

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0001-8791(16)30084-7
DOI: doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2016.10.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.10.004)
Reference: YJVBE 3026

To appear in: *Journal of Vocational Behavior*

Received date: 13 February 2016
Revised date: 25 October 2016
Accepted date: 26 October 2016



Please cite this article as: Lapointe, É. & Vandenberghe, C., Supervisory mentoring and employee affective commitment and turnover: The critical role of contextual factors, *Journal of Vocational Behavior* (2016), doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2016.10.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.10.004)

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Supervisory Mentoring and Employee Affective Commitment and Turnover: The Critical Role of
Contextual Factors

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Abstract

Past research has largely ignored the role of contextual factors in the relationships between supervisory mentoring and individual and organizational outcomes. In order to fill this void, we investigate how job scope and career and development opportunities, two critical contextual factors, moderate the supervisory mentoring-affective commitment-turnover links. Integrating social exchange theory with insights from situational approaches to leadership, we hypothesized that (a) job scope would interact with supervisory mentoring in predicting affective commitment and (b) career and development opportunities would interact with affective commitment in predicting turnover such that the conditional effects of supervisory mentoring on turnover would be stronger at high levels of these contextual moderators. Results of a study conducted with a sample of 228 business alumni, using 15-month voluntary turnover as outcome, supported our predictions. We discuss the implications of these findings for mentoring research and practice.

Keywords: Supervisory Mentoring; Affective Commitment; Turnover; Job Scope; Career and Development Opportunities

Mentoring refers to a developmental work relationship in which the mentor supports the personal and professional growth of the protégé (Kram, 1985). In organizations, mentoring by the supervisor (i.e., supervisory mentoring) is particularly beneficial with research suggesting that its influence on job outcomes (e.g., commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention) is stronger than that of other forms of mentoring (Payne & Huffman, 2005; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Scandura & Williams, 2004). As supervisors are the main representatives of the organization for employees (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002), supervisory mentoring likely results in direct and explicit signals about the organization's concern for employee development (London & Smither, 1999; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Following social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees should therefore reciprocate to the organization the benefits associated with supervisory mentoring (e.g., via increased commitment).

But what would happen if, beyond supervisory mentoring itself, the organizational context does not support employee development? Would supervisory mentoring suffice to bring about desired outcomes? Would the social exchange logic described above still hold? These are questions worth asking as, notwithstanding the fact that theoretical work on mentoring

acknowledged the importance of the context (e.g., Chandler, Kram, & Yip, 2011; Kram, 1985; Wanberg et al., 2003) and researchers called for systematic investigation of the role played by contextual factors (e.g., Dougherty, Turban, & Haggard, 2010), empirical examinations remain scarce. Answers seem even more crucial for highly qualified white collar employees which are known to seek and expect support for their development (Benson, Finegold, & Mohrman, 2004; Drucker, 1999; Ng, 2016). Aiming to fill this gap, this study examines how job scope and career and development opportunities, two critical contextual factors supporting employee development, moderate an expected negative relationship between supervisory mentoring and turnover, as mediated by affective commitment, among highly qualified white collar employees.

Supplementing social exchange theory with insights from situational approaches to leadership (Howell, Dorfman, & Kerr, 1986), we argue that job scope and career and development opportunities will act as *enhancers* of supervisory mentoring's effects. That is, when employees are provided with (a) challenges in their jobs (i.e., high job scope) and (b) career and development opportunities in the organization, they should acknowledge that the organization is supporting their development on a continuing basis. Following the norm of reciprocity, supervisory mentoring's indirect relationship to turnover through commitment should be strengthened in these conditions. Note that as we focus on mentoring from supervisors and as supervisors are representatives of the organization towards employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002), we expect the relationship of supervisory mentoring to turnover to be fully mediated by affective commitment (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Job scope, which reflects the level of enrichment of a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), offers a context in which employees have opportunities to put into practice what they learn

through mentoring. As supervisors, who are also mentors and act on behalf of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002), can shape employees' tasks and job conditions (London & Smither, 1999), their ability to influence commitment through mentoring should be eased when employees concomitantly perceived their job to be enriched (i.e., high job scope). Indirectly, this should also strengthen the relationship between supervisory mentoring and retention. Furthermore, career and development opportunities should strengthen affectively committed employees' loyalty to the organization by ensuring that organizational membership will allow them to meet their career and development goals. As mentoring is in essence development-oriented (Kram, 1985) and is associated with heightened expectations about future prospects within the organization (Eby et al., 2013; Underhill, 2006), supervisory mentoring's indirect relationship to turnover through commitment should also be strengthened when career and development opportunities are high.

