Effect of Mentoring Program on Mentees' Academic Performance from an Islamic Perspective

Kesan Program Mentor terhadap Kemajuan Akademik Mentee dari Perspektif Islam

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between mentoring program and mentees' academic performance using the survey questionnaires gathered from bachelor degree students in Malaysian higher institutions in Sarawak, Borneo Island. The SmartPLS version 2.0 was employed to test research hypotheses. Outcomes of this test showed two important findings: firstly, communication significantly and positively correlated with academic performance. Secondly, support correlated positively and significantly with academic performance. In sum, this result confirms that mentoring program does act as an important predictor of mentees' academic performance in the organizations, where this research was conducted.

Keywords: Communication; support; academic performance

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti hubungan antara program mentor dan prestasi akademik mentee menggunakan kajian soal selidik yang diperoleh daripada pelajar ijazah sarjana muda di pengajian tinggi di Sarawak, Pulau Borneo. SmartPLS versi 2.0 telah digunakan untuk ujian hipotesis penyelidikan dan hasil ujian menunjukkan dua penemuan penting: pertama, komunikasi secara positif dan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan pencapaian akademik. Kedua, sokongan secara positif dan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan pencapaian akademik. Kesimpulannya, dapatan kajian membuktikan bahawa program mentor sebagai peramal penting dalam prestasi akademik mentee dalam organisasi yang dikaji.

Kata kunci: Komunikasi; sokongan; prestasi akademik

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a broad term and may be interpreted based on civilizational and organizational perspectives. In a Western civilization, mentoring is first highlighted in the epic story of '*The Odyssey*' written by Homer. In this story, Odysseus tells his loyal and experienced friend, namely, Mentor (a person who has great wisdom and trustworthy) to teach his son, namely, Telemachus (a mentee or protégé who has less experience) about the tips for handling challenging lifestyles before he goes to the Trojan War (Edlind & Haensly 1985; Ismail et al. 2005; Ismail et al. 2006; Merriam 1993). This story explains that mentors are the elderly who have wisdom, experiences and can be trusted to educate young men with little experience and knowledge (Little et al. 2010; Johnson et al. 1991; Russell & Adams 1997; Wanguri 1996).

Conversely, in an Islamic civilization, mentoring is often called as *al-halaqah* (group gathering) and *usrah* (family system). In this gathering, there is a *naqib* (leader) or *murabbi* (educator) who is responsible for delivering information, discussing and sharing knowledge with his/her member (mentee). For example, prophet Muhammad SAW was appointed by Allah SWT as the first mentor who planned, developed and managed *halaqah* in the house of al-Arqam bin Abi al-Arqam during preaching at the secret stage in Mecca (*Da'wah bi al-Sir*). In this *halaqah* and usrah, prophet Muhammad SAW delivered revealed knowledge (*wahyu*) to followers, and discussed and shared revealed knowledge with followers, as well as developed credible cadres and preachers (*Da'i*) to teach and guide other people in implementing the Islamic way of life (*nizam al-hayah*) in terms of personal, family and society. After the era of Prophet

Muhammad SAW, his job has been continuously carried out by credible preachers. According to Shaykh 'Ali Mahfuz (t.th.), credible preachers were highly respected by their communities because they showed high Islamic knowledge (*thaqafah al-Islamiyyah*), and demonstrated respectable personality characteristics (e.g., *al-hikmah, 'iffah* and *qana'ah),* and practiced proper Islamic knowledge in daily life. The importance of mentors is clearly stated in al-Qur'an (surah al-Tawbah 9:71), which explains that mentors play very important roles in helping needy people, guiding people from doing good things and forbidding people from doing bad things (Fariza 2005).

Most Islamic *muamalat* literature highlight that mentoring is an important activity in counseling, education and *tasawuf*. For example, counseling is often said as *al-Irshad* (al-Ghazali 1967) where mentors are viewed as experts in psychology that can be offered to solve individual problems. While, in an educational context, mentors are often called as *muaddib, murabbi, murshid, mu'allim and mudarris* (Abd. Halim 2008). In addition, in a *tawasuf* viewpoint, mentoring is also known as *al-suluk* (good moral and well behaved) where a learning group is properly guided by an individual who has comprehensive *syariah* knowledge, *tarekat* and *hakikat*, namely *Shaikh (mentor)*. The discussion clearly explains that mentoring concept has been successfully implemented in the era of Prophet Muhmmad SAW and now its notion is adapted as a learning method to maintain and achieve the organizational strategy and goals.

