

An Investigation on Impact of Psychosocial Mentoring on Motivation of Protégées in Formal Mentoring Program

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Abstract

The value of having a mentor has been well established. In tune with acknowledgment in current times that employees are the only source of competitive advantage in business a sizeable number of corporate organizations have implemented formal mentoring programs. These programs are seriously used as intervention tools by human resource professionals to motivate and engage high potential talent and providing employee's opportunity to foster personal and professional bond within the organization,. While mentoring programs have become increasingly popular, there have been few empirical studies in the country on such a topical subject. The paper seeks to examine the effectiveness of psychosocial mentoring in context of its impact on motivation of protégées, an important outcome of a formal mentoring program. Questionnaires were administered to 183 protégées engaged in a formal mentoring program in service sector organization in Delhi NCR. Correlation and regression analysis was used to find the relationship between psychosocial mentoring and motivation of protégées. Friendship and Parent dimensions of mentor psychosocial function were found to have predictive characteristics with respect to motivation of protégées. Human resource professionals may design trainings for mentors which emphasizes on comrade and ally based approach as opposed to a disciplinarian during their engagements with protégées.

Keywords: Formal mentoring, Psychosocial function, Motivation, Protégées, Organization

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1. INTRODUCTION

The popularity of mentoring as an emerging tool in the hands of human resource professionals aiming to nurture and develop employees has been increasing in recent years. It has been acclaimed to be a career management and development tool in organizations (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005; O_Reilley, 2001). In a recent article in Times of India, 2015, credited India with the history of having mentoring in form of Guru-shishya relationship. Mentoring has over years become a corporate mantra for training, nurturing and retaining talent. It is well established that presence of a mentor leads to motivation and engaging protégées. While many organizations may claim to believe in a culture of mentoring and coaching, few have a formal structure in place. According to Noe, (1988), almost five decades back, many organizations have attempted to formalize mentoring relationships to capitalize on the potential developmental aspects of such relationships). Especially in early 1970's, quite a few organizations have made attempts to replicate the benefits of mentoring process by initiating formal mentoring programs (Zey, 1985; Burke, Mckeen and McKenna, 1994).

In a recent study titled "CEO as Chief Talent Officer 2014" it was discovered that more than ninety percent of CEOs believe in active involvement in participation in talent endeavors of human resource department, an amazing two third of the CEOs are believed to be driving mentoring program in respective organizations. CEOs are now involving themselves not just with the strategy of hiring appropriate talent, but also with how the organizations groom them for future leadership roles (Business Standard, December, 2014). Companies have commonly used mentoring as a means for supporting employees' personal and professional development and have also been found to increasing employee motivation and performance.

Today, many organizations are attempting to replicate these benefits by developing formal mentoring programs (Burke, Mckeen and McKenna, 1994). As of 1989, one third of United States companies had formal mentoring programs (Bragg, 1989) and formal mentoring is an ongoing workplace practice today (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Deutsche Bank

found that in the aftermath of the financial crisis, a diverse workforce had become even more of a priority for financial service companies. Internal company research revealed that female managing directors who had left the firm did so because they were offered better positions elsewhere. In response, Deutsche Bank created a sponsorship program aimed at assigning women to critical posts. The company paired female executives with executive committee members who served as mentors. This not only raised the women's visibility, but also ensured that they would have a powerful advocate when promotions were being considered. As a result of this mentoring program, one-third of the participants were in larger roles, and another third had been deemed ready to move-up by senior management (<http://www.forbesmedia.com>). Many major US companies such as Bank of America, Marriot International, and Charles Schwab have formal mentoring programs in place to help them attract, retain and develop high performers.

In India, companies across sectors like Siemens, Samsung, Inter Globe Enterprise, Bharti Airtel, Radission, HDFC have explored the utility of formal mentoring programs for meeting pressing talent management challenges such as attracting, motivating and engaging the generation Y workforce, developing a diverse pipeline of talent in underrepresented populations, and aligning mentoring to their overall employee development strategy. In one of the earliest studies done Gaskill and Sibley (1990) upper - level mentored executive's perceived higher levels of job motivation than non mentored executives. Consistent with the youth mentoring literature, Ragins (2010) endorsed the opinion of Liang, Tracy, Taylor and Williams (2002) and propounded that high-quality relationships are further characterized by authenticity, engagement and empowerment, which lead to increased self-worth, motivation, new skills, and the desire for greater connection. In view of Noe (1988), observation that protégées who demonstrate greater motivation are likely to receive more mentoring support from mentors and lack of empirical studies on the subject in the country, it was found prudent to explore the impact of psychosocial mentor function on motivation of protégées.

