

DOES MENTORING WORK? THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF MENTORING IN CHINA

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Researchers have found that mentoring can impact protégés' career outcomes positively or negatively. In this study we explored the mediating effect of mentoring on the relationship between personal learning and career development in Chinese enterprises. Data from 316 employees of Chinese enterprises were collected and analyzed to measure the impact of their personal learning on career development. It was found that personal learning and mentoring had a significantly positive impact on career development. Mentoring mediated the relationship between personal learning and career development. We, therefore, suggest that, when promoting career development benefits, enterprises should enhance the positive effects of personal learning and career development through mentoring mechanisms.

Keywords: mentoring, protégé, personal learning, career development, China.

A mentor is generally defined as an experienced individual within an organization who has attained a certain rank or achievement and who can provide career development support to less experienced individuals in that organization (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1994; Kram, 1985; Zey, 1984). These less experienced individuals are commonly referred to

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as *protégés*. Researchers have shown that the career outcomes of protégés can be improved by the mentoring system (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004; Jacobi, 1991; Rhodes, 2005). In addition, some researchers have noted that the mentor role influences the job satisfaction, career satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and career expectations of the protégé (Baugh, Lankau, & Scandura, 1996; Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Collins, 1994; Corzine, Buntzman, & Busch, 1994; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Mobley, Jaret, Marsh, & Lim, 1994; Seibert, 1999).

In the past the main focus of related studies was on the effect of mentors' support in relation to employees' pay, promotion, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, intention to change jobs, and behavior in the workplace, and in most of this research positive correlations were demonstrated among these variables (Chao et al., 1992; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Dreher & Chargois, 1998; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Scandura, 1992; Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). However, some researchers found that mentoring was not strongly related to the protégés' career outcomes (Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1999; Russell & Adams, 1997; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Therefore, the purpose in a majority of past studies was to perform a unidirectional examination of either the positive corresponding relationship between mentoring systems and protégés (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990) or the negative relationship between the two (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2008; Eby et al., 2004; Eby & McManus, 2004; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). However, such positive and negative relationships may coexist (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2010) and the relationships between mentor and protégé and protégé career outcomes are intricate (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004).

In this study we reexamined the effect of mentoring on protégés' career outcomes. Focusing on employees of Chinese enterprises, our aims were to clarify the effect of mentoring systems in these organizations on employees' career development, and to assess whether or not there are differences compared to findings in studies conducted by Western scholars. Richard, Ismail, Bhuiyan, and Taylor (2009) identified one of the antecedent variables of any mentoring system as employees' human capital. In other words, mentors can choose those with a higher level of education or more experience as protégés (Allen, 2004; Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Allen, Poteet, & Russell, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008); therefore, protégés' personal learning motivation also serves an important role, and career outcome may be further affected by mentoring functions. However, most researchers have explored the effect of mentoring on protégés' careers (Allen et al., 2004; Lankau & Scandura, 2002) and the mediating role of mentoring functions has rarely been addressed. This is one aspect of mentoring that was explored in this study.

The mentor – often referred to by protégés in Chinese as *Xi-Fu* – holds a respectable position in Eastern societies. From the standpoint of management practice, even though China initiated a policy of reform and opening up of the country to the rest of the world in 1978, the more traditional mentor-protégé, owner-employee, and political leader-citizen relationships have been preserved because the degree of Westernization in China is still low. In recent years, researchers studying human resource management in China have shown a strong interest in these relationships (Taylor, 2005; Yang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2004). While the general expectation has been that the understanding and execution of mentoring relationships in China be very different from what has been found in empirical studies in Western countries, research focused on China has been rare. Coupled with the different timing of Chinese employees' contact with Western human resource management theories and practice, the level of implementation and application are also expected to be different. As a result, the effect of mentoring on an individual's career outcomes might also differ from the outcomes for employees in the West. Because of possible differences these are also topics worthy of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our purpose in this study was to explore the relationship between the personal learning and career development of Chinese employees in enterprises and to examine the mediating effect of mentoring on the relationship between personal learning and career development. We used the work of Kram (1985) and Higgins and Kram (2001) to establish three variables of mentoring: *coaching*, *recommendation*, and *protection*. Factors related to personal learning were *personal skill development* and *relational job learning*; factors related to career development were *job promotion* and *job satisfaction*. The research framework of our study is presented in Figure 1.

