

The Beginning and Benefits of Mentoring Relationships – A Case Study of Chefs in Taiwan

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Abstract

This paper is a descriptive study of mentoring relationships between chef mentors and their protégés in Taiwan. It primarily aimed to complement the understanding of the initiation factors and career benefits of such mentoring relationships. In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty-six chefs who worked in star hotels or well-known restaurants in Taiwan. This study deconstructed the formation of mentoring relationships and their mutual benefits in the workplace. The interview results indicated fourteen initiation factors and seven classifications of benefits of mentoring relationships. Previous studies have seldom explored the mentoring relationship characteristics in different cultural contexts and culinary workplaces. Based on the results, this study provides advice on developing a sustainable career through mentoring relationships and recommends the technology-based industry to consider creating effective mentoring relationships. Further related discussion is also provided in this paper.

Keywords: Descriptive study; Mentoring relationship; Chefs; Benefits

Introduction

Studies on mentoring relationships began in the 1980s, and numerous professions such as designers, engineers, lawyers, teachers, reporters, managers, doctors, and medical technicians have been investigated to obtain qualitative and quantitative results on this relationship [1,2]. A literature review of studies related to mentoring relationships conducted over the past three decades showed that the majority of this research was conducted in North America [3,4] and that the primary framework adopted for these studies emphasized the career, psychosocial, and role model functions of these relationships [5-7]. Numerous studies have used professions as the entry point for examining mentoring relationships; however, profession type also influences the content and development of mentoring relationships. Regarding practical application, numerous enterprises worldwide have become increasingly aware of the value provided by positive mentoring relationships. In a survey of Fortune 500 companies, 96% of executives identified mentoring as an important developmental tool, and 75% said it had played a key role in their career success [8]. Consequently, these enterprises have attempted to establish formal mentoring relationships to generate comparatively greater competitive advantages in human resources and to increase organizational commitment and job satisfaction [9-11]. However, mentoring relationships differences in time, profession, and cultural values substantially influence the development of interpersonal relationships [12]. Kram [5] suggests, initiation of mentoring relationships is 6-12 months then is cultivation phase about 2-5 years. During this phase mentors will recognize the protégés and willing to develop their ability.

Being a chef is one of the most challenging professions in the hospitality industry, requiring both scientific and artistic innovation [13]. Intangible culinary knowledge is difficult to convert into specific knowledge, because cooking skills are a fine-art, thus, in the kitchens of contemporary hotels and restaurants, diverse and sophisticated culinary skills are cultivated through close interaction between mentors and protégés; mentors assist their protégés in understanding and mastering various culinary techniques that have been refined over thousands of years through daily practice. However, the dynamic association and content of mentoring relationships in Chinese skill-based organizations examined by previous studies have differed over time because of

unstable working environments, changes in organization scale and characteristics, and the formulation of career types. In mentoring relationships in the Chinese kitchens since the millennium, in addition to teaching cooking skills, mentors also provide guidance in dealing with people and assist with career development.

Thus, based on extant literature regarding mentoring relationships in Western countries, this study recruited 36 chefs who worked in star-rated hotels and renowned restaurants in Taiwan. This study adopted a different vocational and cultural perspective to investigate the initiation of mentoring relationships and the benefits of mentor-protégé relationships in Chinese kitchens.

Materials and Methods

Literature review

Benefits of mentoring: Mentoring relationships are defined as the provision of guidance, counseling, emotional support, and sponsorship by an experienced manager or supervisor to a subordinate employee, or the provision of personal support either to personnel who lack experience or to the newly employed to facilitate their development [14,15]. From a reciprocal perspective, a mentoring relationship can be further defined as a type of interactive exchange process that benefits both the mentor and the protégé [16]. Mentoring is the most effective way to transfer skills and knowledge quickly, and to inspire loyalty and cooperation in new employees [17]. Through mentoring relationships, individuals and organizations can effectively grow and develop. Some studies have mentioned that mentors not only improve the techniques and knowledge of protégés but also transfer norms and behaviors to them and contribute to their accumulation of career and social capital, supporting their career development and shorten protégés' learning

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curves. [18] Protégés become productive sooner because they obtain knowledge, skills, and core values more quickly through the mentoring experience than from time-consuming traditional methods [19].

The mentoring relationships in skill-based workplaces discussed in this study require comparatively more time for the mutual learning process to be developed and thus for the mutual benefits of these relationships to become evident.

