

The Role of Attachment and Mentoring in Junior Faculty's Job Satisfaction

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Some researchers would argue that attachment styles are immutable traits whereas other researchers would be proponents of the suggestion that mentoring may actually buffer the negative impact of attachment insecurity. Although logical arguments support these assertions, empirical studies have hardly examined the possible role of attachment styles in the giving and receiving of the two broad mentoring functions - career support and psychosocial support, and its relation to job satisfaction. The present study used data from a survey of 125 faculty protégés to link faculty job satisfaction with attachment styles and mentoring. While securely attached faculty protégés were found to have higher job satisfaction, high degree mentoring also was found to be positively related to increased job satisfaction. Finally, secure attachment and mentoring predicted unique variance in job satisfaction. The field of faculty mentoring research as well as practitioners in higher education developing faculty mentoring programs can use this information.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is defined as a dyadic relationship where psychosocial support and career support are the functions provided by the mentor to the protégé (Kram, 1996). Mentoring is recognized as a powerful human resource development (HRD) tool that assists in career advancement, and promotes many affective outcomes; one of them being job satisfaction (Aremu & Adeyoju, 2003; Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 2006). As newly hired faculty members advance their careers by teaching, scholarship, and service (Zeind, Zdanowicz, MacDonald, Parkhurst, King, & Wizwer, 2005), they also experience isolation at work, less satisfaction with their jobs, high stress, and produce less research (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002; Olsen, 1993; Paul, Stein, Ottenbacher, & Liu, 2002). Junior faculty members benefit from mentoring by experiencing job satisfaction (Benson, Morahan, Sachdeva, & Richman, 2002) as they learn the ropes of academe (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2005; Steiner, Curtis, Lanphear, Vu, & Main, 2004).

Universities spend resources on formal faculty mentoring programs assuming that a supportive setting is crucial to success in academe (Hodges & Poteet, 1992). However, not all mentoring relationships produce favorable outcomes (Eby & McManus, 2004). Moreover, because formal mentoring programs are structured and coordinated interventions within an organization's human resource policies, it makes sense for program planners to match mentors and protégés well, and minimize potential problems (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Because academic departments cannot dictate faculty to trust and like each other, sometimes they may fail in their efforts by trying to control the personal chemistry that is so vital to developing rewarding mentoring relationships (Feldman, 1999). The characteristics of two people in a relationship influence the extent and quality of their interactions between each other (Gormley, 2008). Since mentoring relationships are essentially developmental in nature, involving emotional bonding and

close interpersonal relations; a look at mentoring through the lens of attachment theory is warranted (Germain, 2011; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2004). Attachment theory contributes to the understanding of socio-emotional functioning and attachment style defines one's ability to form and manage close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1990, 1994). Adults with secure attachment styles have a sense of worthiness and an expectation that other people are generally accepting and responsive to their support-seeking endeavors (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991), whereas adults with insecure attachment (avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent) are less satisfied with work relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1990).

The problem remains in faculty mentoring research as to why certain mentoring relationships produce favorable outcomes and why certain individuals are predisposed to mentoring. Since few studies have explored attachment styles, mentoring relationships, and mentoring outcomes (Bernier, Larouse, & Soucy, 2005; Larose, Bernier, & Soucy, 2004); there is a lack of understanding of the relationships among these variables for junior faculty at the beginning of their academic career. Understanding faculty mentoring should be important to HRD professionals because mentoring is a key tool for universities to attract and retain faculty.

