

THE ROLE OF REVERSE MENTORING ON EMPLOYEE WORK ENGAGEMENT: DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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Abstract

Employee engagement is a headline issue and it's becoming even more complicated when businesses are trying to engage employees who belong to multiple generations and "Reverse Mentoring" can be suggested as a solution to deal with the changing dynamics and it is proposed to be a tool to develop and engage multigenerational workforce. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of reverse mentoring on employee work engagement as mentors in selected organizations in Sri Lanka. This study will examine the moderating effect of self-efficacy, perceived organizational support and the mediating effect of knowledge sharing between reverse mentoring and employee work engagement. As per the Employee-driven job resource model (JD-R), it is argued that when an organization facilitates reverse mentoring (relational level), employees also perceive it as a job resource and as a strong organizational support and feel obligated toward the organization. Currently employee engagement which is facilitated by knowledge sharing enables organizations to gain competitive advantage and to this end, knowledge sharing is fundamental domain in retaining competitive advantage, particularly in terms of employee engagement. This theoretical association between the individual-level, relational-level factors and work engagement of junior employees (as mentors) will reveal significant managerial implications and insights for future research. Further, the impact is amplified by offering organizations a strategic tool to bridge generational gaps and promote a collaborative culture along with enhanced work engagement.

Keywords: Employee Work Engagement, Knowledge Sharing, Perceived Organizational Support, Reverse Mentoring, Self-Efficacy

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1. Introduction

Employee engagement has become a headline issue throughout the business and in managing human resources. Employee Engagement is the state of emotional and intellectual involvement that motivates people to deliver their best outcome (Roberts & Hewitt, 2018). Also, it is defined “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to Iddagoda & Opatha (2017), even though employee engagement is widely discussed in management, it is rarely understood globally and domestically. Employee engagement is becoming even more complicated when modern-day companies try to engage employees who belong to multiple generations.

The Gallup Report (2016) states that employee work engagement is 34% and 16.5 % of employees were actively disengaged in the United States. The Global Workplace Report (2018) states that 85% of employees are not engaged and 18% are actively disengaged. Further, the category of employees who are not engaged are merely engaged but are not cognitively and emotionally connected to the work (Gallup Report, 2016). Generally, only 13% of employees are engaged globally. Southeast Asia is currently enjoying 22% of employee work engagement. In the context of Sri Lanka, 14% employees are engaged, 62% are not engaged, and 23% are actively disengaged (Opatha & Iddagoda, 2017).

Currently, most organizations occupy five generations traditionalists, baby boomers, generation X, generation Y and Generation Z. Compared to Boomers who have spent most of their careers in one organization, retaining and engaging employees who belong to fresh generations with a strong preference for multiple job movements is challenging (Eddy et al., 2010; Rupp et al., 2006). These challenges shoot to massive amounts during layoffs, pay cuts, and ambivalent economic conditions (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Although these generations have been the cynosure of considerable research interest during the past decade, there is a scarcity of sound human resource development (HRD) practices that can effectively respond to the changing demographic needs of the labour market. Therefore, HRD professionals should identify and implement novel practices to address those needs and challenges and one such practice drawing much attention is the concept of “reverse mentoring.

Reverse mentoring is a mentoring relationship where the new junior employees are paired up with more experienced managers or employees to help the experienced worker acquire new learning (Allen et al., 1999; Kram, 1996; Kram & Hall, 1996). Reverse mentoring can be suggested as a solution to deal with the changing dynamics, and it is proposed to be a tool to develop and engage a multigenerational workforce (Garg & Singh, 2020). The concept of reverse mentoring was to teach technology to the senior employees in most of these organizations, limiting the potential of reverse mentoring to help Boomers gain the latest technical expertise from their younger colleagues (Baily, 2009). Reverse mentoring is an innovative method that adds value to the mentees, who gain new knowledge and skills (Murphy, 2012); The key aspects of reverse mentoring that differentiate it from traditional mentoring relationships are: (1) structural role reversal wherein junior acts as mentor and senior acts as a; (2) two-way knowledge sharing; (3) emphasis on mentor’s leadership and competency development and (4) commitment toward mutual learning and support (Murphy, 2012). This means that the support functions are slightly different, with knowledge exchange and skill development replacing sponsorship and protection,

which are because of one's role in the organizational hierarchy.

According to the JD-R theory, job resources complement job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001b). Job resources include having a mentor and expressive emotional network resources (Anaza et al., 2016). The JD-R literature (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Van De Voorde et al., 2016) establishes job resources as an essential antecedent of work engagement and provides evidence that a motivational process is triggered by job resources, which leads to work engagement. It is argued that when an organization facilitates reverse mentoring (relational level) as a knowledge-sharing mechanism, employees also perceive it as a job resource and solid organizational support and feel indebted to the organization (Anaza et al., 2016). Therefore, the JD-R model explains psychological conditions or antecedents for work engagement. So far, it does not address the knowledge and knowledge sharing that boost employee work engagement through reverse mentoring. Therefore, the interest of this study is to emphasize the benefit of increased engagement through reverse mentoring as well. However, it should be noted that while reverse mentoring could be cross-generational, it is not always age-dependent (Harvey et al., 2009). It works when it is acknowledged that junior or new members who join the organization have the knowledge to share and are willing to do so with more senior managers.