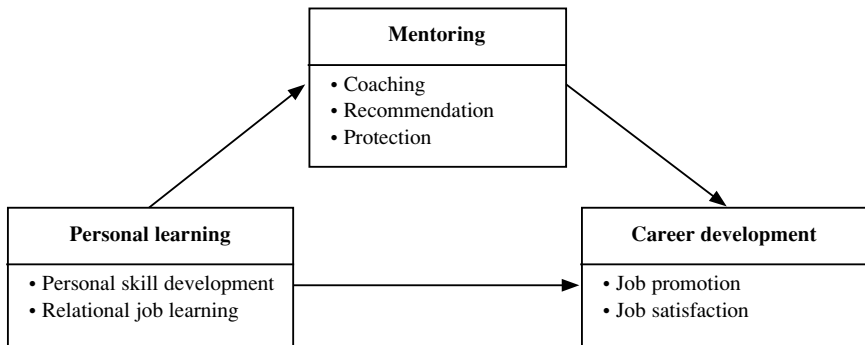


Figure 1. Research framework.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL NETWORK

The workplace is experiencing technological and internationalization changes, that affect employees' career planning and development. Career researchers Arthur and Rousseau (1996) and Hall (1996) have written extensively about the changing nature of the career environment. They have identified four broad categories of change that affect the context in which individuals' careers unfold, and that have direct implications for the nature of individuals' developmental relationships. First, the employment contract between individuals and their employers has changed (Rousseau, 1995): firms no longer provide the sole or primary anchor for an individual's personal and professional identity (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Secondly, the changing nature of technology has also affected the form and function of individuals' careers and career development. Thirdly, the changing nature of organizational structures affects the sources from which individuals receive developmental assistance. Lastly, organizational membership has become increasingly diverse, and this affects both the needs and resources available for development. Recognizing these changes, Higgins and Kram (2001) proposed their developmental network theory, in which are described the relationships a protégé cites as being important to their career development. In the developmental network theory it is emphasized that employees can simultaneously have multiple mentors and multilayered mentoring relationships, which help the protégé to establish a strong connection with others at each phase of their career.

PERSONAL LEARNING AND MENTORING

Leslie, Aring, and Brand (1998) stated that over 70% of learning in the workplace is derived from informal learning. Informal learning has substantial impacts on, and benefits for personal learning, with the mentor being an important resource in informal learning. Kram (1996) defined *personal learning* as *the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or competence contributing to individual development, including self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback*. Therefore, the employee must learn how to communicate and collaborate with others as well as developing an effective and socially interdependent relationship with other members. Hall (1996) described the concept of the boundaryless career, and stressed the importance for the employee of interaction techniques and organizational awareness, and that continual learning is essential for a successful career. Therefore, personal learning involves expanding personal relationships with others, listening to others, and developing the ability to work with others (Gherardi, Nicolini, & Odella, 1998; Goleman, 2001).

To achieve career success and self-realization, the individual must learn continually. Employees must keep themselves abreast of technological advances and innovation in order to advance in their careers. To adapt to technological and

social changes, individuals have to constantly enrich their skills to improve work efficiency and enhance value. Marsick (1987) also observed that mentoring is as an important resource for personal learning. Kegan (1994) wrote that, in a changing environment, individuals should focus on developing a higher intelligence model, that is to say, they must develop a systematic way of learning, or the ability to “think outside the box” and thoroughly understand organizational relationships. Systematic learning involves the learners’ behavior, attitude, and even personality development and change (Rogers, 1983). Rawson (2000) argued that learning to learn involves self-consciousness, understanding, and interacting with others, and can even lead to personal development. Taking this into account, in this study we consider personal learning from the perspectives of learning elicited by informal learning, respect for the interpersonal network, and interpersonal interactions, with a focus on the learners’ individual development. Therefore, in this study we adopted the conceptualization developed by Lankau and Scandura (2002) who classified *personal learning* into two dimensions: *relational job learning*, that is, *understanding the interdependence or connectedness of one’s job to others* and *personal skill development*, which is *the acquisition of new skills and abilities that enable better working relationships*. With mentors as role models, protégés can get more learning opportunities. Further, through mentors’ recommendations, protégés can gain better opportunities for promotion or personal development. In other words, a good attitude toward learning can positively affect mentoring relationships. Therefore, we posed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Chinese employees’ personal learning will be positively related to mentoring.