Lack of management training, communication skills, and the heritage of traditional cooking culture are three major sources of workplace stress [20,21]. To avoid this stress, chefs must establish a mentoring relationship in which the mentor teaches technical skills to the protégé, thus shortening the learning curve in the kitchen and enabling both parties to benefit from the mentoring relationship. Previous (circa the 1980s) mentoring relationships between Chinese chefs required both parties to undergo a formal apprenticeship ceremony. The mentor in the Chinese kitchen not only teaches the protégé culinary skills but is also responsible for the protégé's behavior and discipline. In return, the protégé is obligated to serve the mentor and share all work- and non-work-related sundry duties. Mutual connections may extend from working life to personal life. Such mentoring relationships typically span three years and four months in the traditional Chinese kitchen. However, with the change times, recent advancements have reduced the timespan of this relationship, such as the prevalence of culinary schools, which provide protégés with fundamental culinary education. Such variations lead to the informal mentoring relationship trends examined in this study. Turban and Dougherty [22] asserted that informal mentoring relationships provide protégés with relatively more positive benefits, including an increased likelihood of promotion, superior compensation, and increased career satisfaction.

Because of the unique characteristics of culinary work, which necessitates prolonged learning periods and the accumulation of experience, informal mentoring relationships in that field of work have excellent interactivity because the mentor and protégé share similar "yuanfen" (a predestined affinity, or synchronicity), views, and concepts. In addition, protégés can receive psychological support and opportunities to imitate role models because of general interaction with mentors and the active concern and experience sharing of mentors. This not only enhances the transference of culinary skills but also increases the emotional connection between mentors and protégés.

In sum, mentoring relationships can provide protégés with additional work support, facilitate the improvement of their culinary skills and knowledge, provide mental support and comfort, and further assist their career development. To achieve bidirectionality and enhance interactivity, mentor-protégé reciprocity and partnerships are established, thereby prolonging mentoring relationships.

Importance of relationships in Chinese culture: Culture is a crucial aspect of mentoring relationships, and the expectations and acceptance of interactive relationship models differ considerably between cultures [3]. Chinese cultural values are often an important factor in determining and shaping Chinese business organization and management. [23]. When comparing Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and numerous other countries, it is apparent that countries with an increased tendency toward collectivism exhibit a more apparent long-term orientation and greater concern for the future [24]. In other words, in social structures, people expect to be cared for by other members of the same structure, and foreign groups are typically rejected. Thus, being considered a member of such structures and maintaining positive

relationships with them provide favorable career benefits. In Asian cultures, both social exchange behavior and closeness in a relationship are critical factors in the development of relationships, which in turn critical factor influencing reward fairness. According to the model of relationships proposed by Hwang [25], mentors employ the rule of "renqing" (providing their apprentices with a favor) when performing social exchange.

In this study, the term "mentoring relationships" is translated as "shitu guanxi;" in Mandarin Chinese "mentor" is a synonym for "master" or "shifu," and "protégé" is a synonym for "mentee" or "tudi." Consequently, the term "shitu" (i.e., mentoring) used in Chinese kitchens refers to the formal and informal relationships that exist between senior chefs and inexperienced apprentices. However, the meaning of the English word "relationship" differs considerably from that of the Chinese term "guanxi." The figurative meaning of "relationship" in English denotes specific interpersonal or person-event connections and influences, whereas "guanxi" in Chinese denotes a social network. The term "guanxi" also implies "gate/pass" or "connect," and refers to the establishment of two entities to facilitate an interactive flow between these entities and in social exchange [26,27]. In Chinese society, resource allocation is greatly influenced by whether the relationship established by the parties is close or distant. In addition, Asian countries emphasize the mutual obligations between senior and junior members of an organization and give greater consideration to the long-term maintenance and development of relationships.

In sum, the establishment of mentoring relationships can provide protégés with additional work support, facilitate the improvement of their culinary skills and knowledge, provide mental support and comfort, expand social relationships, and further assist career development. Upon completion of tasks, the protégé may glorify the mentor or provide advantages to the mentor through various channels that enhance the mentor's career. In a Chinese restaurant workplace, mentoring relationships are formulated by deepening the relationship between mentors and protégés, enabling both parties to join the core group and thereby obtain superior exchange benefits and develop sustainable career by building relationships.