Although older employees are known for their loyalty, dedication, and commitment to quality work (Albright & Cuff, 2005), their sense of engagement at work might suffer if they lack opportunities to acquire new knowledge and an upland ageing workforce can be organizational deadwood if they are not actively engaged (Callanun & Greenhaus, 2008). An invitation to participate in a reverse mentoring program may reduce job plateauing if senior employees perceive this opportunity as a scope of learning new knowledge that can make their work more challenging. Moreover, there seems to be a dearth of professional development initiatives for senior employees in the workplace.

Knowledge-sharing behaviors help to motivate and engage employees, and a culture of sharing knowledge matters a lot, where the sharing of information is considered as a remarkable accomplishment (Memarie, 2018). Employee engagement increases when organizations invest in the process of knowledge sharing actively and let their employees make informed decisions so that they can grow as supposed leaders. Reverse mentoring seems to be an efficient tool for sharing knowledge, creating engagement, developing leadership and, first and foremost, building intergenerational relations based on mutual acceptance (Murphy & Kram, 2014). In other words, employee engagement enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage (Song & Chermack, 2008) because employees are focused on improving their performance. To this end, knowledge sharing is fundamental and essential in retaining competitive advantage (Teng & Song, 2011), particularly regarding employee engagement.

Employees consider themselves motivated and engaged when on-the-job knowledge is just a click away. Likewise, knowledge sharing helps increase employee engagement by increasing employee satisfaction, visibility, and time saving (Memarie, 2018). Techniques like enterprise social networking can make junior generations feel more at home and engaged at work. Fresh generations may naturally settle to social platforms, but they want these systems to help them learn more efficiently and perform their jobs better. Similarly, the knowledge-sharing behaviors it encourages prove productive and valuable in their own dead-on (Trees, 2015). According to a Gallup

survey in 2018, only 13% of the company employees surveyed were engaged. The rest of the unengaged employee population tends to switch jobs to find places where their knowledge can be shared and heard (Memarie, 2018). Employees want recognition and appreciation for their efforts; when their contributions are recognized, they tend to share their knowledge more effectively and with greater enthusiasm. Research shows that in cases where knowledge is not actively shared among employees, their cognitive resources remain under-utilized within the organization (Memarie, 2018).

Also, the younger and older participants expressed various ways they developed self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is knowledge of performing a task and the experience, initiative, and confidence to complete the task (Bandura, 1982). Young adult mentors reported increasing self-efficacy by gaining leadership skills through mentoring their older adult partners. Older adults reported gaining confidence in their ability to use technology and engage socially in the digital world. An increase in self-efficacy has long been found to increase the social support of older adults (Holahan & Holahan, 1987).

Previous literature has extensively discussed and analyzed the antecedents and consequences of work engagement. However, identifying cost-effective measures that can sustain work engagement to boost work outcomes has received sparse attention in this context. Since reverse mentoring is said to be more significant in engaging employees who belong to multiple generations, as per the author's knowledge, fewer studies are done to examine the mentor's work engagement. This study intends to provide new insights concerning the association of reverse mentoring with work engagement. Therefore, this study aims to examine "Does reverse mentoring influence employee work engagement, considering the moderating effect of self-efficacy and the mediating role of knowledge sharing? Understanding how these dynamics interact could provide valuable insights into enhancing employee engagement through strategic mentorship practices, particularly in organizations seeking to improve knowledge flow and foster a supportive work environment.

Accordingly, research questions have been constructed to examine the role of reverse mentoring on employee work engagement in multinational organizations, the role of self-efficacy in the relationship between reverse mentoring and employee work engagement, the role of the perceived organization support for the relationship between reverse mentoring and knowledge sharing and the role of knowledge sharing for the relationship between reverse mentoring and employee work engagement.

2. Literature Review

This will present the existing knowledge explored and empirical findings associated with the role of reverse mentoring on individual work engagement. This describes the definitions and antecedents of work engagement and reverse mentoring. Then, the factors influence the role of reverse mentoring on employee engagement. Finally, the moderating effect of self-efficacy and perceived organizational support and the mediating role of knowledge sharing will be discussed.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is "a positive, fulfilling and work-related mindset which is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Again, work engagement is "a positive, work-related frame of mind which is characterized by high levels of energy

and dedication on work (Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), Vigor refers to the employees' mindset, which is characterized by energetic feelings, willingness to put higher efforts into the work and the feeling of continuing to work even though it seems difficult. Dedication explains employees' interest, activated by recognizing the work as meaningful, challenging, and inspiring. Absorption refers to an employee's obsession with a work role where an employee will not withdraw from the workplace though the time has expired.

When employees are facilitated with a challenging and resourceful work environment, the best performance will be produced, facilitating work engagement (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Engaged employees will develop warm, trusting relationships with their colleagues and grow as successful individuals (Diener et al., 2010). In the state of engagement, the employee displays energy towards the work which is dedicated and purely absorbed for the attached duties and responsibilities (Pathirage & Weerasinghe, 2020)

Work engagement is "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles" (Cattermole, 2019). In the state of work engagement, employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990). Further, employees will be engaged, satisfied and enthusiastic about their work (Campbell, 1990). Employee Engagement is the state of emotional and intellectual involvement that motivates people to deliver their best outcome (Roberts & Hewitt, 2018). Effective employee work engagement promotion has become a key issue in recent academic studies and practice (Bakker et al., 2011) (Anaza et al., 2016). With an emergent economy further tightened by its labour market (Schwab, 2017), it is beneficial and crucial to focus on creating an engaging environment while managing costs (Cattermole, 2019). Changes in job descriptions, globalization, increased demands for technical knowledge and changes in workplace cultures which will occur because of age and work experience, may support employee engagement (Saks, 2006). Older employees are valuable due to their work experience, professionalism, work ethics, lower turnover, and knowledge (Douglas & Roberts, 2020).

