

Original scientific paper

MENTORING OF EMPLOYEES AIMED AT INCREASED ENTERPRISE EFFICIENCY

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Abstract

The key to the success of an enterprise lies in the constant development of all its members. Success and long-term survival in the market are due to investing in human potential, more precisely in producing quality and trained staff who will give the best results from their work.

The mentoring process requires a commitment of time and a plan. It's a process of development. This paper identifies the influential factors and outcomes of mentoring in the human resource development context by reviewing different mentoring research and studies. Mentoring is an important tool to bridge the generation gap, promote diversity in the workplace and transform the enterprise into a learning organization. In the research, we surveyed 200 mentored employees from four Balkan countries - Macedonia, Serbia, Greece and Albania for their views and opinions about the mentoring of employees aimed at increased enterprise efficiency. Respondents (n=200) were selected according to the availability of the researchers. The results show that there was a positive relationship and strong influence between mentoring employees aimed at increased enterprise efficiency. Opinions about the mentoring relationships from mentored employees shows that employees who have a mentor are inclined to demonstrate above-average commitment to their enterprise. The findings of this paper lay a basis for future studies, and it is useful to expand the current research by conducting future studies.

Key words: mentoring, employees, enterprise.

JEL classification: M1, M53

INTRODUCTION

Ethical principles are the core of a successful partnership during the mentoring process. Mentoring is, in its most basic form, a developmental relationship grounded in and molded by philosophical, historical, and sociological factors. The overarching dimension of mentoring, which is commonly accepted by researchers and practitioners across definitions and discussions, is that mentoring is a developmental relationship.

Human potentials and the management of human potentials in modern enterprises have the importance of a key factor for success operation. The modern enterprise emphasizes people and managing their potential. Especially highlights the confidence in the ability of the employees, the strength of the company is in the ability of all employees. (Ristić, 2006).

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The basis for a good mentoring relationship is when the mentor and the mentee recognize the need for further personal professional development, have identical understandings of the idea they need to realize and have mutual respect.

The dynamic relationship between the mentor and the mentee enables a rich dialogue related to experience, insight into the situation, reflection and evaluation. In this relationship, the mentee has the opportunity to ask questions, share opinions and observe a more experienced professional within a safe and protected environment. Through cooperation and reflection in the mentoring process, the mentee gains greater confidence in terms of expertise and self-confidence in his abilities. Most successful mentorships grow into friendships that continue long after the need for mentorship has ended. Mentoring is a significant aspect of personal learning and is an effective approach for forwarding career development.

Hamlin explains that mentoring has been recognized as a powerful human resource, development intervention aimed at providing inexperienced employees with career advancement opportunities and also serves as a form of on-the-job training (Hamlin, 2011).

The way a company manages human resources has an impact on the competitiveness of the enterprise and its ability to achieve its mission. Human resource (HR) process research refers to the way HR practices are communicated in organizations, including the way these HR practices are understood (i.e. perceived HR strength) and attributed (i.e. HR attributions) by employees (Kitt and Sanders, 2022).

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING EMPLOYEES

In modern living conditions, strong individuals are not enough just to have a job, they want to do great deeds. He stands behind the great works dedication, multi-year engagement and work on solving problems for achieving the goals for the common good.

The goal of the mentoring relationship is the creation of an independent and efficient practitioner; therefore it is of great importance to take responsibility for one's own practice. Professional mentoring programs are an effective strategy for rewarding employees with high potential, through personal attention and guidance, which leads to nurturing the company's management chain. By connecting high-potential employees with leaders, senior managers, and each other, high-potential employees learn and are ready to take on leadership positions. This results in an increase in their engagement and a shorter time for increasing productivity, by harmonizing internal processes and reducing costs to a minimum. The introduction of incentive schemes is an important motivator of employee productivity in the workplace. (Zyl and Magau, 2024)

The mentor gives "his" candidate psychological support as well as support for advancement in the workplace, and on the other hand, the degree of self-esteem and emotional connection with the company in which he works increases for the mentor.