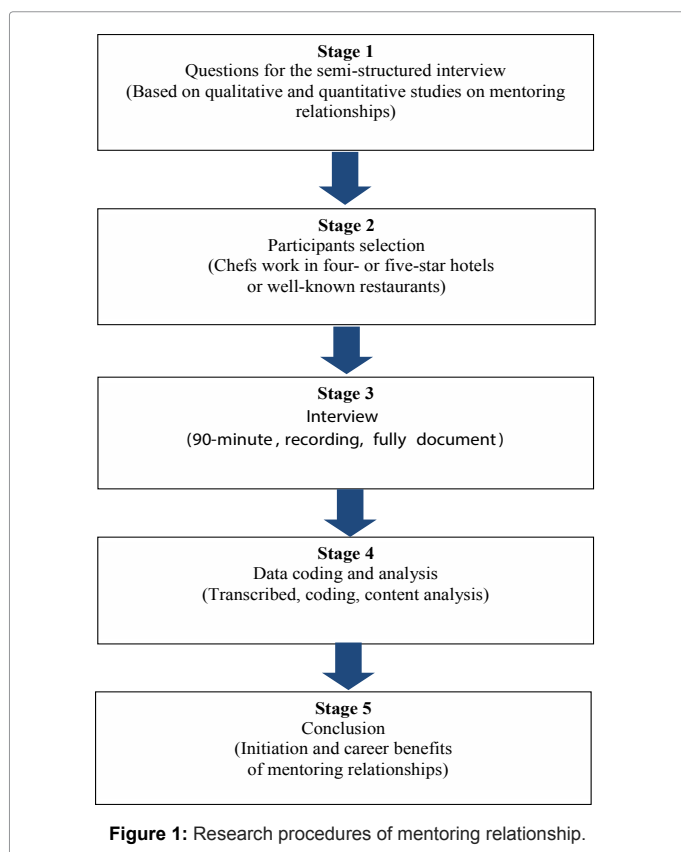
Methodology

Participants and instruments: To comprehensively understand mentoring relationships, data should be collected based on the different viewpoints of mentors and protégés. Lofland, et al. [28] suggested that several social factors such as episodes, encounters, roles, relationships, and groups are suitable for qualitative study. Insight into these social phenomenon enables the researcher to develop depth and integrity in the study [29]. Accordingly, based on extant qualitative studies pertaining to the functions of mentoring relationships, we adopted an in-depth interview method to investigate the development of mentoring relationships in the kitchens of Taiwan. The interview results were also examined to obtain a greater understanding of mentoring relationships.

The number of participants were thirty-six chefs. This study selected twenty mentors for interview, and asked mentors to appoint one protégé to join this interview, but since the four protégés were no longer engaged in the catering industry, they were excluded from the interview. The participants of this study comprised twenty head chefs with an average of thirty-three years of work experience and their sixteen protégés, who worked in four- or five-star hotels or well-known restaurants. In the present study, all protégés designated by the mentors for interviews had been learning from the mentor

for at least two years. Because Kram 1983 suggest that, the range of career functions and psychosocial functions characterizing a mentor relationship peaks during this phase [5]. However, mentors selected the most suitable protégés for interviews instead of making selections based on years of experience or sampling convenience. Mentors and protégés have differing perspectives regarding the benefits and costs of mentoring relationships, according to an intensive interview study of pairs of chefs that makes the experiences of both individuals explicit, highlighting how both can be beneficiaries of the relationship [30,31]. In this study, using a retrospective and participant-matching interview method, the participants were asked to recall their mentor-protégé interaction and mutual recognition processes. To enhance the constructed validity of the interviews, each head chef was given the interview items prior to the interview and asked to record the name of their protégés to confirm their mentoring relationships [32]. The questions for semi-structured interviews were constructed based on various qualitative and quantitative studies on mentoring relationships conducted by Kram, Burke, Scandura, Allen, and Haggard [1,2,5,7,33] these questions involved phases of mentoring relationships, mentoring-relationship functions, characters, and mentoring benefits.

The interview process had three stages. In the first stage, the chefs were instructed to use a retrospective method to recall the mutual recognition with their protégés during the development of their mentoring relationships. In the second stage, the chefs were instructed to recall in substantial detail interactions pertaining to the teaching and learning of work skills between the mentor and protégé. In the third stage, the chefs were asked to describe the status of their current mentoring relationship. Each interview was limited to a 90-minute time frame. The interviews were recorded in their entirety to fully document participants' answers, the analysis procedures show as Figure 1.