The discussion shows that mentoring program has two major components, namely the mentor as educator, leader and teacher. While, the mentee as student or/and follower who need advice and guidance. In a Western perspective, mentoring program is planned and implemented to be responsible for the relationship between man and man (*habl min al-Nas*) in order to obtain safety and well being in this world. Conversely, in an Islamic perspective, mentoring program is designed and administered to be responsible for the relationships between man and god (*habl min Allah*), and between man and man (*habl min al-Nas*) in order to obtain safety and happiness in this world and the day hereafter (*akhirah*). Today, the traditional mentoring concept that is previously viewed as an important field of education (Little et al. 2010; Johnson et al. 1991) and counseling (Gregson 1994; Zuraidah et al. 2004) has been given new interpretations by contemporary educationists,

social psychologists and management scholars in order to suit it with the diversity of organizational development and challenges (Dennison 2000; Ismail et al. 2005; Ismail et al. 2006; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012; Oliver & Aggleton 2002).

MENTORING PROGRAM IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

In present organizations, mentoring is often viewed as a learning method where it encourages comfortable relationship between mentors (i.e., knowledgeable and experienced person) and mentee (i.e., less knowledgeable and experienced person) as an instrument to develop group and individuals' potentials in carrying out particular duties and responsibilities, familiarise themselves with new techniques, and caring for all aspects of mentees (Cummings & Worley 2009; Johnson et al. 1991; Long 2002; Noe et al. 2002). There is no one best mentoring program model to fit all organizations, but they are designed and implemented according to the uniqueness of organizational contexts in terms of beliefs, policy, orientations, stresses, strengths and weaknesses (Irving et al. 2003; Ismail et al. 2005; Ismail et al. 2006; Santos & Reigadas 2002; Santos & Reigadas 2005). These factors have affected organizations to design and administer the various types of mentoring program, especially informal relationship (e.g., specific demands, spontaneous and ad-hoc) and formal relationship (e.g., structured and coordinated relationship between mentor and mentee, using standard norms, continuously action plans, time frame, and particular objectives). In organizations, formal and informal mentoring programs are viewed as equally important, but informal mentoring programs are often implemented to complement and strengthen formal mentoring programs in order to achieve organizational strategies and goals (Friday & Friday 2002; Hansford & Ehrich 2006; Hansford et al. 2003: Ismail et al. 2005; Ismail et al. 2006).

A review of current higher education student development program literature highlights that effective mentoring programs have two salient practices, i.e., communication and support (Bernier et al. 2005; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012; Tennenbaum et al. 2001). Communication is generally defined based on Islamic perspective as relationship between sender and receiver based on *Qaulan* principle. This principle is described at several places in al-Qur'an like   *Qawl al-Sadida* (surah Fussilat: 33; al-Najm: 3-4; Ibrahim: 27, decisive and true words), *Qawl al-*

Ma'rufa (surah Luqman: 16-19; al-Baqarah: 83, good words), *Qawlan Baligha* (surah al-Ma'idah: 1; surah al-An'am: 115, words that fulfilled the promise), *Qawl al-Maysura* (al-Isra': 53, the words of a good and fast), *Qawl al- Karima/Tayyibah* (surah Ibrahim: 24-27, noble words) and *Qawl al-Layyina* (surah al-Nahl: 125; Taha: 44, said a gente word). In the context of higher education, communication based on *Qawlan* principle has been adapted and translated in contemporary terms like effective learning communication. For example, mentors openly deliver information about the procedures, content, tasks and objectives of the mentoring programs, conducting discussions about tasks that should be learned, give detailed explanations about the benefits of attending mentoring programs and provide performance feedback (Allen et al. 2005; Fox et al. 2010; Ismail et al. 2005; Ismail et al. 2006; Santos & Reigadas 2005; Stewart & Knowles 2003).

On the other hand, support is broadly defined as mentors providing emotional support (e.g., acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and guide them to properly apply in daily life) and instrumental support (e.g., assist mentees to adapt campus environments) at varying times to mentees (Allen & Finkelstein 2003; Davis 2007; Fox et al. 2010; Stewart & Knowles 2003; Zuraidah et al. 2004).