In professional literature, there are several types of definitions for mentoring, such as activity within organizations, but they all contain the common essence and the same goal. Authors Megginson and Clutterbuck define this activity as "helping from one person to another represented and with a significant transfer of knowledge, thoughts or work tasks" (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2004) analyzing the definition in more depth, several significant points can be drawn segments of it:

- Help from one person to another is best explained through the role that he has the mentor himself, and it refers to the perception of the wider meaning related to everything that happens in the workplace, although it is all just beginning it may seem unimportant or even trivial.

- Meaningful transmission of knowledge, thoughts or work tasks justifies the mentor's role by helping the employee do the right thing to direct his thoughts, to accumulate more easily and better knowledge, and through that to perform their work duties in a better quality.

Kalbfleisch defined mentoring as a relationship of care and assistance between mentors and mentees (Kalbfleisch, 2002). Kram defined mentoring as a relationship between an older, more experienced adult who helps a younger individual learn and navigate through the organization (Kram, 1988). Anaza concluded that mentoring could be effective for enhancing work engagement (Anaza, 2016).

Mentoring can also be seen as "a partnership between two free, independent parties, who talk equally. Here is the power and authority they use wisely to challenge, offer opportunities, encourage and aiding the mentee. The power of truth and the power of reasoning provide valuable learning and experience" (Molander 1989). The main purpose of mentoring as a process is to release and channel it the employee's potential, to develop his abilities that will further strategic development of employees as a means of improving the competitiveness of organizations become a basis for better performance of work duties, and all of this will contribute to greater success and competitiveness of the organization itself.

In the report - The Benefits of Mentoring: a literature review, it is emphasized that, mentoring contributes to economic prosperity and social well-being by: benefiting all stakeholders, improving motivation among participants across all sectors, improving performance in a range of social, educational and business activities and developing knowledge and skills in all sectors (Garvey and Garrett-Harris, 2008).

In this direction the benefits of mentoring for an organization are employee engagement, employee satisfaction, employee happiness, retention rates, promotion rates, attracting talent, representation in leadership, inclusive culture, increased productivity, breaking down silos. The benefits of mentoring are like those of leadership, and the style that choose has a strong correlation with employee attitudes. (Serang, Ramlawati, Suriyanti, Junaidi and Nurimansjah, 2024)

Based on the findings of the study - Mentoring Elements that Influence Employee Engagement, author concluded that mentoring plays a significant role in employee engagement. More specifically, mentoring psychosocial support and perceived organizational support were significant predictors of the elements associated with work engagement - vigor, absorption, and dedication (Thornton Fountain, 2018).

The value is achieved only with correct and quality-oriented development of the employees. Through the process of mentoring, employees can create more value and make the right decisions, be innovative to advance the competitiveness of the enterprise.

2. RELEVANT RESEARCH

The world is growing into a place of great turbulence and increasing day by day demand and offers. Burke and Cooper name eight key challenges they face every company faces: globalization, response to customers/consumers, increasing revenues and reducing costs,

strengthening enterprises, transformation and change, introduction of new technology, human development capital, ensuring fundamental and long-term changes (Burke and Cooper, 2004).

With all this, the level of competition between enterprises has increased significantly. Most of them can copy technology, processes, products, services, and even the strategies and goals. But one thing that is impossible to copy - human resources. That's why employees represent a significant, if not crucial, role competitive advantage. To achieve success, the enterprise must anticipate them the needs of human resources, but also its own opportunities and needs and to act in relation to them.

Mentoring has experienced a tremendous upswing over the past decades, which has only recently slowed down somewhat. One possible factor explaining mentoring's popularity is numerous case studies suggesting that it is one of the most effective ways of helping individuals to develop.

In its 2022 L&D Social Sentiment Survey, Donald H. Taylor discovered that mentoring is now the fourth on a list of learning and development strategies L&D teams are looking at (Taylor, 2022).