Data coding and analysis: Collected data were analyzed using the content analysis method. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed to analyze and summarize participants' responses. Subsequently, data were compiled using axial coding and partial open coding methods. The standard for axial coding was based on the mentoring relationship constructs and characteristics proposed by Kram, Scandura, Allen et al. and Haggard [1,2,5,7] as the primary analytical framework, and open coding was performed for data that did not fit a specific category or did not have references to past studies. Interview data regarding the initiation of the mentoring relationship concerned the characteristics of the Chinese relationship recognition process, which have not been previously studied in the literature. Therefore, open coding was employed to process the interview data from the first section, while structured coding was used to process the data on the career benefits of mentoring relationships in the second section. The main framework was based on the three dimensions of the mentoring-relationship functions proposed in past research. The two aforementioned parts were categorized by Judge A and Judge B using the same keywords. This study adopted a stable reliability between coders as a reference for reliability measurements. Analysis was collaboratively performed by two assessors. When the assessments of the two assessors differed, further discussion was conducted to enhance the reliability of the research results. Coder A was a doctoral student with a background in hotel and restaurant management, who was currently studying at a management institute. Coder B was a graduate student of psychology.

Weber [34] indicated that during the coding process, the classification procedure exhibits acceptable reliability when the interjudge and intrajudge acceptance level is 0.8. To achieve classification stability, Judge A was instructed to re-perform coding and classification two weeks after the initial classification conducted by Judge A and B. Regarding coding stability, the intrajudge reliability coefficient was 0.97. The interjudge reliability coefficient for Judge A and B was 0.91. Kassarian [35] indicated that satisfactory results are achieved when the reliability coefficient exceeds 0.85. Thus, the classification procedures in this study achieved acceptable reliability.

Results

Participant demographic information

This study recruited twenty mentors with an average of thirty-three years of work experience and their sixteen protégés from international four and five star hotels in Taiwan. Among these participants, the least experienced chef had twenty years of work experience, and the most experienced chef had forty-two years of work experience. The thirty-six chefs in this study were experts in Taiwanese cuisine, Shanghai Cuisine, Canton Cuisine, Sichuan Cuisine, and Zhejiang Cuisine.

Contents of initiation and benefits

During the first data classification phase, fourteen factors for the initiation of mentoring relationships were identified. These factors were then divided into external and internal because some are influenced by external and environmental conditions while others are influenced by inner character. In the analysis section, several mentors attributed the relationship development initiation of factors such as fate, feelings, and mutual distance. The external factors comprised fate, an unspoken consensus, feelings, distance, performance, attachment, and relationship referrals. The internal factors comprised attitude, diligence, morality, intent, ease of teaching, endurance, and talent. A summary of the critical factors count and example of interview content

are tabulated in Table 1 and proportion of internal and external factors shown as pie chart in Figure 2.

During the second data classification phase, critical elements of the benefits of mentoring relationships were identified. Subsequently, seven new classifications were inducted, namely, mentor’s influence, enhancing visibility, coaching and cultivating, learning opportunities, sustainable career development, workplace reciprocity, and becoming a confidant. Thus, a total of twenty-one critical elements of benefits were found, as tabulated in Table 2 and proportion of benefits classifications shown as pie chart in Figure 3.

Initiation of mentoring relationships

After classifying and summarizing the content of the interviews conducted with the mentors and protégés, the findings suggested that the initiation and establishment of mentoring relationships in Chinese restaurant kitchens is typically informal. The initiations of mentoring relationships count in Table 1, internal factors were 53.5% and external factors were 46.5%. In Chinese restaurant kitchens, mentoring relationships are initiated in two parts. The first part comprises external and unexpected factors. The recognition process between mentors and protégés involves numerous critical emotional factors such as fate, unspoken consensus, feelings, distance, performance,

attachment, and relationship referrals. Nonspecific factors and the feature of believing in fate are crucial in the relationship recognition process. These elements consequently verify the emphasis of yuanfen (fit to work together), and feel a protégé is the right person to teach. Sosik and Godshalk [36] used “closeness” to describe the quality of a relationship, as the concept “distance” does in this study. The distance factor expressed by the mentors during the interviews refers to the sense of emotional distance between mentors and protégés. When the sense of distance between a mentor and protégé is relatively close, the likelihood of initiating a mentoring relationship is increased. Weinberg, et al. [37] also included the concept of “intimacy” in their investigation of mentoring relationships. The degree of intimacy, trust, and perceived obligation between two people primarily depends on the relationship development during their interaction. The relationship between the two individuals should be one based on mutual trust and respect, and should allow both to develop their respective skills while the mentoring arrangement exists [38]. Following the catalytic process of this interaction, the personal attributes of both parties attract each other, causing one person to perceive the other as an insider (zijiren) instead of an outsider. This quasi-identity underlies the characteristics of intimacy, trust, and obligation [39].