Our aim in this paper is to demonstrate that supervisory mentoring's benefits are limited when it is disconnected from the context in which it is embedded. As recent meta-analytical work underscored substantial heterogeneity in the strength of mentoring's effects (Eby et al., 2013), this study may help better understand *when* mentoring is really effective, particularly for highly qualified white collar employees. By supplementing social exchange theory with insights from situational approaches to leadership, this study also increases the understanding of mentoring's operating mechanisms which lack theoretical grounding (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008). Moreover, by using 15-month voluntary turnover as a behavioral outcome, we answer calls to go beyond cross-sectional measures of attitudinal outcomes (Allen et al., 2008; Eby, Butts, Hoffman, & Sauer, 2015). Finally, we relied on a sample of alumni from a French language business school located in Eastern Canada to test our hypotheses. This adds relevance to our study by answering calls for more research examining mentoring across cultures (Chandler et al., 2011) and outside English-speaking environments (Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2010).

Supervisory Mentoring in Context

According to Viator and Scandura (1991), mentors provide three functions to protégés: vocational mentoring, role modeling, and social support. Vocational mentoring focuses on preparing the protégé for career advancement, role modeling on conveying appropriate attitudes, values and behaviors, and social support on providing positive regard and tangible help. In the case of supervisory mentoring, mentoring functions are performed on the sidelines of usual supervisory duties (Tepper, 1995) and involve a deeper, more personal supervisor-subordinate relationship (Booth, 1996; Eby et al., 2015; Pan, Sun, & Chow, 2011). Supervisory mentors also have substantial leverage to perform mentoring functions through daily interactions with subordinates and direct control over work assignments (Eby et al., 2015; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Scandura & Williams, 2004). Of critical importance, supervisors personify the organization and through exposure to supervisors' mentoring behaviors employees likely form perceptions about the extent to which the organization values them and their development (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Wanberg et al., 2003). On the basis of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees are therefore expected to reciprocate to the organization the benefits associated with supervisory mentoring. Supporting this idea, supervisory mentoring was found to be positively related to affective commitment (e.g., Scandura & Williams, 2004), which captures employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Likewise, Payne and Huffman (2005) found that affective commitment partially mediated the relationship of formal mentoring to turnover and this relationship to be stronger when the supervisor was identified as the mentor, suggesting that supervisory mentoring indirectly contributes to retain employees. These results justify viewing affective commitment as fully mediating the relationship of supervisory mentoring to turnover.

Yet critical features of the organizational context such as job design, human resource policies, including performance management systems and reward systems, or organizational culture plausibly influence supervisory mentoring's effects (Chandler et al., 2011; Kram, 1985). As mentoring aims to support employee development, characteristics of the context serving this purpose should be particularly influential. Building on the substitutes for leadership literature (Howell et al., 1986; see also Kerr & Jermier, 1978), contextual factors reflecting the organization's support for employee development should act as "enhancers" of supervisory mentoring by creating an impetus for the social exchange relationship between employees and supervisors. Indeed, growth and development are sought for by a large number of employees. As a matter of fact, employees today expect organizations to involve them in decision-making, provide challenging and meaningful work, support skill development and offer career management assistance, among others (Roehling, Cavanaugh, Moynihan, & Boswell, 2000). The popularity of the notions of "boundaryless career" and "protean career" (Baruch, 2006) further illustrates that employees often consider organizational membership as a vehicle through which they can attain valued personal goals. Of particular importance, highly qualified white collar employees are known to highly value continuous development (Drucker, 1999) and to expect their needs and wishes to be considered by the organization (Benson et al., 2004; Ng, 2016).

In this study, we focus on two contextual factors indicative of the organization's concern for employee development: (a) job scope, and (b) career and development opportunities. Both job scope and career and development opportunities are central to highly qualified white collar jobs (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Drucker, 1999; Parker, 2014). In addition, both factors can be shaped by organizations (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011), suggesting that they can concretely be leveraged to maximize mentoring's benefits.

The Moderating Role of Job Scope

Rooted in the job design literature, job scope captures the extent to which a job is “enriched” (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Job enrichment is achieved by increasing the variety of skills required to perform a job (i.e., skill variety), the extent to which a job requires the completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work (i.e., task identity), the impact that a job has on other people within and outside the organization (i.e., task significance), the freedom that employees have in carrying out their tasks and scheduling their work (i.e., autonomy), and the extent to which employees are provided with information about their performance (i.e., feedback). High job scope should convey the message that the organization supports employee development by giving protégés opportunities to put into practice what they learn from their mentors. Indeed, high scope jobs are rich, complex and challenging, and put fewer constraints on behavior (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Through increased skill variety and task identity, high scope jobs enable employees to use a wider range of skills and manage more complex work processes. Increased task significance enables employees with new knowledge and skills to concretely make a difference and positively influence others. Through increased feedback, employees can also learn from their mistakes and refine their competencies. Finally, through increased autonomy employees can innovate and try new ways of doing things.

In the case of supervisory mentoring, the mentor’s role is endorsed by the supervisor who has a significant influence on employees’ tasks and job conditions (London & Smither, 1999). Jobs with high scope should thus be perceived as being consistent with supervisory mentoring’s goals and strengthen the obligation to reciprocate the benefits associated with mentoring. As the supervisor represents the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002), reciprocation should be directed toward the organization. In sum, job scope should act as an enhancer of the relationship between supervisory mentoring and affective organizational commitment. In support of this view, previous research suggests that job enrichment fosters learning and development (Parker, 2014)

and is seen as a discretionary practice reflecting organizations' support to employees (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Job scope moderates the positive relationship between supervisory mentoring and affective commitment such that this relationship is stronger at high levels of job scope.