In the Mentoring impact report 2022, it is point out that companies with mentoring programs had an average 2021 U.S.Fortune 500 rank of 238, compared to an average rank of 315 for those without mentoring programs. Also, companies with mentoring programs had an 18% greater performance than the average YoY profit change for all U.S. Fortune 500 companies in 2020, while those without mentoring significantly underperformed against the average by 43%. Overall, companies with mentoring programs did 53% better than those without mentoring in 2020 (Mentoring impact report, 2022).

And in the 2016 Millennials Survey, Deloitte found that 81% of Millennials stay 5 years or more at a company when they have a mentor (The Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2016).

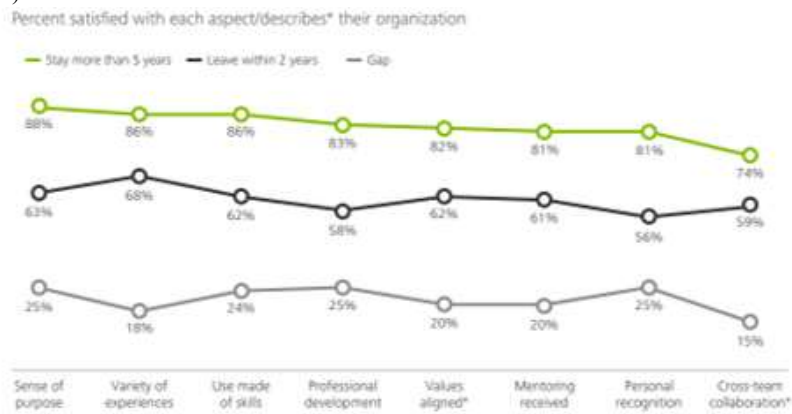


Figure 1. Those likely to remain longest share their organizations values and are more satisfied with its sense of purpose and support of professional development
Source: The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey

Among the many methods that talent development leaders turn to, mentoring has become a staple, with 84% of top U.S. companies now providing structured mentoring programs to some or all of their employees. Given the Fortune 500 list is based on profitability and revenue, this ultimately means that companies with mentoring programs also tend to generate more revenue and have better profitability (Mentoring impact report, 2022).

According to LinkedIn, over 90% of employees say they would be more inclined to stay with a company that invests in developing their skills and talents (Workplace learning report, 2018).

For CEO's in formal mentoring programs (Harvard Business Review 2015): 84% said mentors had helped them avoid costly mistakes, 84% become proficient in their roles faster and 69% were making better decisions.

Authors of the paper – Mentoring as a journey focuses attention on mentoring as a relationship rather than a role with a set of preconceived duties. According to them, mentoring is conceived as journey that describes a unique relationship and that journey involves the building of an equal relationship characterized by trust, the sharing of expertise, moral support, and knowing when to help and when to sit back (Awaya et al., 2003). The focus of the mentoring process should be on the role of trust and respect in the employment relationship in influencing the ER climate, voice climate and, consequently, voice behaviours, thereby guiding further research and offering practical implications for human resources practice in this respect. (Prouska, McKearney, Psychogios and Szamosi, 2024)

In the study - Career Outcome of Employees: The Mediating Effect of Mentoring, the authors examined the mediating effect of mentoring systems on the relationship between personal learning and career outcome of employees in Taiwanese companies. They used a survey conducted with 246 employees to analyze the effect of personal learning on career outcome. The given results showed that employees' personal learning and mentoring had a significant positive effect on their career development and further analysis demonstrated that mentoring mediated the effect between personal learning and career outcome. They conclude, mentoring mechanisms can have a sustained influence on personal learning and career outcome (Rueywei et al., 2014).

The paper - The impact of employees' commitment on organizational performances examines the impact of employees' commitment on the productivity of organizations in the Republic of Serbia. According to authors, employees' commitment represents the willingness of employees to make efforts for the benefit of the organization and the desire to remain in them. They emphasize that It can be seen as: affective, continuous and normative commitment. According to them, affective commitment reflects a belief in the goals of an organization and a willingness to actively participate in its development; normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation on employees to remain in the organization while continuing commitment is due to employees' assessment that leaving the organization causes greater costs than benefits. In the research 169 employees of 17 organizations in Serbia were surveyed and it has been proven that overall organizational commitment, as well as its certain types, have a positive impact on the productivity of organizations in Serbia, with the impact of normative commitment on performance greater than other types of commitment (Đorđević et al., 2020).