MENTORING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Past researchers have shown mentoring to be a strategy that enterprises use to assist protégés’ development in an organization. Benefits of mentoring include improvement in protégés’ productivity, further professional success, enhanced job promotion, and improved pay. Professional success is generally defined in terms of money and position, the common symbols of success (Aryee, Wyatt, & Stone, 1996; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Orpen, 1995; Scandura, 1992). Fisher (1994) asserted that mentorship learning has a stimulating effect on organizational members’ job performance, by raising spirits, motivation, and the quality of work. Byrne, Dik, and Chiaburu (2008) also argued that a direct mentor-protégé relationship is significantly related to career satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and in-role performance. Moreover, mentoring is a traditional recruitment mechanism, and protégés who have mentoring support have been found to be more satisfied with their jobs, to perform better, and to be more committed to the organization (Chao et al., 1992). Aryee, Chay, and Chew (1996) also suggest that, through mentoring functions,

opportunities could be provided to satisfy employees' career, psychological, and support needs. Hunt and Michael (1983) further pointed out that a mentor-protégé relationship can help with the protégé's career planning, career involvement, organizational socialization, job satisfaction, increases in income, and job involvement. Accordingly, mentoring can enhance employees' career development. Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Chinese employees' mentoring will be positively related to career development.

PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In an organization, some knowledge is tacit. Through interpersonal networks, individuals can utilize social resources to help them accomplish work objectives and enhance competitive advantage. The knowledge required to achieve working objectives is frequently generated through informal interactions (Lesser & Storck, 2001; McElroy, 2002; Stewart & Stoker, 1995). Therefore, better understanding of the environment in an organization leads to more intricate personal interactions and information transfer. In other words, individuals' clear understanding of the relationship between themselves and the environment influences the intensity of information connection with others, and this promotes the accomplishment of work objectives (Bolles, 1992; Jackall, 1988; Krackhardt, 1987; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Higgins and Kram (2001) stressed four career outcomes that are important for personal learning and career development of protégés: career change, personal learning, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. The Chinese scholar Liao (2004) also noted that effective personal learning and successful career development require guidance from mentors to increase opportunities, including on-the-job learning, such as personal skill development, relational job learning, and promotion opportunities and job satisfaction in career development. In other words, outstanding personal learning results can enhance career development. Therefore, we formed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Chinese enterprise employees' personal learning will positively affect career development.

MEDIATING EFFECT OF MENTORING ON PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Bu, Craig, and Peng (2001) found that Chinese employees are more concerned than are employees in other countries about whether the instructions they receive from their supervisors are consistent with their company's policies. They are also less concerned about their independent assessment of situations and less likely to insist that their opinion is right if their judgment is inconsistent with that of the supervisor. Chinese employees still emphasize role relationships, because more recommendation opportunities could be facilitated by these relationships

leading to enhancement of future career development. This form of traditional mentor-protégé experience is very compatible with the Chinese saying, “Be my teacher for a day, be my teacher for a lifetime”.

In terms of personal learning, the Chinese scholars Yao and Zeng (2002) conducted a survey with workers in Hunan Province and found that the aspect of their job with which they were most satisfied was their interpersonal relationships and the aspect with which they were least satisfied was their pay. Further, job characteristics and job reward factors had the greatest impact on overall job satisfaction. Xu (2004) noted that employees who are very intelligent possess greater job satisfaction and that there is a significant and positive relationship between knowledge employees’ job stressors and job satisfaction. External stress of intelligent employees was found to be significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction. With regard to job characteristics, very intelligent employees were found to be inclined to choose stressful and challenging work.

