

Newcomers' relationship-building behavior, mentor information sharing and newcomer adjustment: The moderating effects of perceived mentor and newcomer deep similarity

Zheng, Y., Zheng, X., Wu, C. H., Yao, X., & Wang, Y.



UNIVERSITY OF SURREY



**SURREY
BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Extensive evidence from the newcomer socialization literature shows that newcomers' proactivity in socialization brings an array of positive work and career outcomes (Ellis et al., 2017; Saks et al., 2007).

In the meantime, a growing body of research has investigated how organizational "insiders," such as mentors, can provide informational and psychological support to help new employees to adjust to a new working environment (Allen et al., 1999; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). In both cases, there has not been an equivalent focus on both parties that are involved in socialization processes. This lack of evidence prevents us from understanding what newcomers' behaviors motivate mentors to offer support, or whether mentors' support is perceived as helpful by newcomers.

To understand the connection between newcomers' proactivity and mentors' mentoring behavior for newcomer adjustment, we specifically focus on newcomers' relationship building behaviors and mentors' information sharing behaviors. We draw on the similarity-attraction perspective (Byrne, 1971) and argue that newcomers' relationship building behaviors are likely to elicit information sharing behaviors from mentors when they perceive a deep similarity with newcomers; i.e., they have a perceived similarity based on their attitudes, beliefs, and values (Harrison et al., 2002).

We propose that mentors are more likely to positively interpret newcomers' relationship building behaviors share more useful information when they see that the newcomers share a deep similarity with them. We also expect that mentors' self-reported information sharing behavior will have a stronger association with newcomers' perceived information sharing by their mentors when the newcomers perceive a deep similarity with them. Finally, we include role clarity and job performance as cognitive and behavioral indicators of newcomer adjustment and expect that newcomers' perceived information sharing will be proximal to contributing to role clarity and job performance.

We collected our data from a Chinese technology company. A time-lagged study with a total of 99 newcomers and their mentors was conducted within three months of newcomers entering the company. The results show that newcomers' relationship building is linked with increased information sharing behavior from mentors when they perceive a higher level of deep similarity with newcomers.

In turn, when newcomers also perceive a higher level of deep similarity with their mentors, they are more likely to receive the information shared by mentors, which contributes to their role clarity and job performance. This study offers novel understandings to both newcomer socialization and mentoring literature by showing that the effectiveness of newcomer proactivity is largely dependent on how mentors see the indicators of relationship quality with newcomers.

By examining how the perceptions of both mentors and newcomers can shape the mentoring relationship functions (Humberd & Rouse, 2016), this study offers significant contributions to the literature as it describes the dynamic shift of roles between mentors and newcomers as the senders and receivers of information. Organizations should match mentors with similar mentees based on their values, beliefs, and attitudes, if such information is available, to maximize the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

Organizations should also encourage mentors and newcomers to make explicit about expected behaviors, roles and outcomes of the relationships (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000), in order to lower chances of miscommunication caused by divergence between the two parties. Training programs can help both mentors and newcomers to overcome the negative presumptions of dissimilar newcomers, in order to facilitate better adjustment processes.



UNIVERSITY OF SURREY



UNIVERSITY OF SURREY