The objective of the research - Emotional Intelligence and Mentoring Received in Hotel Organizations was to investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence

competencies (self-regulation, self-awareness, empathy, social skills, motivation) and mentoring received, focusing on the supervisor-subordinate relationship in four- and five-star hotel organizations in Greece and participants were 250 employees representing 108 hotel organizations. According to authors, results indicate that social skills and self-awareness are positively associated with mentoring received in hotel organizations (Vasilagkos et al., 2021). The results of the research - The effect of mentoring on the success of mentees: challenges and imperatives offer a new direction of understanding factors that contribute to effective mentoring. Authors concluded that for mentorship to be successful, there should be commitment from top management to the program and the role of mentees should be clear and should be allowed some freedom to initiate issues in their respective environments (Rankhumise, E., 2015).

The study Building Psychological Capital and Employee Engagement: Is Formal Mentoring a Useful Strategic Human Resource Development Intervention examine whether and how formal mentoring programs could impact psychological capital and employee engagement, two key business drivers that directly affect an organization's bottom line. Findings in the study are indicate that frequency of contact between the mentors and mentees was a key factor for engaging in mutually beneficial learning, which was instrumental for building psychological capital and employee engagement (Ghosh et al., 2018). The authors Jeevan and Poonam point out that mentoring is a valuable resource for learning and coping with major organizational changes and it brings value to everyone involved in this relationship, that is, mentees, mentors, and the organization. The study - Impact of Mentoring Functions on Career Development: Moderating Role of Mentoring Culture and Mentoring Structure examine the impact of mentoring functions on career development and investigates the role of mentoring culture and mentoring structure as moderator. Results reveal that mentoring functions significantly affect career development (Jeevan and Poonam, 2015). A quantitative study - The Importance of Mentoring in Employee Work Engagement – Based on Research of Company Employees in Poland was conducted on sample of 1,010 employees of companies operating in Poland who had participated in a mentoring programme in their company. The findings in the study demonstrate the importance of the mentoring process in shaping employee engagement in work and the involvement of employees in the mentoring process was found to affect their engagement. The author Baran points out that according to statistical analysis of the obtained results, the work engagement of employees is positively correlated with mentoring programme participation (Baran, 2017). Although research investigating how organizational culture contributes to institutional failure has extensively conceptualized the causal factors (e.g. norms for behaving unsafely), how culture prevents such problems from being corrected is less well theorized (Hald, Gillespie and Reader, 2024).

In the Mentoring report 2022, it is emphasized that mentoring is strongly correlated with positive revenue and profit outcomes for Fortune 500 businesses and data from the 2021 U.S. Fortune 500 list indicates that companies that prioritize mentoring and other engagement strategies fared better during one of the most financially chaotic periods in history.

This research indicates that mentoring can be an effective tool for supporting employees, because it influences not only development, in the broad sense, of the employees themselves, but also the development of the entire organization. By affecting employees' attitudes and behavior, it influences their commitment to work, which can

contribute to the success of the whole organization. The employee perceptions of acceptable behaviors are influenced by a variety of sources. Supervisors are often the most salient source of social information. That is why leadership and mental health are two topics that must not be excluded by the mentor. (Gulseren, Thibault, Kelloway, Mullen, Teed, Gilbert and Dimoff, 2021).

3. RESEARCH

The current situation with mentoring in the region makes this topic absolutely current and desirable for empirical treatment. During mentoring, the mentor has different roles. What will be the role of the mentor depends on the stage of development of the employee. The purpose of this paper is to create a unique rounded theoretical-applicative basis for understanding and using the concept of mentoring employees as a means of improving the competitiveness of the enterprise. Continuous education, professional and flexible employees, high motivation, responsibility, participation and commitment of human resources is a significant segment for research from a scientific aspect, which also represents a scientific contribution for further theoretical-empirical research.