This study sought to answer the question: What are the relationships among faculty protégés' attachment styles, mentoring, and job satisfaction? We examined the relationships among attachment styles, mentoring, and job satisfaction of faculty protégés by testing the following hypotheses:

H₁: *Faculty protégé attachment styles are related to their job satisfaction.*

H₂: *Mentoring (i.e., degree of career and psychosocial support from mentor) is related to faculty protégé job satisfaction.*

H₃: *After controlling for gender, and ethnicity, protégé attachment styles and mentoring (i.e., degree of career and psychosocial support from mentor) significantly predict job satisfaction.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring

Mentoring is traditionally defined as developmental support offered to a junior employee (protégé) by a mentor who is typically someone more senior and experienced in the organization (Kram, 1983, 1985). The definition of mentoring has evolved considerably from the face-to-face, traditional, dyadic, hierarchical relationship to other formats (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007) such as e-mentoring sustained through the electronic medium (Hamilton & Scandura, 2003), team and peer mentoring, where the team leader mentors members and team members mentor each other (Williams, 2000) and bidirectional mentoring, where the interaction is two-way, mutual, and reciprocal whereby the mentor and protégé both benefit (D'Abate, Eddy, & Tannenbaum, 2003).

There are two major forms of mentoring – formal and informal, both of which are beneficial to the mentor and the protégé (Packard, Walsh, & Seidenberg, 2004; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000), and the intent of both are career and psychosocial development (Kram, 1983, 1985). Formal mentoring programs match individuals as part of an organized, facilitated employee development program (Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006), while mentors and protégés seek out each other spontaneously in informal mentoring (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 2006; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

The present study is focused on formal mentoring involving faculty in higher education because in spite of its popularity, not much is known about formal mentoring programs (Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Scandura, 1998). Moreover, compared to the corporate world, fewer institutions of higher education have formal mentoring programs for faculty development. Only about a quarter of U.S. universities have formal faculty mentoring programs, while most new faculty are expected to seek out mentors informally (Brent & Felder, 2000). This may not always work out because the time spent by new faculty to come across the right mentor may add to their already high stress levels of meeting the demands of the new job and learning the ropes of the organization. New faculty typically do

not have enough time, receive inadequate feedback and recognition, often set unrealistic self-expectations, experience lack of collegiality, and find hard to strike a work-life balance. All these factors sometimes lead to low scholarly productivity, and ineffective teaching (Sorcinelli, 1994) that may cause burnout and turnover. Additionally, women faculty or faculty who come from underrepresented groups has difficulty finding mentors informally because of the general unavailability of mentors from those groups. A mentor can help a new faculty member assimilate into academe, offer assistance on initiation in research and teaching activities, and serve as a supporter in the tenure and promotion process (Brent & Felder, 2000; Paul, Stein, Ottenbacher, & Liu, 2002). In order for new faculty to become productive in the academic community within their first couple of years, academic departments should be proactive in helping them through formal faculty mentoring programs rather than allowing their development to proceed entirely by trial and error (Boice, 1992). University of Vermont, Marquette University, University of California, Northern Illinois University, New York University, University of Kansas, are some of the universities that have implemented formal faculty mentoring programs. Mentoring has shown to have positive outcomes for junior faculty in formal mentoring programs by facilitating organizational socialization, and research productivity (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002; Paul, Stein, Ottenbacher, & Liu, 2002). A review of 39 studies of mentoring in academic medicine revealed mentorship having an important influence on research productivity, personal development, career guidance, and career choice of junior faculty (Sambunjak, Straus, & Marusic, 2006).

Majority of the research on mentoring over the last two decades has involved itself with theory development, benefits of mentoring from both the mentors' and the protégés perspectives, barriers to the establishment of mentoring relationships, and various kinds of socio-cultural and individual differences of mentors and protégés (Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002). The following section lays out attachment theory and its possible role in mentoring relationship.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is concerned with the nature of close emotional bonds or attachments that are developed early in life and how these unique intimate relationships affect the course of life (Bowlby, 1988). One of the basic tenets of attachment theory is that an individual's early attachment experiences are internalized over time through the development of internal working models of attachment (Bowlby, 1988). Infants explore their environment with an assurance in their mind about the availability of their secure base, also called their attachment figure. When they find certain stimuli to be frightening, they are more prone to activate attachment behavior. Because of communication between the mother and the child, some parts of the child's developing personality maybe nurtured while some others may be ignored and may go out of synchrony with the parts that are being nurtured. The child's confidence in the stability of this partnership enables him or her to internalize the working model of his or her relationship with the mother. This association of a control system with attachment theory and its connections with internal working models are regarded as primary features of personality functioning all through life.

