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The Effect of Mentoring on U.S. vs. Foreign-Born Faculty's Self-Esteem and Job Satisfaction

Abstracts: The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship among mentoring, self-esteem, and job satisfaction between U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members in 21 research universities based on their country of origin, marital status, faculty ranking, tenure, and mentoring status.

Keywords: Foreign-born faculty, mentoring, self-esteem, job satisfaction

Problem and Purpose Statement

Research shows that international faculty are great assets to U.S. higher education because aside from their teaching, research, and service responsibilities, they have the potential to enrich the university campus and community with their cultures and worldviews (Alberts, 2008; Mamiseishvili, 2010). Despite international faculty's increased role in research, teaching, and services in U.S. higher education institutions, there is limited research that focuses on their development as a faculty member. For example, only handful of studies have focused on the acculturation, productivity, and job satisfaction issues that international faculty face in U.S. higher education institutions (Alberts, 2008; Collins, 2008; Mamiseishvili, 2010).

Even though international faculty members are very productive with their research and publication, there has been a lack of effort in the career development for international faculty in U.S. higher education institutions. Consequently, many international faculty members are not satisfied with their faculty careers when compared to U.S.-born faculty (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011). Some common factors of those dissatisfactions include, but not limited to salary gap, job security, job autonomy, and tenure and promotion opportunity (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Marvasti, 2005).

In addressing this research issue, the purpose of this study was to compare U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members' job satisfaction in 21 research universities based on the country of origin, marital status, faculty ranking, tenure status, and mentoring status. Additionally, the study sought to explore the relationships among mentoring, self-esteem, and job satisfaction of U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members.

Literature Review

Foreign-born faculty members are often viewed as underrepresented faculty members in U.S. higher education. Unlike U.S.-born faculty members, foreign-born faculty experience more difficulties in finding a faculty position because of employment visa issues (Varma, 2010). Asian faculty members may have experienced frustration or job dissatisfaction because of the model minority stereotype that is commonly portrayed among Asian American students (Museus, 2008) such as being successful academically, excelling in math, having good work ethics, and

remaining quiet in class. The model minority stereotype can potentially affect Asian American and foreign-born Asian faculty members in U.S. higher education institutions especially those who are not in science or engineering. This stereotype can add additional pressure to their teaching and scholarly performance, which may indirectly lead to stress and social isolation among faculty members in the workplace.

Foreign-born faculty members from Asia are highly productive in their academic career; many of them have even surpassed their U.S.-born colleagues in scholarly work (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007). Despite their productivity and success, many Asian faculty members feel less satisfied with their jobs compared to their U.S.-born colleagues (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2009). Some factors that might have affected foreign-born Asian faculty job satisfaction include tenure, salary gap, job autonomy, and promotion opportunity (Marvasti, 2005). Foreign-born faculty members grew up in different environments with different educational and cultural backgrounds. As a result, they may view job satisfaction very differently compared to their U.S.-born colleagues. Having a good understanding of faculty job satisfaction is important for performance and productivity (Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009). When faculty members are dissatisfied at work, they are less likely to commit to their institution which eventually leads to poor performance or high turnover.

In many organizational studies, self-esteem indicates a direct effect on job satisfaction (Ahmed, 2012; Alavi & Askaripur, 2003; DeConinck & Brock, 2011; Kuster, Orth, & Meier, 2013). Individuals with high self-esteem tend to have higher self-confidence levels and clearer self-concepts (Kundu & Rani, 2007). As a result, they are more likely to choose a career that aligns with their interests and competencies. Also, they are prone to take risks and challenges to satisfy their needs, which eventually helps to improve their job satisfaction (Korman, 1970). Kundu and Rani (2007) also found out that high self-esteem individuals tend to excel in their careers and earn promotions. Research scholars have often overlooked studies on faculty members' self-esteem on job satisfaction (Ahmed, 2012).

