrich, 2006; Hansford *et al.*, 2003). The items used to measure this variable were: (1) I need advice from superior staff while doing my job; (2) I feel comfortable with the formal discussions about my job; (3) I feel comfortable in dealing with my immediate boss/supervisor; (4) I prefer to have a say in formal discussions; (5) I feel comfortable with the instructions that I received from my immediate boss/supervisor; (6) I feel comfortable with the meeting schedules; (7) Participation in formal discussion is a good mechanism for

overcoming daily job problems; (8) Participation in formal discussion helped to improve my confidence while working; and (9) Participation in formal discussion is important for sharing ideas.

The second section related to informal mentoring, with 7 items modified from mentoring management literature (Bisk, 2002; Hansford and Ehrlich, 2006; Hansford *et al.*, 2003). The items used to measure this variable were: (1) I prefer to have a say in informal discussion; (2) I feel comfortable with the instructions I receive outside formal discussion; (3) I feel comfortable with the discussions that are done outside formal discussion; (4) Participation in informal discussion is a good mechanism for overcoming daily job problems; (5) Participation in informal discussion helped to improve my confidence while working; (6) Participation in informal discussion is important for sharing ideas; and (7) I think informal gathering helped to enhance a sense of belonging among workers.

The third section had 9 items related to same gender type in mentorship and 4 items on cross gender type in mentorship modified from mentoring programme literature (Gaskill, 1991; Ragins and McFarlin, 1990). The items used to measure this variable were: (1) I need advice from superior staff while doing my job; (2) I feel comfortable with the formal discussions about my job; (3) I feel comfortable in dealing with my immediate boss/supervisor; (4) I prefer to have a say in formal discussion; (5) I feel comfortable with the instructions I receive from my immediate boss/supervisor; (6) I feel comfortable with the meeting schedules; (7) Participation in formal discussion is a good mechanism for overcoming daily job problems; (8) Participation in formal discussion helped to improve my confidence while working; and (9) Participation in formal discussion is important for sharing ideas.

Finally, a section on individuals' psychosocial behaviour had 8 items modified from psychosocial literature (Noe, 1988, 2005; Levesque *et al.*, 2005). The items used to measure this variable were: (1) My immediate boss/supervisor acts as a good role model for me; (2) My immediate boss/supervisor encouraged me to explore new ways of conducting myself while at work; (3) I respect and admire my immediate boss/supervisor; (4) I agree with my immediate boss's/supervisor's attitudes and values; (5) My immediate boss/supervisor helped me meet new colleagues; (6) My immediate boss/supervisor shared dreams with me while at work; (7) My immediate boss/supervisor encouraged me to express myself openly about anxiety and fears while at work; and (8) My immediate boss/supervisor conveyed feelings of respect to me as an individual. These items were measured using a 7-item scale ranging from "very strongly disagree/dissatisfied" (1) to "very strongly agree/satisfied" (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because the study focused on employee attitudes.

The analysis was based on 153 employees who worked in a public university in Sarawak, Malaysia. In the data collection, the Human Resource Manager did not provide the list of registered employees and did not allow the researchers to directly distribute survey questionnaires to employees in the organization. After considering this situation, we used a quota sampling to determine the number in the sample based on the duration of the study and budget constraints. A convenient sampling technique was chosen to distribute survey questionnaires to employees who were willing to voluntarily answer the survey questionnaires. Consequently, 200 survey questionnaires were distributed to the willing employees, through contact persons (i.e., assistant HR manager, supervisors and/or heads of departments/units) in the organization. Of that number, 153 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding a 76.5 per cent response rate. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to analyze the validity and reliability of the measurement scales and thus test the research hypotheses.

4. Findings

As shown in Table 1, majority respondent characteristics were female (57.5 per cent), aged between 21 to 30 years (46.4 per cent), STPM/Diploma holders (33.3 per cent), staff who served less than 5 years (54.9 per cent), non-academic staff (58.2 per cent), and employees who worked in academic departments (53.6 per cent).