According to Kahn (1990), personal engagement is the expression of oneself through task-related behaviors that promote connections to work. "Feeling committed to an organization is different from feeling engaged in its actions" (Vecina et al., 2013, p. 293). Job and organizational engagement are two forms of organizational commitment (Saks, 2006). Job engagement involves one's work role and a task orientation (Saks, 2006; Vecina et al., 2013). Further job engagement is something that employees feel, and it captures how individuals devote themselves to the performance of their jobs (Saks, 2006). Job engagement consists of involvement with tasks, enthusiasm for tasks, and motivation to work (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Employees feel obliged to repay the organization by enhancing their role performances when they receive support and resources from their organization (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Therefore, employees can engage themselves in their day-to-day activities and feel a sense of belonging to the organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Employees experience work and job-related engagement when they believe their organization and supervisors support them (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

According to Ruck and Welch (2012), there are six requirements that an organization should accomplish to engage their employees clarifying the employee's

role in the organization, identifying the employee and the organization, ensuring the feeling of organizational support, providing information that helps employees to understand corporate goals and strategy, giving employees a voice and listening to them and providing performance feedback to engender the behaviors associated with work engagement (Anaza et al., 2016).

Reverse Mentoring

Reverse mentoring is also one of the employees– ' job resources (Garg et al., 2021), and the junior employees are paired with more experienced managers or employees to help the experienced worker acquire new knowledge and learning (Allen et al., 1999; Kram, 1996; Kram & Hall, 1996). It can be suggested as a solution to the changing dynamics, and it is proposed as a tool to develop and engage a multigenerational workforce (Garg & Singh, 2020). The concept of reverse mentoring aimed to demonstrate technology to the senior employees in organizations, which limits its potential to help them gain the latest technical expertise from their younger colleagues (Baily, 2009). However, in addition to obtaining new insights into technology, reverse mentoring helps to develop sensitization to workplace diversity issues, subject matter advances, work-life balance, and global perspective and contributes to increasing the levels of engagement at work (Chaudhuri et al., 2021). It is attractive to Millennials and GenZ (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2010), where it addresses (Stein, 2013) the strong desire for feedback to be noticed and seen, through interactions with senior leaders, as valuable and useful outcomes (Graen & Schiemann, 2013) as cited in (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2021)

Reverse mentoring offers a private learning space to absorb, reflect and experiment with ideas without pressure from external accountability or intrusion, fulfilling the love for learning commonly found in older leaders (Chaudhuri & Ghosh; Reverse Mentoring, 2021) younger workers are facilitated through intellectual stimulation, allowing emerging leaders to understand the complexities of organizations through the eyes of leaders and fulfilment through co-creation of significant and meaningful pieces of work with their mentee (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Transfer of knowledge is the starting point for reverse mentoring, and it allows younger workers to learn without an implicit assumption that they are following the pathways of older leaders (Browne, 2021)

For flatter organizations, reverse mentoring will be the preferable form of mentoring, facilitating an inter-generational relationship that allows both parties to grow and this increase adoption of reverse mentoring has been associated with the growth in knowledge-based business, speed of knowledge distribution across companies and borders and the increasing relevance of diversity, including generational diversity within the workplace (Anaza, Nowlin, & Wu, 2016)

Brown (2021) explained the reverse mentoring process in three layered processes where the relationship is the commonly understood and observable transfer of knowledge from young to old. There is of course a certain value to this relationship stage though it becomes quickly exhausted as the available knowledge is consumed in exchange. Reverse mentoring recurrently focuses on the benefits of the younger mentor with an older mentee. According to Murphy (2012) and Chen (2014) reverse mentoring and traditional mentoring provide career and psychosocial functions such as knowledge sharing, support, and feedback. Additional attributes also arise in reverse

mentoring such as affirmation and encouragement, new perspectives, skill development, and challenging ideas (Murphy, 2012)

Inter-generational learning is essential and timely, and the senior generations take a vast amount of tacit organizational knowledge away daily (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012). Formalizing a reverse mentoring initiative, which facilitates intergenerational knowledge transfer, will address this issue (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2011). Reverse mentoring has been effectively operationalized in the space of diversity and inclusion (Madison, 2019; Raza & Onyesoh, 2020; Süß-Stepancik & Permoser, 2017), leadership (Gabriel et al., 2020; Kulseza & Smith, 2013) and engagement (Biss & DuFrene, 2006; Boysen et al., 2016; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012).

Reverse mentoring increases employee engagement, learning and performance (Biss & DuFrene, 2006; Boysen et al., 2016), improving workplace culture and team development needed for business success (Alvarez et al., 2005; Clarke et al., 2019; Gadomska-Lila, 2020 (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2011)). Further, it interrupts the traditional educational borders and promotes collaborative learning experiences (Christie et al., 2005). This technique widely facilitates cross-cultural learning and is also used to enhance (Napier, 2006) (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2011).

As per the fundamental purpose of reverse mentoring, initially, it had a narrow technology focus, which broadened over the years with many organizations gaining its benefits in solving countless of organizational problems such as employee engagement (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Murphy, 2012), employee attrition (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Murphy, 2012). The higher learning organization leads to higher predicted work engagement (Albrecht et al., 2017)

Learning culture makes organizational efforts a learning experience for millennials, allowing them to learn and develop their capability by solving business problems. This condition makes millennials engage with their work in the organization (Gadomska-Lila, 2020). This ground-breaking approach encourages learning and facilitates cross-generational relationships (Li et al., 2019). According to Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) reverse mentoring allows for understanding the behaviors, attitudes and thinking patterns of the new generational employees that will improve the relationship between the management and the beginners (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Sammarra et al., 2017).