According to the results of this study, mentors’ recollection of the

Classifications	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	Total	%	
External elements																							46.50%
1. Fate	*	*	*	*				*						*	*	*		*	*			10	
2. Unspoken consensus		*				*		*		*						*						5	
3. Feeling	*	*	*	*		*						*		*	*		*	*	*	*		12	
4. Distance			*	*									*				*					4	
5. Performance	*	*	*		*	*			*		*	*		*		*	*	*	*			13	
6. Attachment							*	*	*						*	*			*	*		8	
7. Relationship referrals				*	*			*	*		*				*			*		*		7	
Internal elements																							53.50%
1. Attitude	*				*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	16	
2. Diligence			*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	15	
3. Morality							*		*						*		*		*	*	*	6	
4. Intent		*				*		*	*			*		*		*		*				8	
5. Ease of teaching		*	*		*			*				*	*				*		*			8	
6. Endurance				*			*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*		*		*		10	
7. Talent		*						*							*			*	*			5	
Total count																						127	100%

*The symbol means the chefs’ conceptions of initiation of a mentoring relationship.

Table 1: Summary of the Initiation of a mentoring relationship.

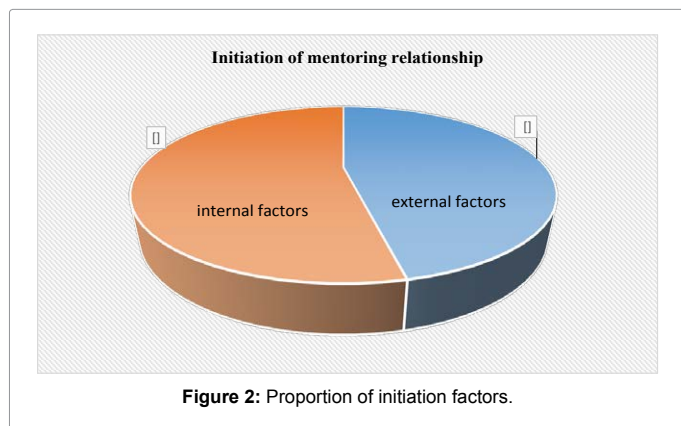


Figure 2: Proportion of initiation factors.

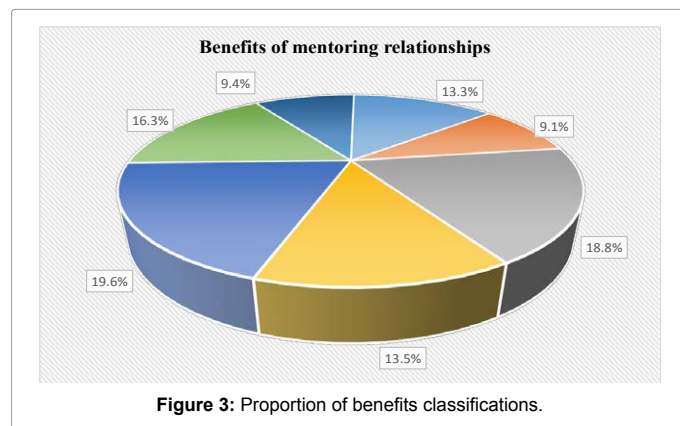


Figure 3: Proportion of benefits classifications.

Classification	Critical elements	Examples from interview content
1. Mentor's influence	1-1 mentor's skill level	➤ Decent mentors typically recommend decent protégés.
	1-2 mentor's fame	➤ When protégés wish to change jobs, they are often asked who their mentor was.
	1-3 mentor's power	➤ When these mentors are dissatisfied with their work conditions, they may leave with the entire work team.
2. Enhancing visibility	2-1 expanding social networks	➤ Excellent mentors allows protégés to expand their social networks.
	2-2 opportunities for exposure	➤ When job hunting, protégés are required only to state their previous mentor to qualify for the job.
3. Coaching and cultivating	3-1 learning the pith of cuisine	➤ Without the secrets receipt and skill of mentors, finished dishes differ even when the exact ratio of ingredients is used.
	3-2 skill persistence spirit	➤ Only when protégés learn to be persistent in their culinary skills and cooking process can they prepare delicious dishes.
	3-3 cultivating ethics, morals, attitudes	➤ The primary requirement of their protégés is morality, followed by courtesy and kitchen skill.
4. Learning opportunities	4-1 recommending learning targets	➤ Mentors recomme to proteges to learn in a different profession.
	4-2 learning secret skills	➤ Mentors train their protégés based on their abundant experiences and secret skills.
	4-3 forced learning	➤ Mentors often instruct their protégés to perform tasks. Occasionally, protégés might become frustrated by these tasks; however, these tasks are beneficial.
5. Sustainable career development	5-1 arranging proper positions	➤ Mentors can recommend their protégés to superior job opportunities, and promote protégés who demonstrate superior performance.
	5-2 offer job opportunities	➤ Mentors provide their protégés with opportunities to work part time.
	5-3 offer career advancement	➤ Mentors are aware of many job opportunities. When an opportunity arises, mentors can recommend their protégés to other workplaces to further advance their career.
	5-4 concerns future career	➤ When a promoted opportunity arises in other hotels, mentors willingly accept the resignation of their protégés with their blessing.
6. Workplace reciprocity	6-1 mutual assistance	➤ Protégés automatically reduce mentor's trivial things and assist in managing various tasks.
	6-2 bonding	➤ When a mentor undertakes a large party, their protégés will assist them voluntarily.
	6-3 working partners	Mentors are both friend and teacher to their protégés. Sometimes mentors rely on their protégés to assist them in completing tasks.
	6-4 proud of each other	➤ They are proud of each other because of their reputation and achievement.
7. Becoming a confidant	7-1 entering factions	➤ When supervisors are familiar with protégés, protégés enter the core group easily.
	7-2 mentor-centered extension	➤ The food and beverage industry emphasizes highly skilled team members but that are mentor-centered.
		➤ Occasionally, mentors are invited to cater for the opening of a new hotel. During such events, mentors typically request assistance from familiar helpers to develop their own confidant and excluding others.