Table 2 shows the results of validity and reliability analyses for measurement scales. A factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation was first done for four variables with 16 items. After that, the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO), a measure of sampling adequacy was conducted for each variable and the results indicated that it was acceptable. Relying on Hair *et al.* (1998) and Nunally and Bernstein's (1994) guidelines, these statistical analyses showed that (1) the value of factor analysis for all items that represent each research variable was 0.5 and more, indicating the items met the acceptable standard of validity analysis, (2) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin's value of 0.6 and were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (3) all research variables had eigenvalues larger than 1, (4) the items for each research variable exceeded factor loadings of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 1998), and (5) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunally and Bernstein, 1994). These statistical analyses confirmed that the measurement scales met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics (N = 153)

	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male Mentees with Male Mentors	42.5
Female Mentees with Female Mentors	57.5
<i>Age</i>	
21 to 30 years old	46.4
31 to 40 years old	39.2
41 to 50 years old	9.8
More than 51 years old	4.6
<i>Academic Length of Service</i>	
0 to 5 years	54.9
6 to 10 years	22.2
11 to 15 years	13.7
More than 16 years	9.2
<i>Position</i>	
Academic Staff	41.8
Non-Academic Staff	58.2

Note: PMR: Lower Certificate of Education.
 SPM/MCE: Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia/Malaysia Certificate of Education.
 STPM : Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia/Higher School Certificate.

Table 2: The Validity and Reliability Analyses for Measurement Scales

Measure	Item	Factor Loadings	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Formal	6	.62 - .85	.85	589.31, p = .000	3.98	66.35	.90
Mentoring Informal	7	.66 - .85	.85	739.90, p = .000	4.57	65.30	.91
Mentoring Same Gender	9	.60 - .85	.93	1.164E3, p = .000	6.24	69.33	.94
Individuals' Psychosocial	8	.51 - .85	.90	846.24, p = .000	5.22	65.28	.92

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Analysis			
			1	2	3	4
1. Formal Mentoring	5.6	.93	(1)			
2. Informal Mentoring	5.2	1.0	.41**	(1)		
3. Same Gender	4.8	1.1	.35**	.51**	(1)	
4. Individuals' Psychosocial	5.0	1.1	.49***	.40**	.60**	(1)

Note: Significant at * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Reliability estimation is shown in parentheses (1).

Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. Mean for all variables are between 4.8 and 5.6, signifying the levels of formal mentoring, informal mentoring, same gender and individuals' psychosocial behaviour ranging from high (4.0) to highest level (7.0). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variables (i.e., formal mentoring and informal mentoring) and the mediating variable (i.e., same-gender), and the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., formal mentoring and informal mentoring) and the dependent variable (i.e., individuals' psychosocial behaviour) were less than 0.90, indicating the data were not affected by any serious collinear problem (Hair *et al.*, 1998).

Stepwise regression analysis was undertaken to test the mediating hypothesis due to its ability to assess the magnitude of each independent variable, however it varies with the mediating variable in the relationship between some independent variables and one dependent variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediating variable can be considered when it meets three conditions. First, the predictor variables are significantly correlated with the hypothesized mediator. Second, the predictor and mediator variables are all significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Third, a previously significant effect of predictor variables is reduced to non-significance or reduced in terms of effect size after the inclusion of mediator variables into the analysis. In this regression analysis, standardized coefficients (standardized beta) were used for all analyses (Jaccard *et al.*, 1990). The results of testing the research hypotheses are shown in Table 4.

The results of testing the mediating model using a stepwise regression analysis are also shown in Table 4. In this model testing, demographic variables were entered in Step 1 and then followed by entering the independent variable (mentoring programme type) in Step 2, and the mediating

Table 4: Result for Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variables	Dependent Variable (Individuals' Psychosocial)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Gender	.12	.08	.19**
Age	-.25*	-.16	-.09
Academic Qualification	-.02	.04	.13
Length of Services	.29*	.136	.08
Position	-.01	.07	.07
Division	-.07	-.13	-.11
<i>Independent Variable</i>			
Formal Mentoring	.37***	.24**	
Informal Mentoring	.28***	.02	
<i>Mediating Variable</i>			
Same-Gender			.53***
R ²	.06	.32	.50
Adjusted R ²	.03	.28	.47
R ² Change	.06	.25	.19
F	1.68	8.33***	16.05***
F Change R ²	1.68	26.55***	53.49***

Note: Significant at * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

variable (same gender) in Step 3. An examination of multi-collinearity in the coefficients table shows that the tolerance value for the relationship between formal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behaviour was .93 whereas the tolerance value for the relationship between informal mentoring and individuals' psychosocial behavior was .96. The tolerance value for the relationship between the independent variables (i.e., formal mentoring programme and informal mentoring programme), the mediating variable (i.e., same gender) and the dependent variable (i.e., individuals' psychosocial behaviour) was .66. These tolerance values were more than a tolerance value of .20 (as a rule of thumb), indicating that the variables were not affected by multi-collinearity problems (Fox, 1991; Tabachnick *et al.*, 2001).