We also hypothesize that job scope will act as an enhancer of the indirect relationship of supervisory mentoring to turnover through affective commitment. Indeed, the strengthened feeling of obligation to reciprocate instilled by supervisory mentoring that appears when job conditions are enriched should not only result in stronger affective commitment but should ultimately reduce turnover behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: Job scope moderates the indirect relationship between supervisory mentoring and turnover through affective commitment such that this indirect relationship is stronger at high levels of job scope.

The Moderating Role of Career and Development Opportunities

Extending Kraimer et al.'s (2011) work on perceived career opportunities, we define career and development opportunities as employees' belief that job opportunities (e.g., promotion) or development opportunities (e.g., training) that match their interests are offered in the organization. By adding development opportunities, we aim to broaden the scope of employee goals captured by the construct and better understand the role of career and development considerations in shaping job outcomes. Doing so is aligned with our view that, through organizational membership, employees, particularly highly qualified white collar employees, seek to attain personal goals and expect the organization to support these (Benson et al., 2004; Drucker, 1999; Ng, 2016; Roehling et al., 2000). Similar to job scope, high levels of career and

development opportunities should convey the message that the organization supports employee development (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Wayne, Shore, & Liden 1997). Unlike job scope, career and development opportunities should exert their moderating effect on the relationship between affective commitment and turnover. Specifically, career and development opportunities should strengthen affectively committed employees' loyalty to the organization by ensuring that they can expect a long-term relationship with the organization in which their potential will be fully realized, making the future relationship compatible with their personal goals.

This proposition is aligned with social exchange theory in that effective social exchange relationships are based on mutually rewarding exchanges and evolve toward mutual commitment and loyalty (Blau, 1964). Employees react more positively when they perceive that the organization is investing in them at least as much as they are investing in the organization and are doing so in a long-term perspective (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). In line with this, previous research suggests that when employees perceive that the organization fulfills their aspirations in terms of career development they feel that their own goals are compatible with organizational goals (Crawshaw, Van Dick, & Brodbeck, 2012). In addition, the more one's present job is relevant to one's long term professional growth, the less one is likely to think about quitting the organization (Crawshaw & Game, 2015). Thus, career and development opportunities likely contribute to tie the achievement of career and development goals to organizational membership, thereby making staying a more compelling choice than leaving. Previous research supports this view. Among others, growth opportunities, examined as a component of supportive HR practices including also participation in decision making and fairness of rewards, were found to be associated with less turnover (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Similarly, career opportunities and promotional chances, which strictly focus on career

concerns (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Kraimer et al., 2011), were found to predict turnover. Building on these evidences, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Career and development opportunities moderate the negative relationship between affective commitment and turnover such that this relationship is stronger at high levels of career and development opportunities.

We also hypothesize that career and development opportunities will act as an enhancer of the indirect relationship of supervisory mentoring to turnover. Indeed, mentoring should make employees feel more apt to further contribute to the organization (Kram, 1985). It is also associated with the expectation that career opportunities are (or will be) available to protégés (Eby et al., 2013; Underhill, 2006). Thus, the *actual availability* of career and development opportunities should fill employees' expectations and strengthen the link between their commitment to the organization and their actual retention in the organization. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Career and development opportunities moderate the indirect relationship between supervisory mentoring and turnover through affective commitment such that this indirect relationship is stronger at high levels of career and development opportunities.

Method

Sample and Procedure

We recruited highly qualified white collar employees via the alumni association of a French language business school located in Eastern Canada. The study was publicized on the website of the association and a link to the survey permitted interested participants to complete a first questionnaire online. This questionnaire included, among others, measures of supervisory mentoring, affective commitment, job scope, career and development opportunities, and

demographics. Participants were also asked to provide their email addresses. Fifteen months later, participants were invited by email to fill a second questionnaire that addressed turnover.

We obtained responses from 485 individuals at Time 1 while 234 also responded at Time 2. Excluding 6 involuntary turnover cases, the final sample consisted of 228 individuals. Attrition analysis revealed no significant differences between responses at Time 1 and Time 2. Participants averaged 38.37 years ($SD = 9.40$) of age and had an average of 7.33 years of tenure ($SD = 7.30$) at Time 1. About half of the participants were male (53%). Almost all of them worked full-time (95%) and most of them worked in the private sector (70%). Participants were graduates from a variety of business disciplines (accounting, management, information technology, etc.). They were non-supervisory employees (47%) or managers with supervisory responsibilities (53%). The size of respondents' organizations varied greatly, with 53% of them working in organizations that had 1000 employees or less and 47% in organizations that had more than 1000 employees.