Table 2: Benefits of a mentoring relationship.

recognition process in mentoring relationships showed that the time and effort used to recognize a mentoring relationship, in construct process of Chinese relationship, emphasizes the factor of believing in fate and emotional factors.

The second part of the initiation of mentoring relationships identifies internal factors of the relationship. Mentors feel that, personal inner qualities are more important factors in the beginning of a relationship. After some time, mentors observe the intrinsic qualities of their protégés and assess whether they possess a favorable attitude, diligence, morality, and intent; whether they are easy to teach; and whether they demonstrate endurance and talent, before they accept their protégés. These critical personality traits are required in Chinese restaurant kitchens that demand continuous practice, active learning, and fast-paced work. Mentoring requires nurturing. It requires a long-term reciprocal commitment of energy and time, as well as two people who come together at a mutually opportune time and who respect and enjoy one another enough to spend substantial amounts of time together [21]. In Asian countries where long-term cultural traits are preferred, mentors expect to have long-term relationships with their protégés, and hope that their protégés learn through practice and benefit the organization in the long-term. Thus, regarding the recognition of mentoring relationships, those people who exhibit the seven aforementioned critical internal factors are accepted for protégés. However, a mentoring relationship may serve as a lens by

which an employee develops beliefs about his or her organization [40]. Eby, et al. [11], in the study of mentor-protégé similarity, found a high level of consistency between the two in terms of attitude, values, beliefs, or personality.

Career benefits of mentoring relationships

This study classified seven career benefits related to mentoring relationships, show as tabulated in Tables 3 and 4. The first benefit of mentoring relationships is called “mentor’s influence,” which comprised the following content: mentor’s skill level, mentor’s fame in this field and mentor’s power. In a Chinese restaurant kitchen, reputation is power. This power not only includes the presence of positive support but also implies the existence of negative forces (a sense of bullying). In addition, the fame of the mentor also represents his trustworthiness and skill level. The trust generated in this context is a type of social trust developed through affect and identity, and a professional trust developed through professional knowledge and ability [41]. Thus, protégés working under a mentor’s reputation often receive substantial benefits in terms of the working process.

The second benefit of the mentoring relationships in this study is called “enhancing visibility.” This dimension not only assists protégés in expanding their social networks, but also emphasizes the existence of factions in the workplace. This is primarily because of the various type of cuisine in the Chinese restaurant kitchen. Xin, et al. [42]

Classifications	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	total	
1. Mentor's influence		*				*		*		*	*	*										
1-1 mentor's skill level		*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	9
1-2 mentor's fame		*	*														*	*		*	15	
1-3 mentor's power		*	*				*		*	*				*		*				*	8	
2. Enhancing visibility																						
2-1 expanding social networks	*		*		*	*			*	*	*	*				*	*			*	12	
2-2 opportunities for exposure	*			*	*	*	*					*	*			*	*	*	*		9	
3. Coaching and cultivating																						
3-1 learning the pith of cuisine	*	*		*		*		*				*		*	*	*	*	*		*	13	
3-2 skill persistence spirit		*	*						*	*	*		*		*	*		*		*	10	
3-3 cultivating ethics, morals, attitudes	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*	*			*	*		*	*	15	
4. Learning opportunities																						
4-1 recommending learning targets	*	*	*		*		*			*			*				*	*			9	
4-2 learning secret skills														*		*		*		*	4	
4-3 forced learning	*	*	*		*		*						*			*	*	*	*	*	10	
5. Career development																						
5-1 arranging proper positions			*	*			*	*			*	*			*			*			7	
5-2 offer job opportunities			*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*			*	*	*	*	*	13	
5-3 offer career advancement					*					*		*			*	*					7	
5-4 concerns future career		*		*	*				*			*			*	*	*		*	*	10	
6. Workplace reciprocity																						
6-1 mutual assistance		*	*		*		*					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	13	
6-2 bonding		*	*									*	*						*	*	6	
6-3 working partners								*				*									2	
6-4 proud of each other			*											*	*				*	*	5	
7. Becoming a confidant																						
7-1 entering factions		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	16
7-2 mentor-centered extension			*	*		*				*		*			*	*				*	7	
Total count																					200	