As per Harvey et al. (2009), the younger employees get the opportunity to interact with managerial-level employees, and it upturns their morale and professional reputation, information accessibility, and empowerment, and satisfies the self-realization needs of the mentor, which may have an impact on employee turnover. Further, it facilitates the transfer of knowledge from younger generational employees to older generational employees related to emerging technological development subjects, which matters in organizational development, employee development, and future market demands in multi-generational workplace backgrounds (Sammarra et al., 2017; Murphy, 2012).

The younger and older participants expressed that they revere mentoring and developed self-efficacy in numerous ways (Salehzadeh et al., 2016). Self-efficacy is the availability of the knowledge of how to perform a task, the experience, initiative, and confidence to complete a given task (Bandura, 1982). As a result, the juniors, as mentors, reported an increase in their self-efficacy by gaining leadership skills through mentoring their senior generation. The senior age reported a gain of confidence in their

ability to use technology and engage socially in the digital world (Holahan & Holahan, 1987).

Reverse-mentoring relationship provides a unique and positive opportunity for intergenerational knowledge to be exchanged (Chaudhuri et al., Engagement, inclusion, knowledge sharing, and talent development: Is reverse mentoring a panacea to all? Findings from literature review, 2021) Both mentor and the mentee will learn from one another, even when young adult mentors were in the primary leadership young adult mentors reported that mentoring older adults provides the experiential information (Murphy, 2012). Ultimately, the most significant outcome of reverse mentoring enables an engaged workforce across different levels (Basu & Verma, 2017).

Knowledge Sharing

As per Meyer & Martins (2012), knowledge refers to understanding, awareness, or understanding of someone or something as facts (descriptive knowledge), skills (procedural knowledge), or objects (acquaintance knowledge). Knowledge is in two types as explicit and tacit (Browne, 2021). Together, explicit and tacit knowledge exists in each organization which is unique to the organization (Albrecht, Breidahl, & Marty, 2017)

Tacit knowledge is the knowing-how is the knowledge embedded in the human mind through experience and professions. Explicit knowledge is knowing that knowledge is codified and digitized in books, documents, reports, memos, etc. Knowledge facilitates action (Browne, 2021). Knowledge retention, commonly used as knowledge management, transfers new information from short-term to long-term memory. 70 % of knowledge comes from on-the-job training, 20% comes through interacting with peers and 10% comes from formal education and training (Li et al., 2019). Different appearances of behaviours such as learning, sharing and transferring the acquired knowledge to human beings are the sources of knowledge (Venzin et al., 1998) as cited in (Martins & Meyer, 2012). Knowledge is developed through learning, knowing and on a knowledge construction level through creating, sharing, transferring, and applying knowledge. Employees who operate at individual, group and organizational level are the carriers of knowledge in organizations (Martins & Martins, 2011). Without knowledge retention, organizations cannot learn from past experiences. Accessibility of appropriate knowledge to the right people will enable them to do their jobs effectively (Du Plessis, 2003).

Knowledge sharing of available knowledge through a knowledge-sharing platform is the main intellectual capital in this dynamic business environment (Memarie, 2018). The present knowledge-based economy will thrive on skilled labour, intellectual capital, and circumstances, and knowledge sharing is considered as the key to motivating and engaging employees (Li et al., 2019). Studies showed that when employees do not actively share knowledge, their cognitive resources remain under-utilized within the team (Carter et al., 2016). When knowledge is not shared, individual performance and organizational performance are bound to suffer, and knowledge-sharing tools allow employees to share their knowledge with the whole team and, as a result, achieve maximum success in this way (Shuck et al., 2010).

One of the main benefits of implementing knowledge-sharing practices within the organization is the direct impact on employee engagement (Memarie, 2018).

Knowledge management enables organizations to manage and organize knowledge as an asset efficiently. A strong knowledge-sharing tool will enable employees to access a large knowledge base. This has a direct effect on employee engagement (Browne, 2021).

The unengaged employee population tends to change jobs and find new places where their knowledge can be shared and heard (Memarie, 2018). Employees demand recognition and appreciation for their efforts. When the contribution is recognized, they tend to share their knowledge more effectively with a greater amount of enthusiasm. Employees are motivated and engaged when on-the-job knowledge is easily reachable (Browne, 2021). Knowledge sharing boosts employee engagement through increasing employee satisfaction, visibility and time saving (Memarie, 2018).

Knowledge combines experience, values, information, and expert insights that help evaluate and incorporate new experiences and information (Gammelgaard & Ritter, 2005). Therefore, managing knowledge is critical to management effectiveness (Argote et al., 2003; Ipe, 2003; Newell et al., 2009) in several cross-functional management areas (Shams et al., 2019). The transfer and sharing of knowledge are critical levers in a company's success (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004; Sokhanvar et al., 2014).

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

The perceived organizational support defines the employee's perception of organisational commitment concerning welfare (Suazo & Turnley, 2010). Further, it is confidence about the degree to which the organization cares about the employee's well-being, values, and-contribution. Perceived organizational support is based on the organization support theory, which is inspired by employees' intention to allocate human-like characteristics to an organization (Makanjee et al., 2006).