Tan and Akhtar (1993) found that employees’ perceptions and behavior can be affected by their degree of Westernization. Researchers have demonstrated that mentor-protégé interactions may differ because of employees’ different values. For example, Chinese employees emphasize the learning, promotion, and personal development opportunities they receive at work. With the mentor as the role model, employees who are protégés can get more learning opportunities; through the mentor’s exposure and visibility, the protégé can get more opportunities for promotion and personal development.

Lankau and Scandura (2002) found that mentors’ professional, social, and psychological support significantly affect employees’ personal skill development and relational job learning. In other words, it has been found that mentoring plays an important role in personal learning and has a mediating and enhancing effect on personal learning and career development. Therefore, we formed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Mentoring will mediate the relationship between Chinese employees’ personal learning and career development.

METHOD

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Our sample comprised employees of Chinese enterprises located in Xiamen, Dongguan, Shanghai, Wuxi, Suzhou, and Beijing. Of the 600 surveys distributed, 462 were returned (response rate = 77%). After excluding incomplete questionnaires, valid samples totaled 316 (52.67% of the distributed surveys).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) and multiple indicators were used to examine the model fit because the model could satisfy some indicators but not others. We utilized general indicators such as chi-square statistics, comparative

fix index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), root mean square residual (RMR), and root mean square estimation (RMSE). Further, regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between personal learning and career development, as well as the moderating effect of mentoring on the relationship between personal learning and career development.

MEASURES

We collected the respondents' demographic data, and we used five scales: (1) a 5-point Likert-type mentoring scale (Dreher & Ash, 1990), in which a higher score indicates more extensive experience with being mentored; (2) a 5-point Likert-type personal skill development scale (Kram, 1996; Lankau & Scandura, 2002), in which a higher score indicates better personal learning; (3) a relational job learning scale (Kegan, 1994; Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Merriam & Heuer, 1996); (4) a job promotion scale, developed by the authors for this study; and (5) a job satisfaction scale (adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967).

In measuring mentoring, we modified the scale developed by Dreher and Ash (1990) in accordance with the research objectives. Mentoring was measured in three dimensions, with nine items for coaching, four items for recommendation, and four items for protection. Respondents were directed to indicate, on a scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*) the frequency with which they exhibited these behaviors they had learnt from their mentor.

In formulating the personal learning variables, we modified the research classifications set out by Lankau and Scandura (2002) and classified personal learning into two dimensions: (1) seven items for personal skill development and (2) four items for relational job learning. Each item was measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicates more effective personal learning.

Career development variables consist of job promotion and job satisfaction. We developed a job promotion scale in order to measure how quickly and frequently our respondents were promoted, along with whether the respondents' promotions were affected by mentors over the entire period of their employment, or whether the respondents' promotions are affected by mentors after working for a period of time within the same organization, for example, as a result of a mentor's recommendation. Respondents were asked to compare past promotions with the most recent one and to assess their satisfaction with the most recent promotion on this basis. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). A higher score indicates greater satisfaction than with previous promotions.

Job satisfaction was measured using the MSQ Short Form (Weiss et al., 1967). Job satisfaction dimensions included 12 items in intrinsic satisfaction, six items

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Personal skill development	3.73	.59	1												
2. Relational job learning	3.73	.61	.76***	1											
3. Personal learning	3.73	.56	.96***	.91***	1										
4. Coaching	3.10	.85	.61***	.43***	.57***	1									
5. Sponsorship	2.76	.93	.33***	.26**	.32***	.54***	1								
6. Protection	2.69	.85	.44***	.38***	.44***	.72***	.64***	1							
7. Mentoring	3.04	.81	.60***	.44***	.57***	.98***	.62***	.77***	1						
8. Job promotion	3.32	.72	.43***	.34***	.42***	.36***	.35***	.35***	.37***	1					
9. Intrinsic satisfaction	3.50	.58	.53***	.44***	.52***	.44***	.40***	.34***	.44***	.65***	1				
1. Extrinsic satisfaction	3.36	.71	.43***	.39***	.44***	.38***	.29***	.32***	.38***	.61***	.69***	1			
11. General satisfaction	3.72	.68	.34***	.22**	.31***	.29***	.20**	.17***	.29***	.42***	.55***	.48***	1		
12. Job satisfaction	3.50	.57	.53***	.44***	.55***	.45***	.38***	.34***	.45***	.66***	.98***	.79***	.64***	1	
13. Career development	3.43	.57	.53***	.43***	.52***	.45***	.40***	.38***	.46***	.77***	.96***	.77***	.63***	.97***	1