*The symbol means the chefs' conceptions of career benefits of a mentoring relationship

Table 3: Summary of the chefs' conceptions of career benefits.

Classifications	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	total	M+P	%	
1. Mentor's influence																				13.30%
1-1 mentor's skill level						*						*		*	*	*	5	14		
1-2 mentor's fame	*			*		*	*	*					*	*		*	8	23		
1-3 mentor's power						*	*								*		3	11		
2. Enhancing visibility																				9.10%
2-1 expanding social networks	*		*				*		*		*	*			*	*	8	20		
2-2 opportunities for exposure	*		*										*	*			4	13		
3. Coaching and cultivating																				18.80%
3-1 learning the pith of cuisine	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	13	26		
3-2 skill persistence spirit								*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	5	15		
3-3 cultivating ethics, morals, attitudes	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	27		
4. Learning opportunities																				13.50%
4-1 recommending learning targets	*		*		*		*	*	*			*		*	*	*	9	18		
4-2 learning secret skills	*		*		*		*					*	*	*	*	*	8	12		
4-3 forced learning			*	*	*		*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	9	19		
5. Career development																				19.60%
5-1 arranging proper positions							*	*	*	*	*	*			*		5	12		
5-2 offer job opportunities	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	11	24		
5-3 offer career advancement			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	7	14		
5-4 concerns future career		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	11	21		
6. Workplace reciprocity																				16.30%
6-1 mutual assistance	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	13	26		
6-2 bonding			*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*					6	12		
6-3 working partners			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	9	11		
6-4 proud of each other			*	*	*	*	*							*	*	*	5	10		
7. Becoming a confidant																				9.40%
7-1 entering factions		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	7	23		
7-2 mentor-centered extension			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	4	11		
Total count																	362	100%		

*The symbol means the protégés' conceptions of career benefits of a mentoring relationship

Table 4: Summary of the protégés' conceptions of career benefits.

contended that relationships in Asian societies are essential cultural and social factors that serve as the driving force in interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships. Thus, in addition to the expansion of social networks, enhancing visibility emphasizes the relationships in faction.

This study established the third benefit of mentoring relationships, called “coaching and cultivating,” which emphasizes learning the pith of cuisine, skill persistence, and cultivates ethics, morals and attitudes. Regarding the cooking pith of Chinese cuisine, methods for cultivating stronger culinary skills are needed in mentoring relationships, during the coaching process, as the dimension of coaching experience and culinary skills further emphasizes the morality, attitudes, and ethics. These concepts comply with the essence of Confucian work dynamics proposed by Chinese Culture Connection [43,44]. These Chinese dynamics emphasize social status and personal virtues such as diligence, perseverance, sense of shame, and awareness of priority in rank. These characteristics reflect the moral ethics of Confucian education and are consistent with our research results. People who demonstrate these characteristics can better follow the instructions of their superiors.

The fourth benefit of mentoring relationships in this study is called “learning opportunities.” This dimension comprised numerous elements such as recommending learning targets, learning secret skills and forced learning. Mentors typically provide their protégés with substantial learning support during the work process. In general, a chef he is not only good at cooking, but also is familiar with strategic planning, product sales, presentation, food quality, safety, and sanitation in the contemporary food and beverage industry [44]. Therefore, mentors play an important role. Mentoring shortens protégés’ learning curves. Protégés become productive sooner because they gain knowledge, skills, and core values more quickly from mentor-guided experiences than from traditional methods [45], and they can even learn some secret skill or a recipe from their mentors; these experiences are a very precious gift. In addition to assisting their protégés in enhancing their skill level and expanding their cooking knowledge, mentors recommend further external learning opportunities to expand the learning scope, forcing their protégés to learn in different workplaces. Mentors nurture their protégés from the perspective of a long-term vision.