Krishnan and Mary (2012) state that organizational support is as sensitive as employees' opinion regarding the extent to which their involvement is valued and recognized by their organizations. Moreover, organizational support indicates how employees perceive that their organizations respect their work and are concerned for their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995; Eisenberger et al., 1986). As major antecedents of POS fairness, supervisory support, favourable job conditions and rewards were identified (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002)

A great POS can be built through organizational appreciation and recognition for the employee's contribution (Shore & Shore, 1995; Eisenberger et al., 1997; Eisenberger et al., 1999). The existing studies revealed that rewards, supervisor's support, training, justice, socio-emotional needs, HR practices, recognition and appreciation-and pay level satisfaction as the key antecedents of POS. further felt obligation, job performance, organizational commitment, positive mood and attitude, organizational trust, job satisfaction, reduction of withdrawal behaviour, organizational citizenship behaviour and stress reduction as the major significances of POS (Silva & Kailasapathy, 2017)

According to the organizational support theory (OST), employees develop beliefs on how much the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being to meet their socio-emotional needs and to establish an idea of the organization's willingness to reward increased effort (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Orpen, 1994). In conclusion, it can be presumed that employees believe organizations behave

human-like when they display positive or negative orientations towards them. Within this mindset, employees tend to treat the actions of organizational agents like managers as the actions of the organization itself, thus attributing a live personality to the corporation (Silva & Kailasapathy, 2017).

Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to organize and execute the actions required to produce a given attainment. Accordingly, self-efficacy beliefs are the outcome of a process of weighing, integrating, and evaluating information about one's capabilities, and which, in turn, regulates the choices people make and the amount of effort they apply to a given task (Gist, 1987, p. 472). In this, "individuals who perceive highly efficacious activate sufficient effort that, if well executed, produced successful outcomes, whereas those who perceive low self-efficacy are likely to cease their efforts prematurely and fail on the task" (Stajkovic & Luthens, 1998). Furthermore, self-efficacy is a dynamic concept and efficacy judgments vary over time based on new information and experience (Mitchell, 1992). Three dimensions of self-efficacy are identified as magnitude, strengths and generality (Gist, 1997). Magnitude refers to the level of task difficulty a one person believes he or she can attain; strength refers to the degree of conviction that a given level of task performance is attainable; and generality refers to the extent to which self-efficacy applies across different situations (Applebanum & Hare, 1992).

Further, the antecedent of self-efficacy belief is explored from an organizational management perspective. Wood and Bandura (1989) identified four primary sources of self-efficacy: enactive mastery experience, victorious learning or modelling, verbal or social persuasion, and psychological arousal. Where enactive mastery experience refers to the strengthening of self-efficacy beliefs due to task accomplishment, vicarious experience or modelling is primarily associated with environmental Influence (Gist, 1987). Social persuasion aims to convey to the person faced with the task the necessity to utilize their ability to succeed while also "not creating unrealistically high expectations which may well affect the person negatively if they fail at the task" (Appelbaum & Hare, 1996)

During previous years, the organizations' ability to address engagement issues has decreased by 14% due to the complex work environment and the engagement efforts are not delivering results. This is where the concept of Employee Experience comes into the discussion. Reverse mentoring has been identified as an employee experience that refers to putting employees at the centre instead of forcing them to change themselves to fit in with the organization's outdated practices. (Dilshan, 2019).

Businesses understand that top-down learning is not always suitable when social media and use of technology are involved. Therefore, "reverse mentoring" programs are emerging. According to Delaney (2012), the mission of a higher level of work engagement can be achieved through a formalized mentorship program in which junior employees are paired with more senior colleagues for a symbiotic mutual benefit. Reverse mentoring is an innovative, employee-driven job resource that can lead to positive organizational outcomes. (Garg, Murphy, & Singh, 2021). Reverse Mentoring is a bottom-up approach to mentoring, an innovative tool to improve employee engagement in the organization (Murphy, 2012).

The junior person serves as a mentor and the senior person as a mentee, which is particularly helpful in engaging younger workers who express a desire for early recognition (Glass, 2017) as well as more exposure to senior colleagues and career support (Chaudhuri and Ghosh & Murphy, 2012). Previous studies have theorized that reverse mentoring is associated with work engagement (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2011). Reverse mentoring refers to an approach wherein a younger, junior employee mentors an older or hierarchically senior executive to share technological expertise, subject matter advances and/or provide a different perspective (Murphy, 2012).

Some of the noted outcomes of reverse mentoring is along the lines of developing leaders and leadership competency (Gabriel et al., 2020; Kulseza & Smith, 2013), increasing employee engagement, learning and performance (Biss & DuFrene, 2006; Boysen et al., 2016), improving workplace culture and team development needed for business success (Alvarez et al., 2005; Clarke et al., 2019; Gadowska-Lila, 2020) leads to the following hypotheses.

H1-Reverse mentoring role has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Reverse mentoring works best when younger, newer and more junior employees in the organization have expertise in one domain (e.g. technological skills, social media skills, subject matter advances, diversity and inclusion issues, openness to work-life balance, etc.) and they are willingly open to sharing that knowledge with their more experienced and seasoned senior colleagues. This also facilitates the leadership development of junior generations as they get heightened visibility and access to organizational knowledge working with senior colleagues (Murphy, 2012).