Measures

All substantive variables except turnover, which was coded as a binary outcome, were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). The study was conducted in French using scales translated from English versions (except affective commitment), following a standard translation-back-translation procedure.

Supervisor mentoring. Viator and Scandura (1991) provide an instrument measuring mentoring functions (i.e., vocational mentoring, role modeling, and social support) which has been found to explain unique variance in career expectations and affective commitment (e.g., Scandura, 1997). As this instrument is directed at mentoring activities by a mentor, we adjusted it to effectively capture mentoring functions performed by the supervisor. We changed the focus of the vocational mentoring scale (6 items) and the role modeling scale (4 items) by replacing the word "mentor" by "supervisor" (e.g., "My supervisor takes a personal interest in my career")

[vocational mentoring] and “I admire my supervisor’s ability to motivate others” [role modeling]). To measure the social support function of supervisory mentoring, we used six high-loading items from Eisenberger et al.’s (2002) well-validated perceived supervisor support scale. These items were preferred over Viator and Scandura’s (1991) social support scale as, in the context of supervisory mentoring, the social support function essentially represents socioemotional support from the supervisor. A sample item is “My supervisor really cares about my well-being.” As a global approach to mentoring functions is often used to examine mentoring’s relationship to outcomes (e.g., Dreher & Ash, 1990; Eby et al., 2015; Sun, Pan, & Chow, 2014) and as the correlations among the three scales described above were quite high in this study (.80, .80, .81), items were combined to form a global measure of supervisory mentoring. The reliability coefficient for the overall measure was .97 in this study.

Job scope. To measure job scope, we used five 2-item scales from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1980) assessing skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Sample items are “The job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills” (skill variety), “The job provides me the chance to completely finish the pieces of work I begin” (task identity), “This job is one where a lot of other people can be affected by how well the work gets done” (task significance), “The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work” (autonomy), and “Just doing the work required by the job provides many chances for me to figure out how well I am doing” (task feedback). These five job characteristics globally represent the extent to which a job is enriched (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), and thus, a high score on the JDS reflects high job scope. The JDS is the most commonly used self-report measure of job scope and its validity has been established (Fried & Ferris, 1987). In this study, a principal components analysis identified one general factor accounting for 40% of the variance. All items (except one that was dropped due to low loading)

had a strong loading on the common factor. The reliability coefficient for this scale was good ($\alpha = .78$). A similar measure of job scope was found to positively correlate with affective commitment in previous research (Schaubroeck, Walumbwa, Ganster, & Kepes, 2007).

Affective commitment. A French version (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Stinglhamber, 2005) of Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) scale was used to measure affective commitment. A sample item is "I feel like part of the family at this organization." Meyer et al.'s (1993) scale is widely used and its psychometric properties have been established (Meyer et al., 2002). Bentein et al. (2005) report good reliability for the French version of the scale ($\alpha = .78-.83$) and found it to negatively predict turnover. In this study, the scale had a reliability of .90.

Career and development opportunities. This study acknowledges that employees may pursue various personal goals through organizational membership. Aligned with this approach, we modified and extended Kraimer et al.'s (2011) 3-item measure of perceived career opportunities, which focuses on the availability of career opportunities that match employees' interests in the organization (and was found to be positively related to affective commitment), to include development opportunities. Using a total of six items, we asked respondents to rate the extent to which a number of opportunities were attractive to them and likely available in their organization within the next two years. Sample items include "opportunities for promotion", "training opportunities", and "opportunities to learn new things." A principal components analysis performed on the data identified one general factor accounting for 64% of the variance and all items loaded strongly on this factor. The scale had a reliability of .89 in this study.

Turnover. Information about voluntary turnover was obtained 15 months after the first survey. Participants were asked if (a) they had left their organization since the first survey and in case they left if (b) leaving was voluntary (i.e., leaving was their own decision). They had to answer these questions by "Yes" or "No." In total, 27 participants reported that they voluntarily

left their organization during the 15-month period. Thus, the voluntary turnover rate was 11.8% (27 out of 228). Voluntary leavers were coded as “1,” while stayers were coded as “0.”

Control variables. We controlled for age, gender, and organizational tenure in the analyses examining our hypotheses because these variables have been found to correlate with affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002) and/or turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Ng & Feldman, 2009).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

The dimensionality of our data was examined using confirmatory factor analysis via LISREL 8.72 (Jöreskog, Sörbom, Du Toit, & Du Toit, 2001) and the maximum likelihood method of estimation. We compared our hypothesized 4-factor model against more parsimonious models using χ^2 difference tests. The following fit indexes were also used: NNFI, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. Values close to .95 or higher for NNFI and CFI, close to .06 or lower for RMSEA, and close to .08 or lower for SRMR, are considered as indicating good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The 4-factor model yielded a relatively good fit to the data, $\chi^2(146) = 435.63, p < .01$, NNFI = .95, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .06. Indeed, in line with Hu and Bentler’s recommendation of using a combination of fit indexes, all values for fit indexes except for RMSEA fell in the desired range. However, as the RMSEA tends to overreject the true model (i.e., to be positively biased) in small samples ($N \leq 250$; Hu & Bentler, 1999), the rather large value obtained in this study may be inflated, hence should be taken with caution (Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby, & Paxton, 2008; Kenny, Kaniskan & McCoach, 2015). Model comparisons indicated that our 4-factor model was superior to six 3-factor models combining variables on a two-by-two basis ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 71.46$ to $507.03, p < .01$) and a 1-factor model that merged all variables ($\Delta\chi^2(6) = 493.08, p < .01$). These results suggest our variables were distinguishable.