Recent studies in university/faculty mentoring programs reveal that the ability of mentors to appropriately implement such mentoring characteristics may have a significant impact on positive mentee outcomes, especially academic performances (Bernier et al. 2005; Tennenbaum et al. 2001). In an institution of higher learning context, academic performance is usually measured based on the following criteria like students' persistence rates, graduation rates, and grade-point average (Granger 1995; Levin & Levin 1991; Santos & Reigadas 2005). Within a mentoring program model, many scholars think that communication, support and academic performance are distinct, but strongly interrelated constructs. For example, the ability of mentors to properly implement comfortable communication and provide adequate support have been essential factors that may enhance positive mentee outcomes, especially academic performance (Bernier et al. 2005; Tennenbaum et al. 2001).

The nature of this relationship is interesting, but not much is known as to the role of mentoring program as an important predictor of mentees' academic performance in the higher education mentoring program research literature (Allen & Finkelstein 2003; Bernier et al. 2005; Ismail et al.

2005; Ismail et al. 2006; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012). Many scholars reveal that this situation is due to the fact that many previous studies have emphasized much on the internal properties of mentoring program, employed simple survey methods to explains different respondent perceptions toward the implementation of mentoring programs and used a simple correlation analysis to measure the strength of association between mentoring program and mentees' academic performance. The findings of these studies have neglected quantifying the effect size of mentoring program as an important predicting variable in the mentoring program research literature. Consequently, it has not provided adequate information to be used as useful guidelines by practitioners in formulating strategic action plans to improve the design and management of mentoring programs in learning organizations (Bernier et al. 2005; Davis 2007; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012; Tennenbaum et al. 2001). Therefore, it motivates the researchers to fill in the gap of literature by measuring the relationship between mentoring program practices and academic performance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study has twofold objectives: firstly, to measure the relationship between communication and academic performance. Secondly, to measure the relationship between support and academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTORING PROGRAM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Several recent studies using a direct effects model to discover mentoring activities based on different samples like perceptions of 189 students in 9 departments at the University of California in Santa Cruz (Tennenbaum et al. 2001), perceptions of 110 students in Canadian colleges (Bernier et al. 2005), and 127 students at a defense based university in Malaysia (Ismail & Ridzuan 2012). These studies proved that the ability of mentors to properly implement comfortable communication and provide adequate support in formal and/or informal mentoring activities had enhanced mentees' positive outcomes, especially academic performance (Bernier et al. 2005; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012; Tennenbaum et al. 2001).

Ibn Qayyim (1292-1350) explains that learning encourages freedom of thinking based on logic and

revelation (*dalil aqli and naqli*) may induce individual actions based on knowledge. As quoted by Ismail et al. (2011), Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) said that, a positive development of human behavior depends on how far human is willing to exploit their thoughts to obtain knowledge. Besides that, Chickering's (1969) vector theory of identity development highlights seven important vectors to develop young adult identities: developing competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, developing interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Further, Levinson's (1978) early adult transition model posits that an individual's life structure would face critical situations when he/she goes through the transformation process from childhood into adulthood. Application of these theories in institutions of higher learning shows that the essence of these theories is that freedom of thinking, positive young adults identities and life styles will be enhanced if mentors able to properly implement comfortable communication and provide adequate support in formal and/or informal mentoring activities. As a result, it may lead to an enhanced positive mentee outcomes, especially academic performance (Bernier et al. 2005; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012; Tennenbaum et al. 2001). Basically, mentoring in Islam has been guided by Rasulullah (PBUH) as stated by al-Zamakhsyari (1074-1145) when he explains Qur'an, al-Mujadalah, verse 11, he said that mentoring is companionship or meeting which is always attended by the people to hear and learn from what the Prophet said. Therefor we can say that *Halaqah* practically is mentoring in our management knowledge.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The literature has been used as foundation of establishing a conceptual framework for this study as exhibited in Figure 1.
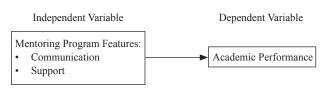
Independent Variable   Dependent Variable

Mentoring Program Features:
• Communication
• Support
→ Academic Performance

FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the framework, it was hypothesized that:
H1: Communication is positively related to academic performance
H2: Support is positively related to academic performance

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a cross-sectional research design where it allowed the researchers to integrate the mentoring program literature, the pilot study and the actual study as a main procedure to gather data for this study. Using such methods may gather accurate data, decrease bias and increase quality of data being collected (Sekaran & Bougie 2010; Zikmund 2000). This study was conducted at Malaysian owned higher institutions in Sarawak, Borneo. For confidential reasons, the name of the organizations used is kept anonymous. At the initial stage of data collection, the survey questionnaires were drafted based on the information gathered from the mentoring program literature. After that, the pilot study was conducted involving 5 senior year students (2nd year and above) in public institutions and 5 senior year students (2nd year and above) in private institutions to verify that all questions were importance, relevant, clear and suitable for the actual study. Hence, a back translation technique was employed to translate the survey questionnaires into English and Malay languages in order to increase the validity and ensure the reliability of research findings (Sekaran & Bougie 2010; Zikmund 2000).