Over the years, the concept and practice of reverse mentoring have been explored across various disciplinary fields, sharing a similar purpose as the first published study – to transfer technology-related knowledge among intergenerational groups. As Most of the studies revealed that the primary

objective of reverse mentoring studies was to transfer knowledge and to bridge the technology divide between intergenerational groups (Alvarez et al., 2005; Augustinien_e and (Ciu_ciu_kien_e, 2013; Christie et al., 2005; Flinchbaugh et al., 2018). Existing studies also revealed that reverse mentoring breaks traditional educational borders and promotes collaborative learning experiences (Christie et al., 2005). This technique enhances cross-cultural learning (Napier, 2006) and leads to the following hypothesis.

H2 - Reverse mentoring role has a positive impact on knowledge sharing.

Employee engagement has received much scholarly attention as it helps organizations retain intellectual capital (Robinson et al., 2004), achieve higher productivity and increase profits (Wellins et al., 2005). In other words, employee engagement enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage (Song & Chermack, 2008) because employees are focused on improving their performance. To this end, knowledge sharing is fundamental and important in retaining competitive advantage (Teng & Song, 2011), particularly regarding employee engagement. It is worth noting that shared knowledge constitutes potential assets that could improve organizational performance. Knowledge, defined as expertise, habit, skills, experience and understanding derived from training or learning processes, is a crucial source of competitive advantage for organizations in the 21st century (Maldonado-Guzmán et al.- Covarrubias, 2016; Shabrina & Silvianita, 2015) and leads to the following hypothesis.

H3- Knowledge sharing has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Knowledge-sharing behaviours help to motivate and engage employees. A culture of sharing knowledge matters a lot, and information sharing is considered a remarkable accomplishment (Memarie, 2018). Employee engagement increases when organizations invest in the process of knowledge sharing actively and let their employees make informed decisions so that they can grow as supposed leaders. Reverse mentoring seems to be an efficient tool for sharing knowledge, creating engagement, developing leadership and, first and foremost, building intergenerational relations based on mutual acceptance (Murphy & Kram, 2014). In other words, employee engagement enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage (Song & Chermack, 2008) because employees are focused on improving their performance. To this end, knowledge sharing is fundamental and important in retaining competitive advantage (Teng & Song, 2011), particularly regarding employee engagement.

Reverse mentoring is an innovative method that adds value to the mentees, who gain new knowledge and skills (Murphy, 2012). The critical aspects of reverse mentoring that differentiate it from traditional mentoring relationships are: (1) structural role reversal wherein junior acts as mentor and senior acts as a; (2) two-way knowledge sharing; (3) emphasis on mentor's leadership and competency development and (4) commitment toward mutual learning and support (Murphy, 2012). The clear aim of this reverse relationship is to share and transfer technological expertise, subject matter advances, knowledge, and understanding of forthcoming trends and global perspectives between the mentor (junior) and the mentee (senior) (Chaudhuri & Ghosh,

2012). The participants in the organizational hierarchy have an uneven status, with the mentor being junior and the mentee being senior, and knowledge sharing is transferred both ways from mentor to mentee and vice versa (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012).

Knowledge sharing is considered the key to motivating and engaging employees. When employees do not actively share knowledge, their cognitive resources remain under-utilized within the organization (Memarie, 2018). Employees consider themselves motivated and engaged when on-the-job knowledge is just a click away. Likewise, knowledge sharing helps increase employee engagement through increasing employee satisfaction, visibility, and time-saving (Memarie, 2018), which leads to the following hypothesis.

H4 – Knowledge sharing moderates the relationship between Reverse Mentoring and Employee Engagement

The younger and older participants expressed various ways in which they developed self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is knowledge of performing a task and the experience, initiative, and confidence to complete the task (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is knowing how to perform a task and the experience, initiative, and confidence to complete the task (Bandura, 1982). Young mentors reported increasing their self-efficacy by gaining leadership skills through mentoring their older adult partners. Older adults reported gaining confidence in their ability to use technology and engage in the digital world. (Holahan & Holahan, 1987). They also found that positive affect and self-efficacy can serve as personal resources in this context.

On the value of reverse mentoring, the increase of self-efficacy was found in both young adult mentors and older adult participants, the breaking down of generational stereotypes, and the connectivity found through intergenerational bonds. The reverse mentoring approach used in this study showed similar impact in creating strong intergenerational connections and increased self-efficacy (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012).

Employee engagement also entails a behavioural component (in addition to its cognitive and emotional states) that can be treated as more proximal to the transactional exchange and which is likely to individual behaviours in the efficacy of the contractual obligations. According to Lawler (2001), perception of self-efficacy is said to produce positive emotions while their absence produces negative emotions, both having ultimate influences on performance outcomes (Silva & Kailasapathy, 2017)

JD-R theory suggests that job and personal resources are positively related to work engagement through work motivation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In the above, personal resources refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact their environment successfully (Hobfoll et al., 2003). Similarly, several other authors (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Llorens et al., 2007; Rothmann & Storm, 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) investigating the relationships between personal resources and work engagement have found that engaged employees were highly efficacious (Silva & Kailasapathy, 2017). Moreover, the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) itself assumes that high levels of self-efficacy are related to motivation, which

is indicated by levels of engagement (Llorens et al., 2007). Therefore, self-efficacy can moderate the positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employee work engagement, leading to the following hypothesis.

H5 – Self-efficacy will moderate the relationship between reverse mentoring and employee engagement.