Notes: N = 316; * p < .1; ** p < .05; *** p < .01.

in extrinsic satisfaction, and two items in general satisfaction. Each statement described reinforcement to a certain aspect of the working environment, and respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the reinforcement on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*), where a higher score indicated a higher level of satisfaction.

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation coefficients of the research variables. Results of correlation analysis demonstrated that the relationships among personal learning, mentoring, and career development showed significant and positive correlations. Specifically, the correlation coefficient between personal learning and mentoring was 0.57 ($p < .01$), the correlation coefficient between personal learning and career development was .52 ($p < .01$), and the correlation coefficient between mentoring and career development was .46 ($p < 0.01$). These results support the first three of our proposed hypotheses.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIABLES

The purpose of SEM is to determine whether or not the research data support the hypotheses and to test the relationships between personal learning, mentoring, and career development.

Data analysis results showed that the chi-square ratio (χ^2/df) was 4.60, CFI = 0.93, GFI = 0.92, and RMR = 0.04. Since the indicators all exceeded the statistical thresholds, the overall fit of the model was good. Further, since the model parameters were correct and exhibited statistical significance, the model could be used as the finalized model for this research. In other words, mentoring helped the employees who took part in our study to apply their personal learning towards their career development. In addition, results shown in Table 2 demonstrate that mentoring had a mediating effect on the relationship between personal learning and career development. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 of this study was supported.

TABLE 2
TESTING OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Relationship of variables	Path coefficient	Hypothesis	Results
Personal learning → Mentoring	0.51***	H1	Supported
Mentoring → Career development	0.27***	H2	Supported
Personal learning → Career development	0.48***	H3	Supported

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < .01$.

REGRESSION RESULTS

Results of our regression analysis show that Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported. Tables 3, 4, and 5 contain the results of regression analysis. As shown in Table 3, personal learning positively and significantly affected mentoring, but relational job learning was not significantly related to mentoring. This result could, perhaps, be explained by Chinese employees' focus on personal skill development. As seen in Table 4, mentoring had a positive and significant effect on career development, but no significance was found in protection. This result could, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that Chinese employees' mentoring systems mainly serve the purposes of coaching and recommendation rather than protection. In Table 5 it can be seen that personal learning positively and significantly affected career development, but there was no significance found in relational job learning. This result could be explained by Chinese employees' emphasis on personal skill development.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL LEARNING ON MENTORING

Independent variable	Dependent variable			
	Mentoring	Coaching	Recommendation	Protection
Personal learning	.69***			
Personal skill development		1.04***	.61***	.54***
Relational job learning		-.18***	-.03	.14
R^2	.26	.39	.15	.20
Adjusted R^2	.26	.39	.14	.20
F	111.15	101.32	26.87	39.99

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

TABLE 4
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF MENTORING ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable		
	Career development	Job promotion	Job satisfaction
Mentoring	.33***		
Coaching		.15***	.23***
Recommendation		.14***	.13***
Protection		.08	-.04
R^2	.22	.17	.22
Adjusted R^2	.21	.16	.21
F	86.29	20.84	29.28

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, *** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$.