Current theory and research on adult attachment draw heavily on Bowlby's (1988) concept of attachment representations or working models. Working models are mental representations of the self and others, which guide how people regulate emotion, and process information in close relationships such as with partner, spouse, teacher, a foster-mother, therapist etc. (Bowlby, 1988). These models guide behaviors and influence expectations and strategies in adult relationships (Bretherton, 1985).

Attachment security in adults is associated with empathy, self-disclosure, conflict resolution skills (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000; Doverspike et al, 1997; Hazan & Shaver, 1990), constructive coping with stress, and social support (Anders & Tucker, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested that attachments to others facilitated autonomy. Individuals with secure attachment styles know that acknowledgement of stress elicits supportive responses from others and turning to them is an effective route to enhanced coping. Attachment has also been linked with curiosity and exploratory behavior that help individuals flexibly adapt to changing environmental conditions (Elliot & Reis, 2003; Reio, Petrosko, Wiswell, & Thongsukmag, 2006).

Based on associations between attachment styles and several adult developmental outcomes, Hazan and Shaver (1990) were the first to theorize that adult work activity can be considered as functionally analogous to exploration. Adults consider work a main source of actual and perceived competence similar to play and exploration in early childhood. Hirschi's social control theory (1969) views attachment as global, and a property of an individual's emotional bonds to society and institutions, for example to organizations. In career development research, Blustein et. al. (1995) presented a strong theoretical explanation of the reasons why the experience of felt security provided by secure attachment relationships should enable (a) exploration of the self and environment, and (b) development through career decision making and commitment processes. They indicated that taking up a new position involves risks and challenges similar to early phases of career development and infant development. One of the main characteristics of progress in career decision making is readiness to explore the environment, and self-efficacy is proposed to assist in pursuing such exploration.

In a survey of over 1000 participants by Hazan and Shaver (1990), secure respondents reported higher overall job satisfaction, felt that they were valuable workers, and were confident that co-workers evaluated them highly. Anxious/ambivalent respondents expected co-workers to undervalue them, and avoidant respondents gave themselves lower ratings on job performance and expected similar ratings from co-workers too. Several studies followed the footsteps of Hazan and Shaver (1990) linking attachment theory with behaviors at work which indicated that securely attached employees showed more resilience (Klohn & Bera, 1998), higher self-esteem (Meyers, 1998), and had stronger coping mechanisms to deal with stress than those with insecure styles (Caldwell, 1994). Securely attached adults were more socially competent (Caldwell, 1994), were likely to use collaborative communication (Kummel, 1998), and were more receptive and appreciative of negative interpersonal feedback (Neuson, 1998). They reported higher levels of personal competence than insecurely attached adults (Meyers, 1998) and yet focused more on relationships than tasks (Doverspike, Hollis, Justice, & Polomsky, 1997). Therefore, secure attachment could be seen as an anchor for relationship competence and social competence.

Attachment and Mentoring

Attachment theory helps explain why individuals who do not form secure attachments during early life are inclined to struggle in comprehending and preserving their adult relationships (Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998). Because mentoring is an adult relationship forged at work to promote career development, it appears that early life social experiences could play a significant role in mentoring relationships. Unless a person's internal working model underwent transformation due to changing conditions, the same model that was developed as a result of early life social experiences would continue to impact his or her mentoring relationship. By focusing on attachment theory, we may be able to better understand the interpersonal nature of a mentor-protégé relationship (Kummel, 1998). Among individual differences studied in mentoring research, attachment styles could be a very significant one because such a linkage could better explain why and when there will be positive or negative outcomes in mentoring relationships and therefore, better inform the process of mentor-protégé pairing in mentoring programs (Armstrong, Allinson, & Hayes, 2002).