The empirical research was conducted using a survey questionnaire submitted electronically. Data collection has been carried out during the month of April, 2022. After the definition of the sample, it was approached to:

- processing of the data from the applied instruments;
- data analysis, discussion, and conclusion.

In doing so, it is significant to analyze the survey questionnaire in order to perceive the attitudes and opinions of mentored employees regarding mentoring aimed at increased enterprise efficiency in the four Balkan countries, as well as to map the needs of employees and to obtain knowledge about professional qualification and experience from mentoring. The research aims to prove the impact of mentoring support for the increased efficiency of the enterprise. The subject of research in this paper is: The appropriate mentoring support of employees has an impact on the increased efficiency of the enterprise. The questionnaire is intended for 200 respondents, employees of companies from the four Balkan states. By means of a survey, the attitudes of the employed workers about the experience with the mentors were investigated.

Below are the results obtained from the research conducted by survey. The first question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor introduces the employee to the company in which he is employed. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 172 respondents answered yes, i.e. 86.43%, b) 16 respondents answered partially, i.e. 8.04%, and c) 11 respondents answered no, i.e. 5.53% (table 1).

Table 1

During the mentoring, the mentor introduces the employee to the enterprise in which he is employed

question	answers			Total n (%)
	yes	partially	no	
1				
	172	16	11	199
	86.43%	8.04%	5.53 %	99%

The second question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor familiarizes the employee with the main features of the work he has to do. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 176 respondents answered yes, i.e. 88%, b) 18 respondents answered partially, i.e. 9%, and c) no, 6 respondents answered, i.e. 3.5% (table 2).

Table 2.

During the mentoring, the mentor familiarizes the employee with the main features of the work he has to do

question	answers			Total n (%)
	yes	partially	no	
2				
	176	18	6	200
	88%	9%	3%	100%

The third question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor familiarizes the employee with the rules and regulations of the company. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 162 respondents answered yes, i.e. 81.81 %, b) 24 respondents answered partially, i.e. 12.12 %, and c) no, 14 respondents answered, i.e. 7.7 % (table 3).

Table 3

During the mentoring, the mentor familiarizes the employee with the rules and regulations of the company

question	answers			Total n (%)
	yes	partially	no	
3				
	162	24	14	200
	81.81%	12.12%	7.7 %	100%

The answers to these three questions point to the fact that learning through reflection on the procedures and the principles on which they are based pave the way for lifelong autonomous learning.

Visually, it is represented by graph 2.

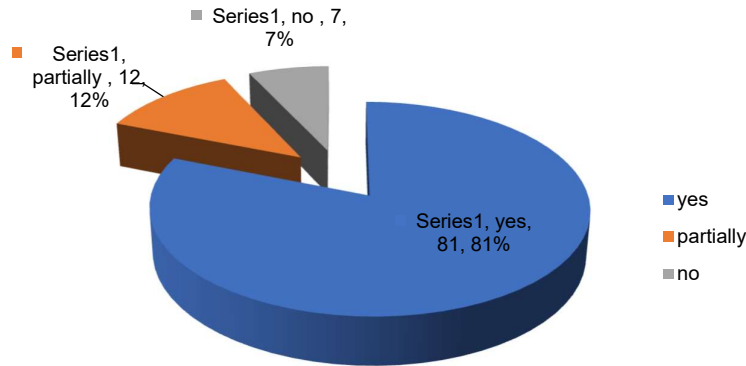


Figure 2. – Answers obtained from own research

The fourth question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor familiarizes the employee with the laws that oblige him to work correctly. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 182 respondents answered yes, that is 91%, b) 11 respondents answered partially, i.e. 5.5%, and c) 7 respondents answered no, i.e. 3.5%. The fifth question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor observes the employee how well he works. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 173 respondents answered yes, i.e. 86%, b) 22 respondents answered partially, i.e. 11%, and c) no, 5 respondents answered, i.e. 3%. The sixth question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor observes the employee which part of the work he needs to improve. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 193 respondents answered yes, i.e. 96%, b) 7 respondents answered partially, i.e. 4%, and c) no, 0 respondents answered, i.e. 0%.