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

As can be seen from Table 1, all study variables displayed very good internal consistency ($\alpha \geq .78$). Supervisory mentoring and job scope were both positively related to affective commitment ($r = .57, p < .001$, and $r = .48, p < .001$, respectively) and negatively related to turnover ($r = -.16, p < .05$, and $r = -.17, p < .01$, respectively). Affective commitment was also negatively related to turnover ($r = -.26, p < .001$). Finally, career and development opportunities were negatively related to turnover ($r = -.19, p < .01$).

Insert Table 1 about here

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1. We used moderated multiple regression to test Hypothesis 1 (see Table 2). Supervisory mentoring and job scope were centered prior to the calculation of their interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). Supervisory mentoring and job scope interacted significantly in the prediction of affective commitment ($\beta = .12, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .02$). To illustrate the nature of this interaction, we plotted the regression line of affective commitment on supervisory mentoring at $\pm 1SD$ of the mean of job scope (see Figure 2). Simple slopes analyses showed that supervisory mentoring was significantly related to affective commitment at both high levels ($t [223] = 7.65, p < .05$) and low levels ($t [223] = 4.85, p < .05$) of job scope. These regression lines differed significantly from one another ($t [223] = 2.34, p < .05$). Hypothesis 1 is thus supported.

Hypothesis 2. To test Hypothesis 2, we estimated the conditional indirect effect of supervisory mentoring on turnover using 5,000 bootstrap resamples and tested its significance using bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs; see Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Job scope was found to significantly moderate the indirect effect of supervisory mentoring on turnover ($-.20, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.48, -.00$), this effect being negative and significant at high levels of job scope ($-.20, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.48, -.00$).

.46, 95% CI = $-.97, -.11$) and negative and significant, yet weaker, at low levels of job scope ($-.26$, 95% CI = $-.78, -.03$). Hypothesis 2 is thus supported.

Hypothesis 3. We used moderated logistic regression to test Hypothesis 3 (see Table 3). Similar to the test of Hypothesis 1, affective commitment and career and development opportunities were centered prior to the calculation of their interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). These two variables interacted significantly in the prediction of turnover ($B = -1.11$, $p < .05$). For illustration purposes, we plotted the regression line of turnover on affective commitment at $\pm 1SD$ of career and development opportunities (see Figure 3). Further probing of this interaction using a median-split approach reveals that affective commitment had a significant and negative effect on turnover at above average values of career and development opportunities ($B = -2.59$, $p < .05$) but was unrelated to turnover at below average values of these opportunities ($B = -.20$, *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4. Similar to the test of Hypothesis 2, we followed Preacher et al.'s (2007) analytical procedure to test Hypothesis 4. Career and development opportunities were found to significantly moderate the indirect effect of supervisory mentoring on turnover ($-.56$, 95% CI = $-1.09, -.09$), this effect being negative and significant at high levels of career and development opportunities (-1.20 , 95% CI = $-2.19, -.41$) but non-significant at low levels of these opportunities ($-.10$, 95% CI = $-.77, .57$). Hypothesis 4 is thus supported.

Insert Tables 2-3 and Figures 2-3 about here

Discussion

The present study fills an important void by examining the overlooked influence of two contextual factors, job scope and career and development opportunities, on mentoring's effects. As hypothesized, job scope interacted with supervisory mentoring, and career and development

opportunities interacted with affective commitment, such that supervisory mentoring led to more significant reduction of turnover likelihood at high levels of these moderators. These findings bear important implications for mentoring research and practice, which are addressed below.

Theoretical Implications and Future Research Directions

By shedding light on the importance of job scope and career and development opportunities as moderators of the supervisory mentoring-turnover relationship, this study lends credence to previous claims regarding the importance of the organizational context in mentoring (e.g., Chandler et al., 2011) and stresses the need to go beyond the mentoring dyad to thoroughly understand this phenomenon (Dougherty et al., 2010). Moreover, by using social exchange theory with insights from situational approaches to leadership, this study contributes to bridge the gap between mentoring research which has evolved separately from other fields (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2010) and the broader management literature. This integration also contributes to clarify the mechanisms through which contextual factors affect how mentoring operates.