MEASURES

The survey questionnaire used in this study had three sections. Firstly, communication was measured using 3 items that were adapted from mentoring communication system literature (Foxon 1993; Sullivan 2000; Yamnill & McLean 2001; Young & Cates 2005). The item used to measure the construct were the importance of mentoring program, approachable and knowledge sharing. Secondly, support was measured using 5 items that were adapted from mentoring support system literature (Tsai & Tai 2003; Chiaburu & Takleab 2005; Langhout et al. 2004; Rayle et al. 2006; Vieno et al. 2007). The items used to measure the construct were interpersonal communication skills, giving suggestions, praise mentee performance in study, understanding the implications of actions taken, and listening. Thirdly, academic performance was measured using 4 items that were adapted from undergraduate student performance literature (Campbell & Campbell 1997; Irving et al. 2003; Rayle et al. 2006). The items used to measure the construct were able to achieve CGPA, able to identify

effective study methods, and able to improve answering skills in tests/exams. All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 7-item Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree/dissatisfied' (1) to 'strongly agree/satisfied' (7). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on student attitudes.

SAMPLE

The unit of analysis for this study is bachelor degree students in the organizations. The researchers had obtained an official approval to conduct the study from the management of the organizations and also received advices from them about the rules for conducting the survey in the organizations. Considering the constraints of the organization rule, as well as the duration of study and finance, the researchers had distributed 250 survey questionnaires using a convenient sampling technique to undergraduate students in the public and private institutions of higher learning. This sampling technique was chosen because the management of the organizations had not given the list of undergraduate students and this situation did not allow the researchers to randomly select respondents for this study. From the survey questionnaires distributed 196 usable questionnaires from the institutions of higher learning were returned to the researchers, yielding 78.4 percent of the response rate. The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consents and on voluntarily basis. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, showing that it may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Sekaran & Bougie 2010; Zikmund 2000).

DATA ANALYSIS

As suggested by prominent scholars like Henseler et al. (2009), and Riggle et al. (2009), the SmartPLS 2.0 was employed to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument and thus test the research hypotheses. This statistical tool is useful because it may deliver latent variable scores, avoid small sample size problems, estimate every complex models with many latent and manifest variables, hassle stringent assumptions about the distribution of variables and error terms, and handle both reflective and formative measurement models (Henseler et al. 2009; Riggle et al. 2009). The SmartPLS path model was employed to assess the magnitude and nature of the relationship

between many independent variables and one or more dependent variables in the structural model using standardized beta (β) and t statistics. The value of R^2 is used as an indicator of the overall predictive strength of the model. The value of R^2 are considered as follows; 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate) and 0.67 (substantial) (Chin 1998; Henseler et al. 2009). Thus, a global fit measure is conducted to validate the adequacy of PLS path model globally based on Wetzels et al.'s (2006) global fit measure. If the results of testing hypothesized model exceed the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R^2, showing that it adequately support the PLS path model globally (Wetzels et al. 2006).

FINDINGS

SAMPLE PROFILE

Table 1 shows the respondents' characteristics. The majority of the respondents were female (70.9 percent), their ages vary from 22 to 24 years (70.4 percent), third year students (68.9 percent), students who had CGPA from 3.01 to 3.50 (48.5 percent), and students who study in public institutions of higher learning (85.7 percent).

TABLE 1. Respondents' characteristics (n = 196)

Respondents' Profile	Sub-Profile	Percentage
Gender	Male	29.1
	Female	70.9
Age	19 to 21 years old	25.0
	22 to 24 years old	70.4
	25 to 27 years old	4.6
Year of Study	Second Year	6.1
	Third Year	68.9
	Fourth Year	24.5
	Fifth Year	0.5
Academic Achievement	CGPA 2.01-2.50	5.6
	CGPA 2.51-3.00	34.7
	CGPA 3.01-3.50	48.5
	CGPA 3.51-4.00	11.2
Institution	Public Institutions of Higher Learning	85.7
	Private Institutions of Higher Learning	14.3

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis were shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Table 2 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses.