Mentoring has positive effects on job satisfaction (Trower, 2012). Cawyer and colleagues (2002) shared that mentoring programs are helpful for new faculty members in reducing their anxieties as they transition into their academic jobs. Mentors help new faculty members acclimate to their organizations and provide advice to faculty members in making decisions for their teaching, research, and service roles (Barker & Cohoon, 2007). In addition, mentoring could foster positive impacts on faculty socialization, which helped to improve their job satisfaction (Griffin, 2012). Also, mentoring plays a vital role in the growth and development of faculty members (Alberts, 2008; Bryant-Shanklin & Brumage, 2011; Collins, 2008; Conklin & Robbins-McNeish, 2006) and boosting faculty morale and job satisfaction (Lee & del Carmen Montiel, 2011). As Acker shared, "employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to stay and continue their position" (as cited in Lee & del Carmen Montiel, 2011, p. 482). Mentoring does play a role in U.S.-born job satisfaction; however, research that focuses on foreign-born faculty members on this subject matter is rare.

Research Design

The targeted population for this study was U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members who were employed full-time at public or private doctorate-granting institutions. A random-convenient selection was drawn from the population using Urbaniak and Plous's (1997) Research Randomizer. A total of 21 institutions representing all four regions of the U.S. were selected. A total of 481 participants (10%) volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were full-time U.S.-born or foreign-born faculty members representing four colleges (i.e., Business, Engineering, Education, and Communication) at those 21 institutions. The participant sample consisted of 291 males (60.5%) and 190 females (39.5 %); 352 (73.2%) U.S.-born and 127 (26.4%) foreign-born faculty. The online instrumentation consisted of four sections: 12-item demographic questions, Spector's (1985) 36-item *Job Satisfaction Scale*, Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item *Self-Esteem Scale*, and Berk, Berg, Mortimer, Walton-Moss, and Yeo's (2005) 12-item *Mentorship Effectiveness Scale*. Descriptive statistics, *t*-test, ANOVA, and multiple regression were used to analyze the data.

Findings

The results showed that there were not statistically significant differences between faculty members' job satisfaction by country of origin, marital status, faculty ranking, and tenure status; however, there was a statistical significant difference in the interaction of faculty members' country of origin and tenure status as well as a statistical significant difference on U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members' job satisfaction by mentoring status. Foreign-born faculty are more satisfied with tenure-track positions as compared to teaching positions. The correlation between U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members' self-esteem and job satisfaction was statistically significant despite the low association relationship between the self-esteem and job satisfaction variables. When mentoring and self-esteem variables were used as predicting variables for job satisfaction, the results showed that self-esteem and mentoring were strong predicting variables for job satisfaction.

Conclusion and Implications

From the practical application standpoint, institutional administrators may utilize the findings of the study with future faculty recruitment efforts and faculty development programs. This study showed that foreign-born faculty members are more satisfied with tenure-track positions as compared to teaching positions because of their research interest and job security. Institutional administrators can be more strategic as they plan and conduct their faculty hiring. The study also indicated that the majority of the faculty members that participated in the study were senior faculty members who were close to their retirement. With the assistance of senior faculty members, institutional administrators can develop more concrete plans such as having an institutionally sponsored mentoring program to promote mentoring between senior and junior faculty members. Previous literature showed that formal mentoring programs that are

intentionally designed and developed for junior faculty members are more likely to be successful (Bland, Taylor, Shollen, Weber-Main, & Mulcahy, 2009), especially when the purpose and goals of the mentoring relationship is to promote faculty advancement and socialization. The challenges that institutions may face with this type of mentoring model are: meeting the different needs of group members, managing group dynamics, providing skill training for group interaction, time commitments, and changing group membership (Bland et al., 2009). Furthermore, institutional administrators may also consider a blended mentoring option to support senior faculty members who are interested in mentoring but have difficulty scheduling face-to-face meetings on a consistent basis. Prior to launching any mentoring programs, institutions should organize structured mentoring training for mentors and protégés to clarify the goals and expectations of the mentoring program as well as promote faculty socialization.

To gain a better understanding of the effect of mentoring on underrepresented faculty members including faculty members of color, future research scholars may conduct a similar type of study that only focuses on underrepresented faculty members. Research scholars may also expand this study to faculty job satisfaction in community colleges or teaching institutions or conduct follow up studies that focus on the impacts of mentoring affecting faculty's job satisfaction using qualitative research methods.

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