Empirical findings from mentoring research conducted with young adults in college, and conceptualizations from youth mentoring suggest relationships between attachment styles and mentor-protégé experiences (Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005; DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Larose & Bernier, 2001). Because mentoring involves interpersonal relationships, it is not surprising that studies have found attachment security influencing mentoring. Protégés with insecure attachment styles had difficulties in establishing relationships with mentors. Specifically, individuals presenting high dismissing attachment tendencies reported difficulties in seeking help from college mentors and had low levels of trust in potential supporters (Larose & Bernier, 2001). Further, in a study of 102 college students who were mentored by 10 faculty mentors, both dismissing and preoccupied attachment styles of the protégés were associated with negative evaluations of mentoring relationship and lower perceptions of security in mentoring (Larose, Bernier, & Soucy, 2004). In another landmark study involving 90 students and 10

faculty mentors, Bernier, Larose and Soucy (2005) examined the influence of mentor and protégé attachment styles on protégés' comfort with self-disclosure and proximity. Self-disclosure is an important component of developing relationships as part of the mentoring process where individuals share information about their experiences (Rocco, 2004). The researchers found that contrasting attachment styles interacted to predict protégés' self-disclosure and comfort with proximity, and their satisfaction with mentoring. For students with Preoccupied attachment styles, higher the level of preoccupation, professor avoidance predicted higher student self-disclosure (professor report; $\beta = .05, p < .05$). For students expressing low levels of preoccupation, professor avoidance predicted lower student comfort with proximity (professor report; $\beta = -.40, p < .05$). On the other hand, for students with Dismissive attachment styles, higher the level of dismissiveness, professor ambivalence predicted higher student comfort with proximity (student report; $\beta = .34, p \leq .05$). The findings of this study suggest that a mentor was most effective when the protégé was provided with a relational stance that was in contrast with the protégé's own. Therefore, people with preoccupied attachment styles could benefit from working with an independence-oriented yet interpersonally competent person. In contrast, an individual who had difficulty developing close relationships might benefit from working with an interpersonally competent person who was comfortable with intimacy.

Attachment theorists assert that a person's internal working model which has been shaped by early social experiences is so immutable that it influences the ability of the person in forming close relationships. Dominant focus on attachment styles as traits has led to a relative neglect of the way that current relationship patterns continue to influence personality and internal working models (Kobak, 1994; Levitt, 2005; Lewis, 1997). Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1990) provide a way of thinking about how adult attachment relationships develop, the functions that they would normally serve, and security of relationships.

The field of mentoring has had a stream of development over the past two decades that included theory development, research on organizational outcomes, and diversity issues (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007). Though empirical research and conceptual frameworks in the literature establish links between attachment and mentoring, and links between mentoring and organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, this review did not find any empirical studies that examined the relationships between mentoring, attachment, and organizational outcomes. Scandura and Pellegrini (2004) are the only researchers who conceptualized a model that proposed a typology of mentoring relationships (functional, marginal, dysfunctional, and marginal-dysfunctional) based on attachment styles, and linked it to organizational outcomes. The present study, by bringing in attachment theory, attempts to fill in a gap in the mentoring research and practice area, specifically related to job satisfaction, and thus provides a solid base for future research.

METHOD

Procedure and Participants

This quantitative study used a cross-sectional and correlational design. The target population of interest for this study is faculty members who are protégés in formal faculty mentoring programs. The available population of 125 protégés was junior faculty in a formal faculty mentoring program at a university in the United States. Although this is a convenience sample with considerable demographic homogeneity, the participants were members of the target population of protégés. The population was secured by obtaining a buy-in from the program director of the faculty mentoring program, who also served as the mediator during data collection. This option was appropriate in order to maintain the confidentiality of data required for the study. A survey was set up on SurveyMonkey for data collection. Because surveys are commonly used for time and cost efficiencies, Dillman's (2007) Tailored Design Method (TDM) was used. Following the recommendations of the method, the survey content was reviewed by experts in the field, and a small pilot study was conducted. The entire available population was surveyed in order for the study to have sufficient power.