Step 3 of Table 4 shows that the relationship between mentoring programme type (i.e., formal mentoring and informal mentoring) and same gender positively and significantly correlated with individuals' psychosocial behaviour ($\beta = .53$, $p < 0.001$), therefore H3 and H4 were supported. This result explains that before the inclusion of same gender into Step 2, formal

mentoring and informal mentoring positively and significantly correlated with individuals' psychosocial behaviour ($\beta = .37, p < 0.001$; $\beta = .24, p < 0.01$). Inclusion of the mentoring type in Step 2 had explained 32 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. As shown in Step 3, (after the inclusion of same gender into this step), the previous significant relationship between formal mentoring remained significant (Step 3: $\beta = .28, p < 0.001$), but the effect size of such relationships was decreased. Conversely, the previous significant relationship between informal mentoring had changed to non-significant (Step 3: $\beta = .02, p > 0.05$). With regards to explanatory power, the inclusion of same gender into Step 3 explains the 50 per cent variance in the dependent variable. These results show the mediating effects of same gender in the relationship between mentoring programme and individuals' psychosocial behaviours in the studied organization.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study confirms that same gender does act as a mediating variable in the relationship between mentoring programme and individuals' psychosocial behaviour in the studied organization. In the organizational context, formal and informal mentoring activities are properly carried out based on the organization's policies and procedures. Most employees perceived mentors and mentees to be actively involved in formal and informal mentoring activities and also were convinced that interaction between people of the same gender in mentorship is comfortably and actively exercised. These results show that properly implemented formal and informal mentoring activities tend to motivate people of the same gender in mentorship to comfortably utilize interactional styles to enhance individuals' psychosocial behaviours.

The implications of this study can be divided into three categories: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the findings of this study show that interaction between people of the same gender in mentoring activities will create caring and comfortable environments that actively encourage open discussions, the seeking of clarification, sharing of knowledge and experiences, as well as increased making of collective decisions to increase job performance and decrease daily work problems. As such, this will lead to improved individuals' psychosocial behaviours in the organization. This result is consistent with mentoring research literature mostly published in Western countries, such as Byrne and Griffitt (1973), Bowlby (1969), Allen *et al.* (2005), and Hegstad and Wentling (2005).

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the data gathered from the mentoring research literature, the in-depth interviews, the pilot study and the survey questionnaires have exceeded a minimum standard

of validity and reliability analyses. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by management to improve the design and administration of mentoring programmes in organizations. These suggestions are: first, update learning content and method. For example, training programmes should consistently focus on up to date knowledge, relevant skills and good moral values. If such training programmes are properly implemented, they will first of all upgrade the capability of mentors in using appropriate methods for meeting the differing needs, expectations and demands of mentees. Second, they will encourage both informal and formal participation styles amongst mentees. For example, mentees should be allowed to provide suggestions, comments and to take part in planning and managing mentoring activities. If this aspect is given proper attention, it will definitely increase mentees' feelings of satisfaction, trust and acceptance in the work environment. Third, in well-implemented training programmes, mentoring activities should be diversified to cater for mentees' needs and preferences, such as sport and camping. Willingness of mentors and mentees to implement such activities after office hours and outside office environments will strengthen the spirit of brotherhood, accountability and job motivation in the workplace. If these suggestions are given due consideration, it will considerably help in upgrading the capabilities of mentoring as an effective vehicle for enhancing organizational competitiveness in the global economy.

6. Conclusion

This study has succeeded in affirming that same gender performs a mediating role in the relationship between a mentoring programme and individuals' psychosocial behaviours. This result supports previous studies and extended mentoring research literature published mostly in Western organizational settings. As such, current research and practice of mentoring needs to consider same gender as a critical aspect of organizational mentoring success where well implemented interaction styles between people of the same gender in mentoring leads to induced positive and productive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, performance, trust, and good moral values). Thus, these positive outcomes are factors that propel employees to full commitment to organizational and departmental strategies and goals.

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