A positive relationship exists between perceived organizational support and knowledge-sharing behaviour (Delio & Manuel, 2013). According to the social exchange theory and the results of numerous studies, the effort that an individual is willing to exert, contributing efficacious knowledge should have a direct relationship with the amount of organizational support that an employee perceives (King & Marks, 2008). Knowledge-sharing among a work group is an outcome that is mainly discretionary and needs to be encouraged, and perceived organizational support will influence knowledge-sharing behaviours (Bartol et al., 2009). On the other hand, an environment of knowledge-sharing and learning systems indicates a learning organization (Griego et al., 2000).

H6 – Perceived Organizational Support will moderate the relationship between reverse mentoring and knowledge sharing.

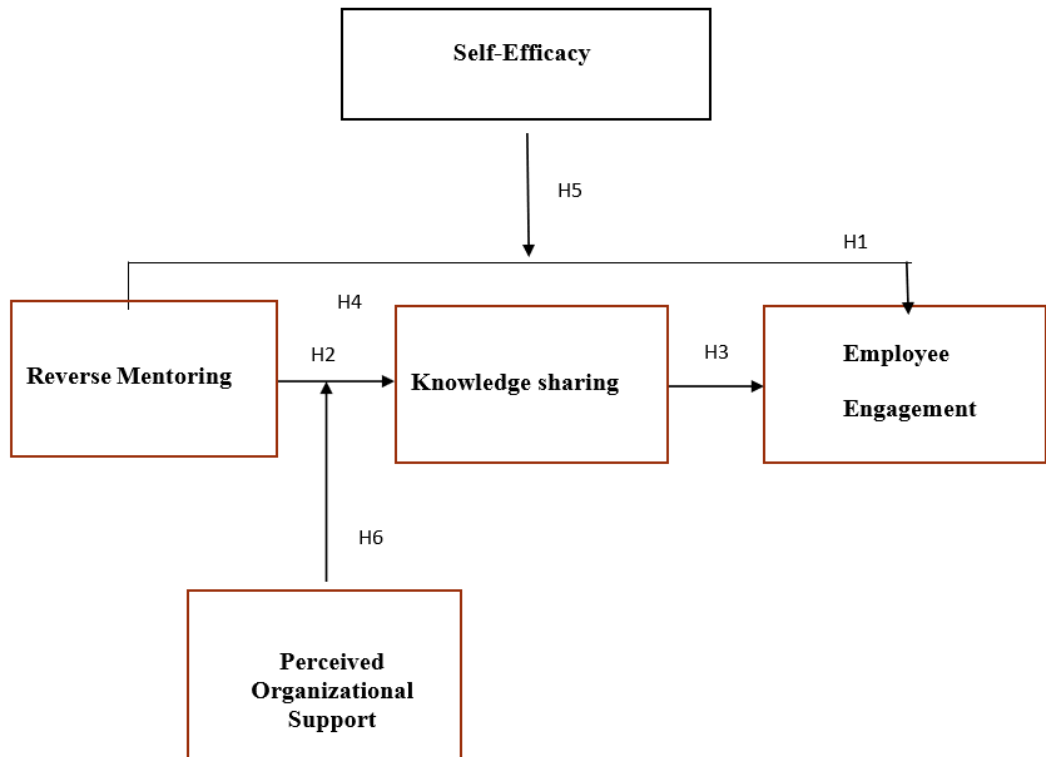
3. Methodology

In this conceptual paper, the methodology involves a comprehensive review of existing literature on reverse mentoring, employee work engagement, self-efficacy, and knowledge sharing. The study will develop a conceptual framework to explore the interrelationships among these variables. A qualitative approach will be employed to gather insights from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, industry reports, and case studies. The framework will be designed to propose how reverse mentoring can enhance employee engagement, with self-efficacy acting as a moderator and knowledge sharing as a mediator. The paper will synthesize existing theories and models to provide a theoretical foundation for future empirical research.

Conceptual Framework

Reverse mentoring is considered the independent variable, and employee engagement is considered a dependent variable, where this relationship will be mediated by knowledge sharing and moderated by self-efficacy and perceived organizational support.

Figure 01: Conceptual framework



Source: Authors compilation, 2024

Theoretical Implications

This paper attempts to extend the limited existing knowledge about the role of reverse mentoring on employee work engagement by exploring the seldom explored arena of knowledge sharing along with the perceived organizational support and the self-efficacy that may boost employee engagement.

At the core of the JD–R theory breaks the evidence that every profession has job demands and resources associated with job engagement, which consequently affects organizational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001b). According to the JD–R theory, job resources complement job demands. These resources are physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: be functional in achieving work goals; reduce job demand at the associated physiological and psychological cost; [or] stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Job resources include having a mentor and expressive emotional network resources (Anaza et al., 2016). The JD-R literature (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Van De Voorde et al., 2016) establishes job resources as an essential antecedent of work engagement and provides evidence that a motivational process is triggered by job resources, which leads to work engagement. Employee-driven job resources may be located at the task level, job/role level or interpersonal or relational level to have motivating potential (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). It is argued that when an

organization facilitates reverse mentoring (relational level), employees also perceive it as a job resource and strong organizational support and feel indebted to the organization (Anaza et al., 2016).

Job demands consist of those factors (such as work overload and interpersonal conflict) that lead to exhaustion, causing some psychological issues over time and, eventually, low work engagement. In contrast, job resources comprise various factors (such as social support, feedback, and autonomy) that stimulate personal growth and development and offset the adverse repercussions of higher job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). Therefore, any resource the organization offers that assists employees in goal performance, learning and development and/or coping with job demands will be deemed a job resource (Anaza et al., 2016). Therefore, the JD-R model explains psychological conditions or antecedents for work engagement. So far, it does not address the knowledge and the knowledge sharing that boost employee work engagement through reverse mentoring.