Table 4

During the mentoring, the mentor observes the employee which part of the work he needs to improve				
question	yes	partially	no	Total n (%)
6	193	7	0	200
	96%	4%	0%	100%

The seventh question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor observes the employee to determine when he needs psychological support. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 173 respondents answered yes, i.e. 86.5%, b) 19 respondents answered partially, i.e. 9.5%, and c) no, 8 respondents answered, i.e. 4%.

Visually, it is represented by graph 3.

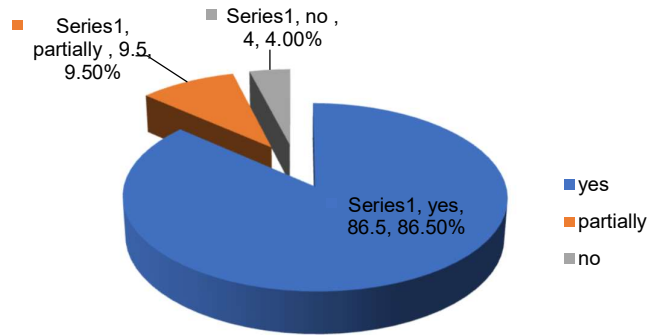
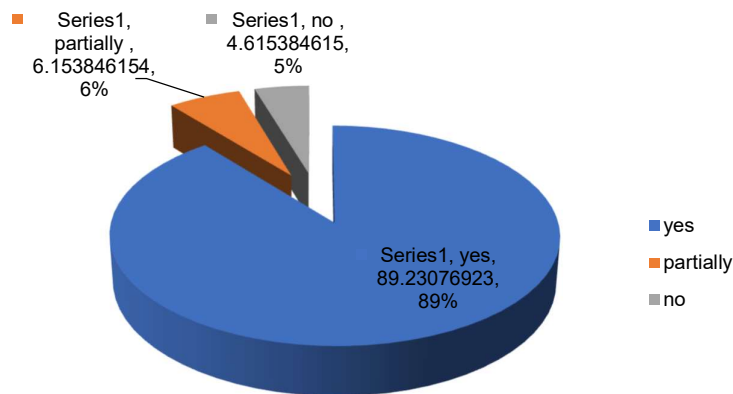


Figure 3. – Answers obtained from own research

The eighth question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: During the mentoring, the mentor observes the employee to determine how good talent he has for the job he is assigned to. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 174 respondents answered yes, i.e. 89%, b) 12 respondents answered partially, i.e. 6%, and c) no, 9 respondents answered, i.e. 5%. Visually, it is represented by graph 4.



Graph 4. – Answers obtained from own research

The ninth question, which was asked to the research population of employees, reads: I freely share ideas with the mentor to improve the work process. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 183 respondents answered yes, i.e. 91%, b) 14 respondents answered partially, i.e. 7%, and c) no, 3 respondents answered, i.e. 2%. There is a tabular display of the received answers on table number 5.

Table 5

I freely share ideas with the mentor to improve the work process				
question 9	yes	partially	no	Total n (%)
	183	14	2	200
	91%	7%	2%	100%

The tenth question, which was asked to the researched population of employees, reads: I constantly talk with the mentor about improving work in the company. The following results were obtained from the employees: a) 193 respondents answered yes, i.e. 96%, b) 6 respondents answered partially, i.e. 3%, and c) no, 1 respondent answered, i.e. 1%. A table view of the received answers can be found in table number 6.

Table 6

I constantly talk with the mentor about improving work in the company				
question 10	Yes	partially	no	Total n (%)
	177	17	6	200
	88.5%	8.5%	3%	100%

Visually, it is represented by graph 5.