The sample consisted of 50 protégés representing 40% of the total protégé population. Seventy percent ($n = 35$) of the protégé sample was female and 30% ($n = 15$) of the sample was male. A frequency analysis of protégé age indicated that 4% ($n = 2$) of the respondents reported belonging to the 21-29 group, 36% ($n = 18$) to the 30-39 group, 54% ($n = 27$) to the 40-49 group, and finally 6% ($n = 3$) to the 50-59 group. A frequency analysis of protégé ethnicity indicated that 84% ($n = 42$) of the respondents were White, 6% ($n = 3$) African American, 4% ($n = 2$) Hispanic, 4% ($n = 2$) Asian, and 2% ($n = 1$) selected "other." No protégé respondent indicated affiliation with an American Indian or Alaskan native ethnicity. A frequency analysis of the protégés' number of years of employment in the current academic unit indicated that 50% ($n = 25$) were employed less than a year, 24% ($n = 24$) were employed between 1 to 5 years, 2% ($n = 1$) were employed between 5 to 10 years.

Measures

Demographic data of the participants regarding gender, ethnicity, age, and tenure status in the university was collected. Attachment style was measured through Hazan and Shaver's (1990) Adult Attachment Style (AAS). In this self-report measure, participants read descriptions of secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent attachment styles, and indicate the one that best describes how they feel in intimate relationships.

Mentoring was measured through Noe's (1988a) Mentoring Functions Scale. It has 21 items that were developed on the basis of career and psychosocial functions identified in previous studies of mentoring relationships through qualitative and descriptive analyses (Burke, 1984; Kram, 1983, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Roche, 1979; Zey, 1984). Responses to items are provided on 1 to 5 scales (e.g., 1="from a very slight extent" to 5="to a very large extent"). Responses are summed and the average score for each subscale is used for the analyses. Two separate scores are formed reflecting Kram's (1985) career mentoring (including sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenge, and exposure items) and psychosocial (including friendship, role modeling, counseling, and acceptance items) mentoring.

Job satisfaction was measured by Spector's (1997) Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS). The JSS is a 36-item scale and responses are provided on a 6-point Likert-type agreement scale to measure employee attitudes about their job and aspects of their job (1 = disagree very much, 2= disagree moderately, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree moderately, 6 = agree very much). The nine facets of the scale are pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards (performance based rewards), operating procedures (required rules and procedures), coworkers, nature of work, and communication. There are four items in each subscale. The JSS is scored by the sum of the scores of all the 36 items. The total score can range from 36 to 216. Because the items are combined, the scoring for negatively worded items is reversed. To reverse the scoring, negatively worded responses are renumbered from 6 to 1 rather than 1 to 6.

Additionally, the last part of the survey asked three open-ended questions to capture the perceptions of the participants regarding their mentoring relationships. Responses to these questions were intended to possibly augment the quantitative findings.

RESULTS

Cross tabulation analyses of the demographic variables of 50 protégés were examined for meaningful relationships using inferential statistics. The results of the chi-square tests did not indicate statistically significant differences between distributions of each sample variable.

AAS scores for the protégés indicated that 58% ($n = 29$) were secure, 38% ($n = 19$) were avoidant, and 4% ($n = 2$) were anxious/ambivalent. Relative proportions of secure and insecure attachment types among the protégés were roughly consistent with those found in previous research (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Zero-order correlations revealed that secure attachment was positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .70$, $p < .01$), suggesting a large effect size (Cohen, 1988) and providing empirical support for H_1 .