Construct of mentoring

An examination of published works on organizational mentoring reveals that as far back as early as 1980s (e.g. Campion and Goldfinch, 1983; Hunt and Michael, 1983) and as until 2000s (e.g. Higgins and Kram, 2001), there is a lack of consensus on the definition of mentoring and mentor in literature (Chao, 1998; Minter and Thomas, 2000; Noe, 1988a). Surprisingly, some researchers have not directly stated a definition of mentoring or mentor either in their survey or interviewing of participants (Phillips-Jones, 1982; Whitely et al., 1992) thus allowing participants to draw on their own intuitive understanding of the mentor and mentoring concepts (Ragins and Cotton, 1993).

Mentoring has been viewed as a dyadic, face to face, long-term relationship between a supervisory adult and a novice student that fosters the protégé's professional, academic or personal development (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant, Vallone, 2000). Mentoring has evolved as a multipurpose developmental tool in the employment life cycle of employees (Adhikari, Ishita and Moshal, B.S, 2015).

The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of greater experience and seniority in the world the young man is entering. It is pertinent to note that no word currently being used is adequate to cover the nature of this pristine relationship. Words such as 'counselor' or 'guru' suggest more subtle meanings, but do not holistically define mentoring. The term "Mentor" is generally used in a much narrower sense, to mean teacher, advisor or sponsor. Levinson et al. (1978), aptly summarizes "as we use the term mentor, it means all these things, and more". The following two definitions capture the essence of the word mentoring:

Mentoring is a nurturing process where a more experienced person serves as a role model, teacher, sponsor, encourager or counselor to a less experienced person for promoting the mentee's professional, personal and leadership development (Lee et al., 2006).

Higgins and Kram (2001) state "A traditional mentoring relationship is one in which a senior

person working in the protégé's organization assists the protégé's personal and professional development."

Both definitions highlight prominent functions of a mentor, his/her competence and key objective of mentoring viz. professional / personal development of the protégé.

2. OUTCOMES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR THREE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Mentoring relationships are important because they have the potentials to offer both organizations and their members a wealth of benefits. Most of the senior management in organizations would not contest that mentoring programs can bring considerable advantages to the three key stakeholder in the process, the mentor, the protégé and the organization. Companies have been continuously assessing the value of mentoring and comparing the effectiveness of formal and informal mentoring programs. Managers who mentor their direct reports were benefited by various outcomes, including job performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994; Sosik, Godshalk and Yammarino, 2004; Raabe and Beehr, 2003; Scandura and Williams, 2004; Brashear, B. et. al., 2006; Ghosh, Rajashi and Reio Jr., Thomas G., 2013). Additionally, mentors benefit from rejuvenation, increased promotion rates, an increased power base and access to related information (Burke, Mckeen and McKenna, 1994; Aryee et al., 1996; Allen et al., 1997; Ragins and Scandura, 1999).

Organizations benefit from opportunities for enhanced organizational learning, competitive advantage, strategic functioning, employee motivation, better performance, and executive development and retention (Kram and Hall, 1989; Viator and Scandura, 1991;). Mentoring can improve communication within the firm and help in merging different cultures. Even when organizational rewards are not congruent with individual performance (as in politically turbulent organizations), the financial, career and other performance – based rewards received by the protégé are an approximate index of the benefits accruing to the organization. Given its potential benefits,

and mentoring received and Noe (1988) suggests that protégées who demonstrate greater motivation may receive more mentoring support from mentors. Hence it becomes an interesting subject to research.

There were several theories like achievement motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, task motivation to name a few which were studied to find relevant definitions. Recent findings on LMI (Achievement Motivation Inventory (Leistungsmotivations Inventar), a standard tool to measure motivation indicated that the seventeen dimensions of the LMI lead to a 3-factor structure, which consists of ambition, independence and task-related motivation. In the current study, motivation was measured by collating 5 items from extensive review of literature. The sample item included statements, "I prefer working independently" (Pareekh, Udai and Purohit, Surathi (2009) and "I am appealed by situations allowing me to test my abilities. All items were measured using Likert scale. The instrument captured demographic information from the protégé's in terms of their gender, experience, level in the organization, education and gender of the mentor.

The face validity, criterion validity and content validity of the scale was done by an expert panel constituting of nine reputed academician and six senior industry professionals. The experts gave their views on the ease of language, appropriateness and if these were double barreled. Changes were carried out post deliberations on the same. Reliability of the motivation scale was measured, with a Cron Balch of .818. The final questionnaire was ready for administration.