The fifth benefit of mentoring relationships, “sustainable career development,” arranging proper positions, offering career advancement, offering job opportunities, and concern for future career. Regarding the work position of protégés, the “proper” position in the mentoring relationships of Chinese chefs originates from mentors emphasizing the introduction of specific tasks to their protégés. The mentors asserted that the work allocated to their protégés was suited to their personality and development, and that they could supervise the working conditions of their protégés. Moreover, the recommendation of part-time work is based on the business characteristics of Chinese restaurant kitchens. A portion of kitchen work is temporary, and this work can only be obtained through relationships. Thus, mentors become ideal middlemen for recommending this type of work, and part-time work opportunities have become an essential characteristic of mentoring relationships. Hofstede [46] stated that Middle Eastern and Asian countries exhibit a long-term orientation, long-term-oriented cultures, and societies that emphasize future development. Thus, the education provided by mentors to their protégés is not limited to skills required in the workplace, but also encompasses the understanding of other disciplines and the planning of future learning directions and career development.

This research primarily considered Confucianism in analyzing the

mentoring relationship, establishing the sixth and seventh benefits of mentoring relationships, “workplace reciprocity” and “becoming a confidant.” However, “workplace reciprocity” and “becoming a confidant” were not mentioned in past studies. Workplace reciprocity was the topic most discussed during our research interviews, includes mutual assistance and bonding, working partners, proud of each other. Because of the distinct characteristics of kitchens, such as the rapid working pace, long working hours, and numerous details and staff members requiring management and skill coaching, protégés who have close relationships with their mentors can assist with completing tasks based on the perspectives and approaches of their mentors. Accordingly, the characteristics of the workforce in Chinese kitchens can be divided into confidants or factions led by mentors. The term “confidant” translated into Mandarin Chinese is “qinxin,” which refers to a person who can be closely trusted. Thus, the “qinxin” of a manager might be his or her closest and most supportive friend. These individuals are near the core of authority and serve as valuable assistants to managers [47]. The confidant mentioned in this study demonstrates greater factionalism and ethics than does the “work group” proposed in Western studies. In Confucian societies such as Taiwan, relationships are influenced by Confucianism, which guides the proper ordering and responsibilities of positions in society [48]. From a differential mode of association, the relationship between a mentor and protégé follows social exchange principles. Mentors demand allegiance from their protégés in return for favorable treatment. Once protégés become their mentors’ “qinxin,” they unconditionally accept the tasks assigned to them by their mentors [47,49]. Thus, protégés who are confidants are obligated to accept the position allocated by their mentors, regardless of whether they perceive that the assigned job is ideal. This demonstrates the collectivistic characteristic of Chinese societies, in which “collective obligations, goals, and interests take precedence over those of individuals” [50,51]. Hofstede, et al. [52-54] also emphasized that in a collectivist society, individuals consider themselves part of the collective whole, and subject themselves to the norms and obligations imposed on them by society. Members of such societies place community goals and interests above their own, and maintain relationships with members of the community that differ from relationships with people who are not members of the community.

Conclusions and Implications

This study investigated the mentoring relationship of Chinese restaurant chefs and, based on the data obtained in the participant interviews, established numerous dimensions and critical elements of this relationship that differed from the characteristics proposed in Western studies. This study clearly described the development process of mentoring relationships and discussed the influence that mentoring relationships have on culinary career. The content of mentoring relationships intrinsically differs because of varying cultural backgrounds in this research. For example, in Western countries, the concept of teaching emphasizes the cultivation of workplace knowledge and experience. By contrast, the cultivation of culinary skills examined in this study emphasizes the morality, and essence of Chinese cuisine. The numerous references to the benefit of mentoring in related research have been primarily aimed at raising companies’ awareness of the value of mentoring relationships and at establishing favorable long-term coaching, guiding, and training relationships to strengthen loyalty and trustworthiness. By examining the facilitative role of mentoring relationships in career development, this study attempted to identify different mentoring-relationship benefits among Chinese kitchens. However, this research found that a mentoring relationship needs to provide different benefits in the kitchen, and that cultivating

a culinary spirit and personal morale and obtain secret skill from mentors are quite important for protégés. The results indicated that the characteristics of Chinese mentoring relationships, such as closeness, factions, and the establishment of a confidant, are attributable to the differences in mentorships based on the level of the relationship. In addition, past studies of the mentoring relationship have discussed the relationship by phase, gender, or type, but in this study we found that the tightness of the bond and level between mutual relationships of mentors and protégés are important factors affecting sustainable career development in the future. This is a major finding and a valuable concept that should be perceived in Chinese workplace management.

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