All constructs had the values of average variance extracted (AVE) larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Henseler et al. 2009). Besides that, all constructs had the values of AVE square root in diagonal were greater than the squared correlation with other constructs in off diagonal, showing that all constructs met the acceptable standard of discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2009; Yang 2009).

TABLE 2. The results of convergent and discriminant validity analyses

Variable	AVE	Communication	Support	Academic Performance
Communication	0.725	.851		
Support	0.741	0.418	.861	
Academic Performance	0.779	0.472	0.437	.883

Table 3 shows the factor loadings and cross loadings for different constructs. The correlation between items and factors had higher loadings than other items in the different constructs, as well as the loadings of variables were greater than 0.7 in their own constructs in the model are considered adequate (Henseler et al. 2009). In sum, the validity of measurement model met the criteria.

TABLE 3. The results of factor loadings and cross loadings for different construct

Construct/ Item	Communication	Support	Academic Performance
Communication			
Objective	0.836673	0.387340	0.364466
Moral values	0.897438	0.393681	0.439693
Critical thinking	0.818922	0.287202	0.396970
Support			
Motivation	0.405739	0.841673	0.365410
Listen to suggestions	0.340172	0.842116	0.355063
Praise	0.339573	0.875203	0.389806
Help	0.327694	0.868722	0.394228
Listen to problems	0.384191	0.875777	0.373948
Academic Performance			
Cumulative grade point average	0.342061	0.329364	0.847694
Effective study	0.458355	0.435010	0.914396
Skills	0.436621	0.380145	0.883913

Table 4 shows the results of reliability analysis for the instrument. The values of composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha were greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in this study had high internal consistency (Henseler et al. 2009; Nunally & Benstein 1994). These statistical analyses confirmed that the measurement scales met the acceptable standard of validity and reliability analyses as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 4. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Communication	0.888	0.810
Support	0.935	0.913
Academic Performance	0.913	0.859

ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUCTS

Table 5 shows that the mean values for the variables are between 51.1 and 5.3, showing that the levels of communication, support and academic performance are ranging from high (4) to highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., communication and support) and the dependent variable (i.e., academic performance) are less than 0.90, showing the data are not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al. 2006).

TABLE 5. Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Variable		Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson correlation analysis (r)		
				1	2	4
1.	Communication	5.3	.92	1		
2.	Support	5.1	1.17	.42**	1	
3.	Academic Performance	5.3	.91	.47**	.43**	1

Note: Significant at **p<0.01
   Reliability Estimation is Shown in a Diagonal

OUTCOMES OF TESTING HYPOTHESES 1 AND 2

Figure 2 shows the outcomes of SmartPLS path model for testing the direct effects model. In terms of exploratory of the model, the inclusion of communication and support in the analysis had explained 76 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Specifically, the results of testing hypothesis highlighted two important findings: first, communication significantly correlated with academic performance ($\beta = 0.35$; t = 4.396), therefore H1 was supported. Second, support significantly correlated with academic performance ($\beta = 0.29$; t = 3.852), therefore H2 was supported. In sum, the

result confirms that mentoring program does act as an important determinant of mentees' academic performance in the organizational sample.
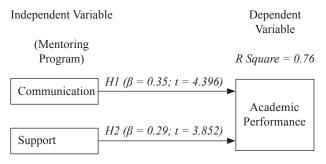
Independent Variable   Dependent Variable

(Mentoring Program)   *R Square = 0.76*

| Communication | → *H1 (β = 0.35; t = 4.396)* → | Academic Performance |
| Support | → *H2 (β = 0.29; t = 3.852)* → | |

FIGURE 3. The outcomes of SmartPLS Path Model

In order to determine a global fit PLS path model, we carried out a global fit measure (GoF) based on Wetzels et al.'s (2006) guideline as follows: GoF = SQRT{MEAN (Communality of Endogenous) x MEAN (R^2)}=0.756, signifying that it exceeds the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R^2. This result confirms that the PLS path model has better explaining power in comparison with the baseline values (GoF small = 0.1, GoF medium = 0.25, GoF larg e= 0.36). It also provides strong support to validate the PLS model globally (Wetzel et al. 2006).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study confirm that mentoring program does act as an important predictor of mentees' academic performance in the context of this study, mentors have appropriately plan and implement mentoring activities based on the organizational policies and procedures. Majority of the respondents perceived that comfortable communication, and material and moral support are actively implemented in formal and/or informal mentoring activities. As a result, it may lead to enhanced mentees' academic performance in higher institutions.