Social exchange theory, which emphasizes mutuality and reciprocity in the employee-organization relationship, describes why supervisory mentoring results in increased affective commitment and reduced turnover. Employees are indebted to the organization for the favorable treatment they receive from its representatives (i.e., supervisors) and, as a result, become more attached to the organization and are more likely to stay (Payne & Huffman, 2005). Situational approaches to leadership, by assuming that the effectiveness of leaders is contingent on situational factors (Howell et al., 1986), emphasize the need to move beyond the actions of organizational representatives (i.e., supervisors) and suggest that contextual factors can facilitate (vs. hinder) supervisory mentoring's effectiveness. The notion of *enhancer* (Howell et al., 1986) combined with social exchange theory's mutuality principle explains why job scope and career and development opportunities exert a positive moderating influence on the supervisory

mentoring-commitment-turnover sequential relationship. They do so because they are indicative of organizations' support for employee development and because employees, especially highly qualified white collar employees, likely find this orientation desirable (e.g., Ng, 2016).

Of interest, highly qualified white collar employees tend to be the main focus of organizations' development efforts (Benson et al., 2004; Ng, 2016), which places them in a privileged position. This suggests that this group of employees, independently of their potential merit, access more easily to career benefits, while other groups (e.g., blue collar workers) may have a hard time accessing similar benefits (Liu, Pickett, & Ivey, 2007). In this line of thought, previous research suggests that individuals with high socio-economic status are more likely to be identified as "high potentials" (Kuncel, Rose, Ejiogu, & Yang, 2014). They are also likely to benefit more from mentoring for career advancement (Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). Organizations should acknowledge that workers of varying backgrounds might benefit from mentoring. More research should also be devoted to blue collar workers who are underrepresented in the literature (Hoffmeister, Cigularov, Sampson, Rosecrance, & Chen, 2011).

It is also interesting to note, in light of previous mentoring research (see Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006, for a review), that gender did not affect the supervisory mentoring-outcomes relationships. However, other gender-related variables such as gender role orientation (Ortiz-Walters, Eddleston, & Simione, 2010) may play a role. For example, individuals perceiving themselves as having primarily feminine (vs. masculine) attributes may respond differently to mentoring functions, which could alter the influence of supervisory mentoring on work outcomes (Ortiz-Walters et al., 2010). It is also possible that gender plays a more salient role when examining outcomes known to be affected by gender in the mentoring literature such as career attainment (Ramaswami, Huang, & Dreher, 2014; Young et al., 2006). Obviously, examining the

role of gender or gender role orientation would contribute to better understand not only *when* supervisory mentoring is more effective but also among *whom* (Pan et al., 2011).

Practical Implications

The rapidly changing work context combined with the decoupling of individual careers from organizations creates a strong demand for effective development tools, among which mentoring is seen as promising (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005; Laiho & Brandt, 2011). Faced with these new realities, organizations are however concerned by the possibility that mentoring could contribute to higher turnover (Laiho & Brandt, 2011). Our study contributes to address this concern. Indeed, results emphasize the critical role that supervisory mentoring plays in fostering affective commitment and employee retention. As “soft skills” (e.g., communication skills such as giving constructive feedback and listening empathically; Roehling et al., 2000) are likely critical to effective mentoring (Allen & Poteet, 1999), building these skills among supervisors should be prioritized. Moreover, the fact that turnover is less likely when supervisory mentoring is supplemented with job enrichment and career and development opportunities suggest that organizations have to demonstrate high consistency in their practices and seek to meet employees’ need for personal growth, in addition to providing satisfying work conditions (Kraimer et al., 2011; London & Smither, 1999; Roehling et al., 2000). Furthermore, although protean and boundaryless career paths are increasingly common, not everyone benefits from changing jobs (Baruch, 2006). As mentoring is linked to career success (Underhill, 2006; Wanberg et al., 2003) and successful careers may follow traditional paths (Koch, Forgues, & Monties, 2015; McDonald, Brown, & Bradley, 2005), organizations should recognize that mentoring is a win-win practice. Similar to other development practices (Morgan, Hall, & Martier, 1979), supervisory mentoring contributes to realize more of an employee’s career potential while also increasing the fit between his or her needs and the organization’s goals.

Hence, organizations should not be reluctant to implement mentoring, seek supervisors' commitment to it, and combine it with enriched tasks and career and development opportunities.

Limitations

First, self-reports, which may inflate the relationships among variables, were used to test the hypotheses. Second, all variables except turnover were measured at the same point in time, which precludes the possibility of drawing causal inferences. Third, findings may be influenced by supervisor's gender and by ethnicity (Wanberg et al., 2003; Young et al., 2006), which were not controlled for. Finally, our sample represents a very narrow segment of the working population, notably in terms of socioeconomic status. For purpose of generalization, findings should be replicated among other groups such as blue collar workers (Hoffmeister et al., 2011).