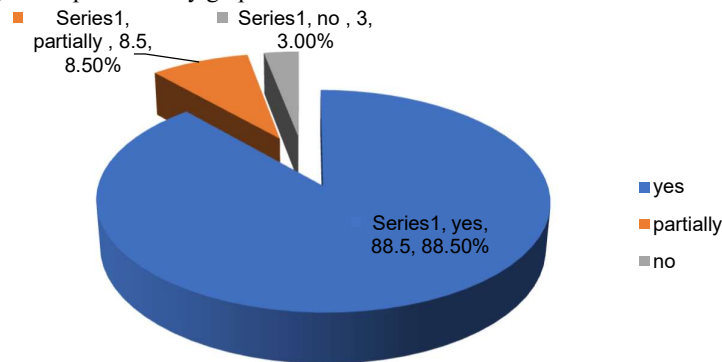


Figure 5. – Answers obtained from own research

For the needs of the paper, a hypothetical framework was developed in which variables were generated that were crossed in a way that should prove the assumption in each set hypothesis and the final general hypothesis. Thus, in the research, three variables were set and investigated, and then cross-referenced. The variable entitled Quality Mentorship was intended to confirm whether employees have quality mentors who can prepare them for all the challenges that work brings with it. The variable is proven with the highest results. The set variable Quality mentoring process is an independent variable that was used to investigate whether the mentors who lead the employees implement the mentoring process with all its elements. And this variable is confirmed. The subordinate-superior communication variable is a dependent variable and it was intended to determine whether employees had quality oral and written communication with their superiors. The variable is validated. The intersection of these variables proved that the set general hypothesis that reads: If the organization applies adequate mentoring support with employees, then there is increased efficiency in the operation of the company, it was completely proven to be correct. Independent variable is titled Quality Mentoring Process. Its indicators are the employees' statements about how adequately they were guided in the mentoring process.

Independent variable - Quality Mentoring Process

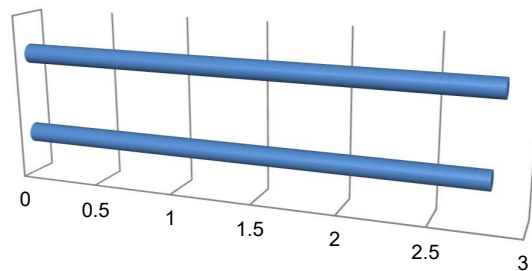


Figure 6.

After analyzing all the data from the Independent Variable and the Dependent Variable and comparing the obtained results of 2.86 and 2.81 which are in the field above 2.0, indicated for a required result for the proof of the hypotheses, we conclude that the Individual Hypothesis, If the organization carries out a quality mentoring process, then the business communication with superiors will take place efficiently, it is confirmed, that is, it is proven.

The results from our research are that mentoring benefits are improved productivity, skilled workforce, cross-organizational knowledge sharing, broadens employee perspective and enhances professional development.

CONCLUSION

The basic reasons for the emphasized actuality can be seen in the fact that enterprises perceive that their employees represent the most important capital. In today's world of increasing national and, in general, global competition, employee development and organizational learning as a whole become a necessity and a prerequisite for success.

Mentoring can positively influence individual development in any domain and with regard to manifold outcomes over the life span. With our paper, we intend to stimulate debate on how researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can work together to help individuals more through mentoring to develop their potentials. Mentoring is increasingly considered an extremely important segment of success operation of every organization, i.e. its inseparable part. Its application in practice is significant for better performance of work tasks by employees, that is, to increase its competitiveness.

The result of good human management resources can be considered not only through the conformity between the real ones human capital needs and available human capital of the enterprise, but also through the higher productivity of the existing worker. An enterprise should make good use of the knowledge of its own employees, and this will be achieved through the transfer of such knowledge that should be acquired by other employees. Knowledge transfer is the biggest challenge for every enterprise and it is becoming a more relevant issue in modern enterprises. This is because the knowledge of the employees is the biggest asset and property owned by an enterprise. In the next period the organisations must try to provide continuous mentoring in the workplace as a learning and development initiative.

The results of the research can be used for scientific purposes for all stakeholders dealing with this field, but also for management structures in organizations.

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