Sisterly Support: The Links Between Mentoring Relationship Quality and Perceived Program Effectiveness

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BACKGROUND

- Enduring mentoring relationships have been found to be associated with a range of benefits to youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).
- Past and present research discusses how the quality of a mentoring relationship can promote or attenuate the benefits associated with mentoring relationships (Dubois & Neville, 1997).
- Further research on formal mentoring elucidates that perceived program effectiveness likely plays a role in the program's participant retention, recruitment, and the program's continuation (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).
- However, little longitudinal research has been done comparing mentee perceived relationship quality with perceived program effectiveness.
- Data comes from the longitudinal study of the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP), an after-school intervention program designed to prevent delinquency in adolescent girls. YWLP implemented a weekly group-based curriculum paired with one-on-one mentoring relationships to improve social, academic, and emotional outcomes (Lawrence, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).
- While the program continually reaches desired outcomes, it is not yet clear how the one-on-one relationship and group program setting interact to promote these outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. Is mentee relationship satisfaction concurrently associated with mentee perception of program effectiveness?
RQ2. Does relationship satisfaction reliably predict mentee perceived program effectiveness five years later?
RQ3. Does relationship satisfaction reliably predict mentee perceived program effectiveness five years later when controlling for T1 perceived effectiveness?

METHOD

Participants:
- N=94 YWLP participants representing three cohorts of girls across three program years.
- Gender: 100% Female Participation.

Measures:

**SCALES**

YWLP Self-report of Change: a=.944

Being a part of YWLP has helped me improve the way I:
1. Deal with sticky situations
2. Talk with my parents
3. Listen to people with different views than mine
4. Talk with my teachers
5. Make decisions about my behavior in school

Relationship Satisfaction: a=.921

Administered at T1 only
1. When something is bugging me, my big sister listens to me while I get it off my chest.
2. My big sister has lots of good ideas about how to solve a problem.
3. My big sister helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me.
4. Sometimes my big sister promises that we will do something and then we don't do it.
5. My big sister makes fun of me in ways that I don't like.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

- Path analysis in Stata was used to compare the relationships between the relationship satisfaction scale and two time points of perceived program effectiveness while controlling for the effects of age, ethnicity, and free/reduced lunch status.
- Maximum likelihood (MLMV) estimation methods were used to account for missing data.

**DISCUSSION**

- This study offers novel information on the degree to which relationship satisfaction is associated with perceived program effectiveness in formal mentoring programs.
- A statistically significant relationship was identified between T1 relationship satisfaction and T1 perceived program effectiveness (p<.05). This comparison validates the relationship question in RQ1. However, relationship satisfaction does not reliably predict T2 program perception (RQ2).
- Understandably, relationship satisfaction did not significantly predict T2 perceived program effectiveness when T1 perceived program effectiveness was controlled for (RQ3).
- Interestingly, T1 perceived program effectiveness reliably predicted T2 program effectiveness. Which leads to developing questions on why relationship satisfaction does not predict T2 perceived program effectiveness along with T1 perceived program effectiveness.
- Lingering questions about changes in perceived program effectiveness, over five years, may indicate a necessity for objective non-self-report perceived measures of change.
- This study was limited by missing data which was accounted for using maximum likelihood estimation methods.

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**REFERENCES** provided upon request.