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age (years)	38.37	9.40	–						
2. Gender	1.47	0.50	–.13*	–					
3. Organizational tenure (years)	7.33	7.30	.56***	–.05	–				
4. Supervisory mentoring	3.32	1.05	–.19**	–.01	–.02	(.97)			
5. Job scope	4.11	0.53	.12	–.02	.04	.39***	(.78)		
6. Affective commitment	3.34	0.96	.02	.01	.15*	.57***	.48***	(.90)	
7. Career and development opportunities	3.42	0.99	–.31***	.09	–.14*	.62***	.31***	.50***	(.89)
8. Turnover	0.12	0.33	–.28***	.02	–.27***	–.16*	–.17**	–.26***	–.19**

Note. *N*s = 219-228. For Gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; for Turnover: 0 = stayers, 1 = leavers. Reliability coefficients are reported in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Results of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis for Affective Commitment

Step	Variable(s) entered	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
1	Age (years)	-.12	-.03	-.03
	Gender	.01	.02	.02
	Organizational tenure (years)	.22**	.17**	.17**
2	Supervisory mentoring		.46***	.47***
	Job scope		.29***	.31***
3	Supervisory mentoring × Job scope			.12*
	ΔR^2	.03	.39***	.01*

Note. $N = 223$. For Gender, 1 = female, 2 = male. Except for the ΔR^2 row, entries are standardized regression coefficients. Final model statistics: $F(6, 216) = 27.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .43$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Results of Moderated Logistic Regression Analysis for Turnover

Step	Variable(s) entered	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
		B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
1	Age (years)	-.06	0.95	-.09*	0.92	-.11**	0.89	-.09*	0.92
	Gender	.03	1.03	.21	1.24	.61	1.84	.52	1.69
	Organizational tenure (years)	-.36**	0.70	-.47**	0.63	-.51**	0.60	-.55**	0.58
2	Supervisory mentoring			-.89**	0.41	-.42	0.66	-.40	0.67
	Job scope			-.63	0.53	-.18	0.84	.07	1.07
3	Affective commitment					-.75*	0.47	-1.28**	0.28
	Career and development opportunities (CDO)					-.73	0.48	-1.25*	0.29
4	Affective commitment × CDO							-1.11*	0.33
	R^2	.30		.43		.50		.56	

Note. $N = 216$. For Gender, 1 = female, 2 = male. The R^2 row includes Nagelkerke R^2 values. Final model statistics: $\chi^2(8) = 74.36, p < .001, -2LL = 84.47, \text{constant} = -4.96$. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .56$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Figure 1. Theoretical Model for the Study

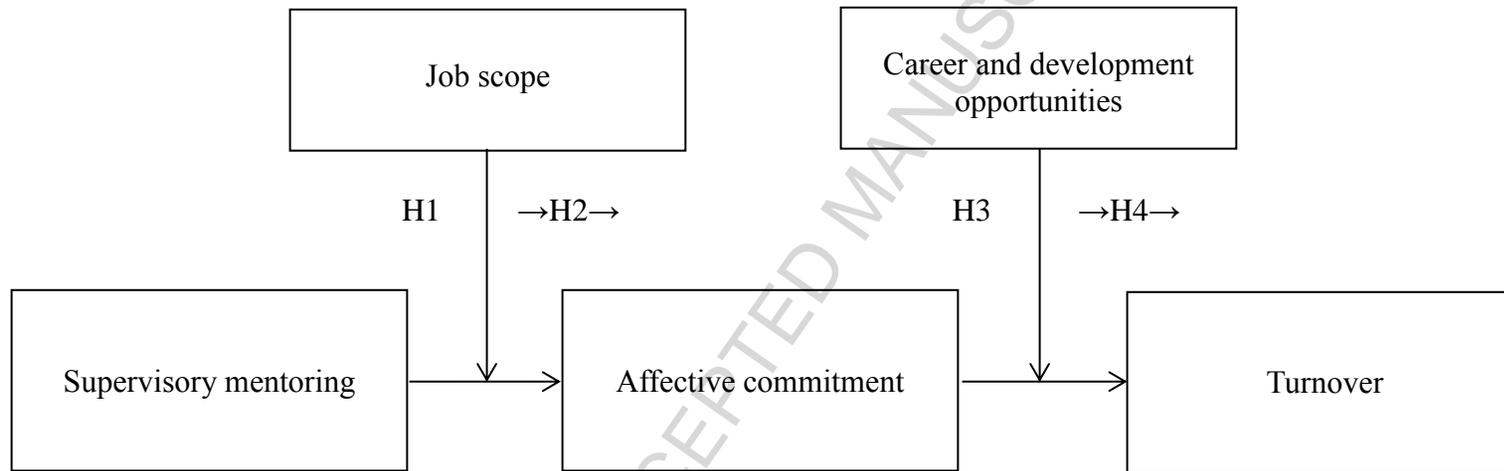


Figure 2. Interaction between Supervisory Mentoring and Job Scope in Predicting Affective Commitment