This study presents three major implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study highlight that communication and support have been important predictors of mentees' academic performance. This result also has supported and broadened the notion of al-Qur'an and best practices done by contemporary researchers like Tennenbaum et al. (2001), Bernier et al. (2005), and Ismail and Ridzuan (2012).

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaires used in this study have met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. This leads to the production of valid and reliable findings. With regards to practical contributions, the findings of this study may be used to improve the design and management of mentoring programs based on Islamic ethical values. In order to achieve this objective, management needs to give more attention on improving the following aspects: firstly, ethical values and good rapport between mentors and mentees should be enhanced in order to induce positive learning outcomes like psychosocial and leadership. Secondly, training content and methods for mentors should be updated in order to improve their competencies in teaching, counseling and guiding students who have different ability levels. Third, mentoring groups based on students' academic achievement should be formed in order to ease the addressing of their needs and expectations by the mentors. Fourthly, mentors who have high teaching loads and active in research, but can show high commitment in enhancing students' studies need to be given a high priority in getting better promotions. Fifthly, various kinds of learning activities need to be organized in order to attract students who have different interests and capabilities to actively involve in mentoring programs. Sixthly, students who have actively participated in mentoring activities and show improvement in academic performance need to be given better recognitions. If these suggestions are seriously considered, this may motivate undergraduate students to enhance their academic performance.

CONCLUSION

The study developed a conceptual framework based on the higher education mentoring program research literature. The confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the instrument used in this study met the acceptable standards of validity and reliability analyses. Thus, the results of SmartPLS path model showed that mentoring program does act as an important predictor of mentees' academic performance in the organizational sample. This result also support and broaden the notion of al-Qur'an and best practices done by contemporary researchers in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Therefore, current research and practices within mentoring programs need to consider communication and support as crucial elements in the higher education student development program. This study further suggests

that the capability of mentors to properly practice comfortable communication and provide adequate support will be essential factors that may enhance subsequent positive mentee outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy, satisfaction, commitment, career, leadership skills and ethics). Thus, these positive outcomes may lead to maintained and supported the higher learning institutions' strategis and goals.

The conclusions drawn from this study need to be viewed within the following limitations. Firstly, a cross-sectional research design used to gather data at one time within the period of study might not capture the causal connections between variables of interest. Secondly, this study does not specify the relationship between specific indicators for the independent variable and dependent variable. Thirdly, the outcomes of SmartPLS path model have only focused on the level of performance variation explained by the regression equations, but there are still a number of unexplained factors that affect the causal relationship among variables and their relative explanatory power. Fourth, the instrument used in this study was developed based on good universal values because the studied organizations consist of Muslim and non-Muslim. Finally, the sample for this study was taken from institutions of higher learning that allowed the researchers to gather data via survey questionnaires. These limitations may limit the generalizability the results of this study to other organizational settings.

The limitations of this study may be overcome if future research considers the following aspects: firstly, more organizational and personal characteristics should be further explored, as this may provide meaningful perspectives for understanding how individual similarities and differences influence the mentoring program within an organization. Secondly, other research designs (e.g., longitudinal studies) should be used to collect data and describe the patterns of change and the direction and magnitude of causal relationships between variables of interest (Sekaran & Bougie 2010; Zikmund 2000). Thirdly, to fully understand the effect of mentoring program on mentee attitudes and behaviors, more organizations need to be used in future study. Fourthly, other specific theoretical constructs of mentoring program, such as learning ethics and delivery mode should be considered because they have widely been recognized as an important link between mentoring relationship and many aspects of individual attitudes and behaviors (Davis 2007; Dutton 2003; Sa'id 1998). Finally, other outcomes of mentee like their psychosocial state, self-efficacy, transfer of knowledge, skills

and ability, positive change, and career help should be considered because they have received a lot of attention in mentoring program research literature (Fox et al. 2010; Hansford & Ehrich 2006; Ismail et al. 2006; Ismail & Ridzuan 2012). The importance of these issues needs to be further discovered in future research.

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