6. SAMPLING

Sampling procedures in the social and behavioral sciences are often divided into primarily two group probabilities and purposive. A list of large organizations was prepared using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is also known as **judgmental**, **selective** or **subjective** sampling; purposive sampling relies on the **judgment** of the researcher when it comes to selecting the **units** that are to be studied. Maxwell (1997) further defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which, "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the

important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices. For the purpose of the current study, protégé profile was someone who is a part of a formal mentoring program being conducted in the organization.

A request for participation from 15 organizations from service sector yielded in 183 respondents. The data was keyed into an excel file and spss was used for further statistical analysis.

7. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to examine presence of all six dimensions of psychosocial mentor functions; descriptive statistics of frequency, mean and standard deviation were used. Mean describes the central position of a frequency distribution for a group of data and standard deviation, a measure of spread helped to summarize how spread out these scores are. The following table displays the statistical output.

Table 1: Mean and SD scores of all six dimensions of psychosocial mentor function

Psychosocial Mentor functions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Friendship	4.93	1.139
Social	4.13	1.516
Parent	3.57	1.682
Role model	4.24	1.455
Counselling	4.60	1.234
Acceptance	4.85	1.219
Aggregate	4.38	1.156

A high majority of the protégées agreed that the mentor provided support and encouragement. Over all *friendship* dimension was the highest amongst all the psychosocial function's (mean = 4.93, SD =1.139) of a mentor. *Social* function had a high mean and relatively higher standard deviation (mean = 4.13, SD =1.516). The mean score of *parent* function of the mentor was the lowest of all psychosocial dimension (mean = 3.57, SD =1.682) and an overall high standard deviation indicate that there was less uniformity in the response with respect

to the parent dimension. Possibly there were few protégé respondents who positively answered that their mentor is like a father/mother and perceived the mentor as a parent and even fewer perceived that the mentor treats them like son/daughter. Almost majority of the respondents answered that their mentor serves as a role model for them, that the mentor is someone they could identify with and that the mentor represented who they wanted to be. Overall the mean score of *role model* function of the mentor indicated a positive perception amongst the protégé (mean = 4.24 SD = 1.455).

Majority of the respondents viewed that their mentor serves as a sounding board and that the mentor guided their personal development. Overall the mean score of *counseling* function of the mentor indicated a positive perception amongst the protégé (mean = 4.60, SD = 1.234). Finally, close to two third of the respondents viewed that their mentor accepts them as a competent professional, sees them as being competent and thought highly of them. Overall the mean score of *acceptance* function of the mentor was second highest among all psychosocial roles indicating a highly positive perception amongst the protégé (mean = 4.85, SD = 1.219)

The overall mean for combined set of mentor psychosocial function was high (mean = 4.51, SD = 1.015) implying that all the dimensions were experienced by the protégé respondents. The results also reinforce the key proposition that a mentor indeed does all these roles albeit the intensity of experience of each dimension may differ from individual to individual and organization to organization.

The researcher used statistical tool of "correlation" to study the relationship between psychosocial mentor function and protégé motivation. The table below shares the level of significance and value of coefficient of correlation of the psychosocial function with motivation of protégé.

Table 2: Relationship correlation as a coefficient of dimensions of mentor psychosocial function with respect to mentoring outcomes

Independent Variable Psychosocial Function	Dependent Variable Motivation
Friendship	.271**
Social	-.047 NS
Parent	-.126 NS
Role model	-.027 NS
Counseling	.054 NS
Acceptance	.133 NS

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

NS : Not significant

The results from the above table help the researcher infer that amongst sub dimensions of psychosocial function, only friendship has a statistically significant correlation with motivation of protégé ($r = .271, p \leq 0.01$). The value of r (coefficient of correlation) is low but cannot be ignored, as in the case of research in field of social sciences. The dimension of social ($r = -.047, NS$), parent ($r = -.126, NS$) and role model ($r = -.027, NS$) surprisingly have an insignificant and negative correlation with motivation. Acceptance is positively but insignificantly correlated ($r = .133, NS$) and so is counseling ($r = .054, NS$).

Further, to understand the predictive association between the six sub - dimension of psychosocial mentor function and motivation of protégé, statistical tool of step wise regression analysis was applied. The table below shares the level of significance and value of Beta coefficient .