Zero-order correlations further revealed that career support was positively correlated with protégé job satisfaction ($r = .57$, $p < .01$) and psychosocial support was positively correlated with protégé job satisfaction ($r = .62$, $p < .01$). Results suggested a strong relation (Cohen, 1988) between protégé job satisfaction and mentoring, lending empirical support to H₂.

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test H₃ that stated after controlling for gender, and ethnicity, protégé attachment styles and mentoring (i.e., degree of career and psychosocial support received by protégé) significantly predict job satisfaction. Guided by theory and empirical research, variables were loaded into the regression equation by steps (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Gender and ethnicity were loaded as variables in the first step to serve as statistical controls. Protégé attachment style as measured by the AAS was loaded into the second step. Mentoring (career support and psychosocial support) received by protégé were loaded into the third step. Standardized beta β s (cumulative R^2) were computed. Results of hierarchical regression analysis on job satisfaction are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
**SUMMARY HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH GENDER, ETHNICITY,
ATTACHMENT STYLE (AAS), AND MENTORING PREDICTING
PROTÉGÉ JOB SATISFACTION**

Variable	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>			
	β	<i>R</i>	R^2	Sig F Change
Step 1				
Gender	-.002			
Ethnicity	-.11			
Block		.11	.01	.744
Step 2				
Attachment style	.75***			
Block		.74	.55	.000
Step 3				
Psychosocial mentoring	.30*			
Career mentoring	.09			
Block		.78	.65	.040
Total adjusted R^2			.56	

Note. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Supporting H₃, each of the predictor variables predicted incremental variance in job satisfaction after statistical control for the influences of the demographic variables. The demographic variables (gender and ethnicity), entered as a block in the first step in the regression, did not reach statistical significance. In the second step of the analysis, the attachment style variable was a significant positive and unique predictor of job satisfaction, $R^2 = .55$, $p < .001$, $F(3,46) = 18.87$. Further, in the third step of the regression, mentoring, specifically psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$) made a unique statistically positive contribution to predict job satisfaction, $R^2 = .65$, $p < .001$, $F(5,44) = 13.94$. Overall, the regression model explained 56.0% of the variance in protégé job satisfaction (large effect size; Cohen, 1988). Each VIF value was less than 3.25, providing no evidence of multicollinearity. VIF values more than 10 and tolerance values approaching 0 are considered as indicating multicollinearity (Green, 1991). Using attachment scores from the AAS, results from the analysis suggest that protégés with secure attachment styles receiving higher level of psychosocial mentoring are likely to be more satisfied with their jobs.

Responses to the three open-ended questions were downloaded into Excel. Responses were coded by looking at the patterns or commonly occurring themes. About 30% ($n = 15$) of the protégés responded to the open-ended questions. The first question was “What is your overall feeling about the effectiveness of participating in this mentoring program?” Almost all rated the program well, citing how much valuable

guidance they received from their mentors for the tenure process, and navigate their way through the university as brand new junior faculty. Some, however, cited lack of time and lack of monetary incentive for mentors as barriers to the effectiveness of the program. The second question was “What are the areas where you benefitted most from your mentor?” Responses encompassed both the psychosocial and the career support aspects of mentoring. Some cited the trust, friendship, and help they received from their mentors in navigating through difficult personal situations, and advice they received regarding the tenure process as well as maintaining a work-life balance. Others referred to collaborative professional activities like presenting, writing, and teaching. The third question was “What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in the mentoring relationship?” The predominant theme in the responses was lack of time and busy schedules contributing to less interaction than desirable. Some protégés referred to their mentors as difficult people, or cited their “own reluctance to burden others.” Some seemed to lack rapport and trust with their mentors and were hesitant to discuss personal issues with them in the fear that such things will be “divulged to the department chair.” Overall, protégés seemed to benefit from the mentoring program, and wished they and their mentors had more time to devote to the relationships.

