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Poster Abstract:

Development of an Organisational Memory Scale

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In many countries, people are retiring earlier than ever before and the retirement of the baby boom generation over the next two decades further intensifies the impact of this trend. Accompanying this development, are fears about the potential loss of organisational knowledge or memory which may equate to the loss of the organisation's competitive advantage.

Organisations, while recognizing that older workers often possess valuable "organisational memory" seem to also assume these same workers will readily divest themselves of their knowledge. Encouraging experienced workers to act as a mentor to younger or less experienced workers, is often mentioned in the management and related literature as a way of capturing and retaining valuable organisational knowledge. However, employees (including older workers) in the possession of considerable organisational memory, may, or may not be willing to divulge their knowledge to others, for a number of reasons.

This poster presents initial results from the first of a series of studies designed to examine the relationship between organisational memory in the individual and propensity to mentor. It outlines the development and exploratory factor analysis of an "Organisational Memory" scale that taps the individual's own resources in terms of organisational knowledge and expertise.

Subsequent studies in the proposed research aim to help organisations more effectively target potential mentors for the purposes of retaining organisational knowledge, while also identifying the relevant costs and benefits of mentoring perceived by those individuals. By doing so it is hoped organisations will have a clearer understanding of how they can minimize costs while emphasising the benefits of such a relationship for the potential mentor.

In contrast to the "development outcomes" focus of much of the mentoring literature, these studies give attention to the "knowledge sharing role of mentoring, while also touching on developmental outcomes, in this case, for the mentor.