TABLE 5
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL LEARNING ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable		
	Mentoring	Coaching	Recommendation
Personal learning	.47***		
Personal skill development		.47***	.49***
Relational job learning		.04	-.02
R^2	.24	.19	.26
Adjusted R^2	.24	.18	.26
F	99.93	36.42	54.88

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

MEDIATING EFFECT OF MENTORING ON PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The purpose in this study was to explore the mediation effect of mentoring (coaching, recommendation, protection) on the relationship between personal learning (personal skill development, relational job learning), and career development (job promotion, job satisfaction). To test the mediator, the regression model must satisfy three conditions (Baron & Kenny, 1986): both the independent variable and mediator must separately show a significant relationship with the dependent variable; the independent variable must show a significant relationship with the mediator; and, after the mediator is installed, the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable must be weaker than before the installation. In addition, when the direct effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable is no longer statistically different from zero fixing the mediator variable, the mediation effect is said to be complete. If, however, the absolute size of the direct effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable is reduced after controlling for the mediator variable, but the direct effect is still significantly different from zero, the mediation effect is said to be partial. In Tables 3 through 5 it can be seen that the regression model met the first two conditions of mediation. We followed this up by constructing a two-phase linear regression model to test the third condition.

The results shown in Tables 6 through 9 demonstrate that, in an analysis of mentoring as a mediator, personal learning significantly affected mentoring ($\beta = 0.69, p < 0.01$) and personal learning significantly affected career development ($\beta = .69, p < .01$). In addition, mentoring significantly affected career development ($\beta = .21, p < .01$). After incorporating mentoring as a mediator, the relationship

between personal learning and career development weakened (β value dropped from .47 to .33, $p < .01$). This fits the third condition for mediation. Therefore, mentoring had a partial mediation effect on the relationship between job learning and career development. From the analytical results of personal learning and mentoring dimensions, the mediating effect of coaching, recommendation, and protection was more conspicuous in the personal learning dimensions of personal skill development. In other words, Chinese employees could achieve better skill development through mentoring. Overall, personal learning significantly influenced Chinese employees' career development, and mentoring played an important mediating role in the relationship between personal learning and career development for the Chinese employees who took part in our study. If an individual spends more time being mentored, it leads to a stronger relationship between career development and personal learning. This result indicates that if employees' personal learning is catalyzed by mentoring, then they can enjoy better career development.

TABLE 6
MEDIATING EFFECT OF MENTORING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable	
	Career development	
	Model 1	Model 2
Personal learning	.47***	.33***
Mentoring		.12**

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

TABLE 7
MEDIATING EFFECT OF COACHING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable			
	Job promotion		Job satisfaction	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Personal skill development	.47***	.34	.49	.35***
Relational job learning	.04	.06	-.02	.01
Coaching		.12**		.13***

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

TABLE 8
MEDIATING EFFECT OF SPONSORSHIP ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable			
	Job promotion		Job satisfaction	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Personal skill development	.47***	.37***	.49***	.41***
Relational job learning	.04	.05	-.02	-.01
Sponsorship		.17***		.13***

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

TABLE 9
MEDIATING EFFECT OF PROTECTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Independent variable	Dependent variable			
	Job promotion		Job satisfaction	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Personal skill development	.47***	.39***	.49***	.44***
Relational job learning	.04	.02	-.02	-.03
Protection		.16***		.10***

Notes: $N = 316$; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Past researchers offered inconclusive findings on the effect of mentoring on protégés' career development. Therefore, in this study we reexamined mentoring functions. We found positive significant relationships between mentoring and employees' career development in our Chinese sample; this is consistent with the conclusions of Western scholars (Allen et al., 1997; Eby et al., 2004, 2008; Jacobi, 1991; Rhodes, 2005).

In past studies the focus has been mainly on examining the effect of mentoring support (or the lack thereof) on employees' salary, promotion, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and personal learning behavior. In only a few studies had the mediating or moderating functions of mentoring been assessed.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the empirical findings of our study:

- (1) The relationships between personal learning, mentoring, and career development were positive and significant.
- (2) Personal learning positively and significantly related to mentoring, but relational job learning was not significantly related to mentoring.

- (3) Mentoring positively and significantly related to career development, but did not significantly relate to protection.
- (4) Personal learning positively and significantly related to career development, but did not significantly relate to relational job learning.
- (5) Overall, personal learning significantly affected Chinese employees' career development, and mentoring played a mediating role in the relationship between personal learning and career development.

According to our results, the relationship between personal learning and career development can be enhanced through the assistance of mentoring. This implies that if employees' personal learning is stimulated by mentoring relationships, then employees can enhance the development of their careers.

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