Managerial Implications

This study provides valuable implications for organizational managers to strengthen employees' engagement, where they feel more interested in performing a specific job when their benefits are attached to the organization and individual interest (McKersie et al., 2019). Second, the positive association between reverse mentoring and work engagement found in the current study implies managers-focus on reverse mentoring practices which increase mentor employees' work engagement (Bakker et al., 2016). Third, the positive association between work engagement and knowledge sharing implies that organizational managers may highlight those human resource development practices that enhance mentor employees' engagement in their jobs if they want their employees to be engaged with their tasks and duties. Fourth, the organization may pay attention to maintaining a work environment or organizational support that characterizes those features that value the key needs of employees, and knowledge-sharing opportunities for boosting employees' engagement. The findings can inform human resource development strategies to increase junior employees' work engagement and successive work outcomes. Subsequently, the management team could use the vital result of the study for better managerial decisions and practices in future as well. This will benefit the implementation of HRD practices, enabling organizations to engage multigenerational employees.

According to this study and supporting the JD - R model, resource interventions at the interpersonal level (reverse mentoring) may provide significant benefits. From a social exchange perspective, reverse mentoring programs can motivate employees to reciprocate in kind with higher levels of work engagement and, therefore, improved organizational outcomes. Managers in industries in which employ younger employees may benefit from similar studies confined only to their respective industries.

By fostering opportunities for reverse mentoring relationships, organizations stimulate learning and connections across hierarchical levels for knowledge sharing and development. A multigenerational workforce will have different needs, and HRD professionals need to attend to those differences to maximize outcomes of developmental initiatives such as reverse mentoring for all segments of the

workforce. This study has significant implications for the design and development of reverse mentoring programs that present an opportunity to decrease the gaps in values and perspectives of a multigenerational workforce.

Future studies need to examine to understand the extent to which different generations are subject to age norms and how their prejudices affect their participation in reverse mentoring relationships. HRD professionals need to address these limitations by building awareness through informative seminars on how age norms can contribute toward developing predispositions about the suitability of a particular age to specific organizational roles.

Moreover, seminars can offer avenues for organizational leaders to share through storytelling how they have acquired new learning from their younger counterparts as mentors. Such stories can inspire both senior and junior employees to overcome inclinations of associating certain “age” with any mentoring role and henceforth be more open to intergenerational learning in reverse mentoring (Baily, 2009).

Reflections on further research

Several organizations have started practicing reverse mentoring to deal with human resource challenges. However, most of what has been written about reverse mentoring can be found in practitioners’ periodicals, lacking both theoretical foundation and empirical evidence. As a result, efforts are required to generalize the benefits of reverse mentoring to the larger population. By highlighting this research-practice gap, this study reports the expanding role of reverse mentoring as is taking place in practice and instigates the readers to revisit the concept by looking beyond its technological aspect and adopting a broader lens toward it. Also, it highlights the need for empirical research on reverse mentoring to support these outcomes or benefits, thereby establishing a solid knowledge base that can boost practitioners' confidence. Therefore, the scope of reverse mentoring research can be expanded in the future.

Cross-cultural studies and in-depth case studies to observe how reverse mentoring is implemented and linked to organizational outcomes may also help improve the understanding of reverse mentoring practice. Similarly, comparative studies between different sectors and different organizations could throw an exciting perspective on this novel practice. Further research can illustrate the processes affecting reverse mentoring in organizations by exploring individual factors, contextual aspects, and their interactions. Dyadic interactions can be further explored with mentors from underrepresented populations and straight mentees, minority mentors with majority mentees, and disabled mentors with non-disabled mentees.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the topic of informal reverse mentoring is mostly missing from the extant literature. Future research could investigate this informal reverse mentoring phenomenon, which is likely extremely widespread but often goes unnoticed. Along similar lines, more research is warranted where reverse mentoring could be investigated from a relational mentoring perspective, as the sustenance of the relationship will depend on the quality of the exchanges happening in the mentoring relationship. Reverse mentoring episodes are also a topic that has remained untouched and can be further explored as new research on mentoring unfolds. There is a need for more inductive methodologies to probe

deeper into this intervention as the research on reverse mentoring is still in its infancy. More case studies and in-depth observation on participants' motivation to learn, personality traits and behavior change can throw further light on this topic. Finally, longitudinal studies will help measure the long-term impact of having a reverse mentor on mentees' change in behavior and skills.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the antecedents of employee work engagement by better theorizing the reverse mentoring as an individual level factor affecting employee work engagement (employee work engagement as mentors). Accordingly, the research findings implied that when employees who belong to fresh generations receive an opportunity to share their knowledge through reverse mentoring practices, they feel valued and feel that they are engaged in their tasks and duties. Furthermore, it was found that reverse mentoring is a novel practice that truly enables knowledge sharing between generations which can boost employee engagement in the current context. Knowledge is one of the main competitive advantages in current establishments and reverse mentoring purely presents a platform to exchange knowledge between generations. Reverse mentoring enables self-efficacy which leads to enhanced employee engagement and reverse mentoring will be well supported by the perceived organizational support. Consequently, this research demonstrated significant theoretical implications such as explaining knowledge and knowledge sharing as job resources on employee work engagement. Finally, this research opens directions for future research such as leadership development on mentors which will be a significant outcome of reverse mentoring practices.

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