Table 3: Determinants of motivation - regression

analysis with set of independent variables of psychosocial function of mentor

Independent Variables : PS Function	Dependent Variable : Motivation		
	Beta	p-value	t-value
Friendship	.390**	.000**	4.767
Parent	-.330**	.000**	4.035
$R^2 = .126$			

** Significant at 0.01 level

The above stated results revealed that motivation of the protégé is very significantly predicted by the dimension friendship ($\beta = .390$, $t=4.767$, $p \leq 0.01$). A surprising revelation was that the parent function has a highly significant negative contribution ($\beta = -.303$, $t= 4.035$, $p \leq 0.01$). Together friendship and parent dimension of psychosocial function of mentor accounts for 12.6 percent ($R^2 = .126$) variance in motivation of the protégé.

Mentors in the function of friends are recognized as the best motivators. Protégées look for a friend and guide in her/his supervisor or mentor. They are charged with a self desire to do better when they have someone who they can trust and confide. A mentoring relationship begins with establishing of a bond between the two individuals in a relationship. Donning the role of a friend cements this further. The regression result establishes parent function to be a negative predictor of protégé motivation. There is a substantial increase in young mentor – managers especially in service sector, protégé are likely to find it hard able to correlate with them as parents. Instead protégées would look for a “buddy” or a “friend” rather than a parent in the work environment. Parental function could be seen more as a control function which is not the acceptable style of today’s mentor managers.

As an inference of the above results, it can be concluded that amongst all the six psychosocial functions of a mentor, friendship and parent are the only two having a predictive characteristic with respect to motivation of protégé.

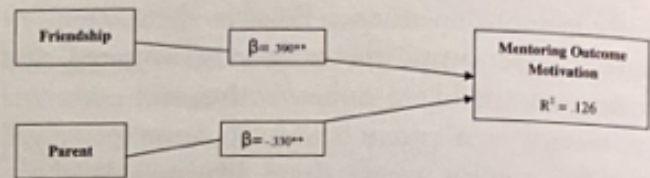


Figure 2: Framework for mentor psychosocial function and motivation

8. CONCLUSION

Mentor in the function of *friends* are recognized as the best motivators. The relationship between friendship function and degree of motivation of protégé was found to be highly significant. The era of boss and supervisor being correct has gone by and today the Gen Y i.e. people born between 1980 until 2000, (Meir, Justin et al., 2010) look for a friend and guide in his supervisor or mentor. Gen Y constitutes overwhelming majority of protégé population. They are charged with a self desire to do better when they have someone who they can trust and confide. In a formal mentoring program, the mentor is likely to be a skip level manager or from a different department, rather than a supervisor and maybe confiding in him/her is easier and convenient.

Another reason could be that a mentoring relationship begins with establishing of an attachment and mutual liking between the two individuals' viz. the mentor and the protégé. Donning the role of a friend cements this further. In the current environment of workplace stress and with the breakage on the Indian nuclear family, there is no one to fall back on for counsel or support. It is likely that mentor fulfills that gap of a shoulder to lean on. A word of praise or encouragement from a trustworthy source is likely to make protégé get energized both at a professional level and personal level. Hence the predictability level of motivation is highly influenced by friendship function of a mentor.

Examinations of impact of parent function on motivation of protégé, presented result which was unexpected and an eye opener too. Not only the mean value of the function was lowest, correlation results inferred that there was an insignificant but negative association between parent function and motivation. The regression results established parent function

to be a negative predictor of protégé motivation. A key reason could be that today young managers being appointed as mentors in the service sector, hence protégés are hardly able to correlate with them as parents.

The above result could be attributed to the rationale that protégées look for a "buddy" or a "friend" rather than a parent in the work environment. In a collectivist culture like India, it was hypothesized that the parent function of a mentor would be most sought after. From the review of literature it was understood that mentor would be a revered personality, placed higher than all. However, reality seems to have changed in the 21st century. The plausible reason for lack of accepting parent function of a mentor could be due to lesser gap in the age of the mentor and protégé, given that we have a sizable number of young managers in the work force. Maybe parental function is seen more as a control function which is not the acceptable style

of today's managers. Moreover motivation comes from independence at the job. Hence if mentors are seen in a parent function which is perceived as a disempowering function, it could lead to a negative impact on motivation of protégé.

It would be prudent to conclude that, the human resource professionals desirous of implementing an effective mentoring program with the aim of motivating and engaging protégées make efforts to train mentors appropriately. Mentors need to emphasize on the function of professional friendship than mentorship. The study gives an insight on how using a systematic process with clear and defined function of mentors can be more valuable in enhancing the motivation level of protégés. This would lead to maximizing returns on investment in a structured mentoring program.

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