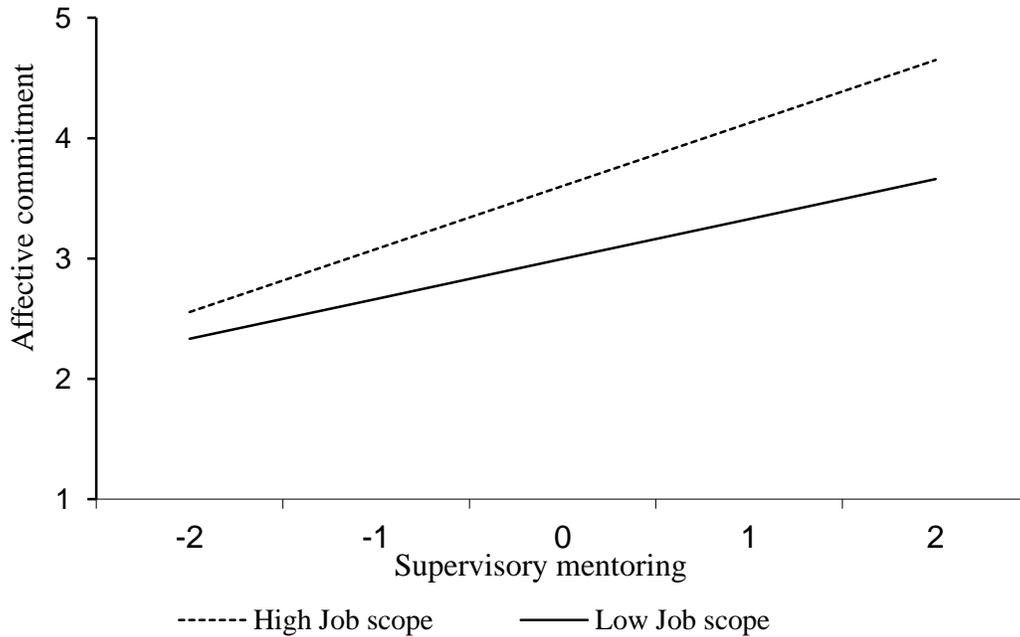
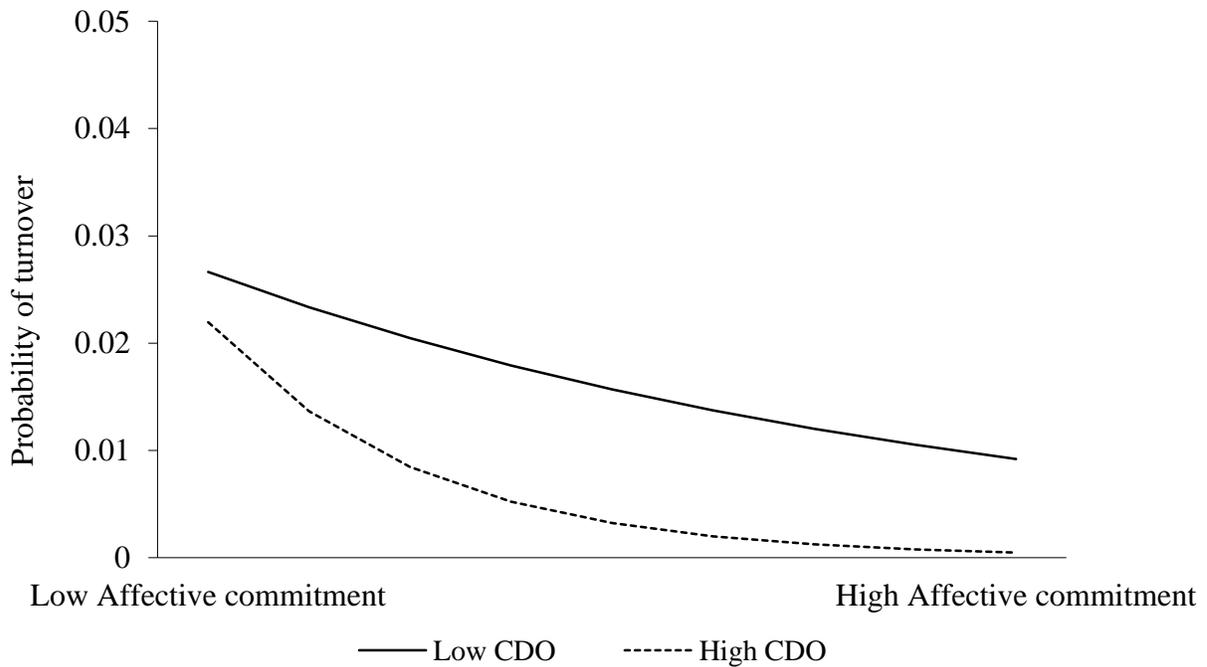


Figure 3. Interaction between Affective Commitment and Career and Development Opportunities in Predicting Turnover



Highlights

- Job scope and career and development opportunities (CDO) contextualize mentoring's effects.
- Job scope strengthens the positive relationship of supervisory mentoring to affective commitment.
- Job scope strengthens the negative relationship of supervisory mentoring to turnover, as mediated by affective commitment.
- CDO strengthen the negative relationship of affective commitment to turnover.
- CDO strengthen the negative supervisory mentoring-turnover relationship, as mediated by affective commitment.