The quantitative result and the qualitative results coincide. Protégés in their open-ended responses clearly indicated the receipt of psychosocial support in the form of trust, friendship, advice, and help from their mentors, and the same result was clearly evident in the quantitative analysis too.

DISCUSSION

The results were consistent with Hazan and Shaver’s (1990) pioneering research on attachment and work behaviors where secure respondents reported higher overall job satisfaction, felt that they were valuable workers, and were confident that co-workers evaluated them highly. Moreover, van Ecke (2007) linked secure attachment style to lower career thought dysfunction that was found to be related to higher levels of job satisfaction (Judge & Locke, 1993). To generalize the findings of this study and better inform the planners of formal faculty mentoring programs, it is important to replicate this study in junior faculty mentoring programs in other universities because none of the prior studies that examined attachment style in relation to job satisfaction (Krausz, Bizman, & Braslavsky, 2001; Sumer & Knight, 2001; Toepfer, 1996) were carried out among university faculty. Academic departments in universities in their efforts to nurture, promote, and retain promising junior faculty, could select protégés with secure attachment styles to augment their job satisfaction levels.

The present study informs faculty mentoring program planners at the institutional level that protégés perceiving higher degree of career support and psychosocial support had higher levels of job satisfaction. Prior studies showing such evidence have mostly been in the discipline of academic medicine (Benson, Morahan, Sachdeva, & Richman, 2002; Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2005; Pololi, Knight, Dennis, & Frankel, 2002; Steiner, Curtis, Lanphear, Vu, & Main, 2004). Administrators at the institutional level can use this study’s findings to begin structuring formal faculty mentoring programs.

Results from the present study also showed that faculty protégés with secure attachment styles, and receiving higher level of psychosocial mentoring are likely to be more satisfied with their jobs. This study is one of the first to examine attachment styles together with mentoring in the prediction of protégés’ job satisfaction. However, this particular aspect of the aforementioned finding regarding the positive role of mentoring in job satisfaction converges with prior research where protégés reported personal development, career and job satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989; Kammeyer-Mueller & Marchese, 2006; Larose, Tarabulsy & Cyrenne, 2005; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller & Marchese, 2006).

HRD practitioners are informed through this study about the importance of developing interpersonal competencies of protégés that could improve the receiving of psychosocial support, such as listening skills and accepting feedback. They can use the mentor-protégé attachment style pairing guide presented in Germain’s (2011) proposal to inform the matching process while setting up formal mentoring programs.

Attachment theory and research originally pertained to infants and young children. In the 1980s, the theory was extended to adults. In the last decade, the theory has been applied to adults in the workplace.

With a growing literature investigating attachment styles as it relates to job satisfaction (Hazan & Shaver, 1990), career development (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995), transformational leadership (Popper, Mayseless, & Castelnovo, 2000), and work versus family concerns (Summer & Knight, 2001), there seems to be a clear need in the field of HRD to explore the link between attachment styles and mentoring relationships. This study adds to the HRD literature base that has extended attachment theory to adults in the workplace.

Specifically, this is a unique study that extends attachment theory to workplace mentoring in the higher education setting. The study holds the promise of enlightening the field of formal faculty mentoring research to clarify faculty empowerment, productivity, and retention efforts. Understanding the relationship of attachment styles of protégés to the mentoring functions and outcomes will help make formal faculty mentoring programs better by impacting mentor-protégé matching. Higher education institutions that plan and implement formal mentoring programs for their junior faculty may go beyond selecting protégés based on professional characteristics, gender, and ethnicity. Mentoring program planners can strengthen mentoring experiences by intentionally developing social competencies such as self-disclosure skills of potential protégés. They could also provide protégés who are not inclined to benefit from mentoring relationships with alternative developmental activities. As effective mentoring can help to enhance job satisfaction, HRD practitioners and researchers should explore innovative ways to increase positive mentoring experiences. By looking at mentoring outcomes in work settings through the lens of attachment theory, this study holds the potential of furthering HRD research and practice.

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