

THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON MENTORING FUNCTIONS

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ABSTRACT: Traditionally mentoring is defined as relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégés career. In the Volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, mentoring is emerged as a developmental tool which offers a lot of personal as well as career outcomes. Many public sector as well as private sector banks have introduced mentoring program as part of their HR practices in order to build skills and required competencies in an employee. This study envisages whether sociodemographic factors like age, gender, educational qualification etc have any significant effect on mentoring received. Data have been collected from 180 employees working in commercial banks in Kerala. The tools used for data analysis includes analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent sample t-test and Post Hoc Test. The results showed that sociodemographic factors have significant effect on mentoring received. Implications of the study, limitations and scope for further research are also discussed.

Key Words: Age, Educational qualification, Gender, Mentoring, Commercial banks.

1. INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING MENTORING

While our interest in mentoring is relatively young, mentoring is an ancient archetype originated in Greek mythology. A figure in Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was a wise and faithful advisor entrusted to protect Odysseus's son, Telemachus, while Odysseus sailed against Troy. Moreover, while the roots of mentoring can be traced to mythology, mentoring is no myth; it is a very real relationship that has been an integral part of social life and the world of work for thousands of years. (Levison, 1978) were among the first researchers to explore mentoring relationships in the context of adult development. They concluded from their study of forty men that a relationship with a mentor was developmentally important to protégés focused on achieving career success (Levison, 1978). Further research was conducted by (K. E. Kram, 1983; Kathy E. Kram, 1985), who interviewed mentor-protégé pairs in order to gain insight into work-related developmental relationships that provided mentoring functions. Much of the nascent research examining mentoring in workplaces indicated that mentoring plays an important role in a protégé's career success (Kathy E. Kram, 1985; Levison, 1978). Mentoring has been defined as a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé's career (Kathy E. Kram, 1985; Levison, 1978), see also reviews by (B R Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Over the years, a feature that distinguish mentoring from other relationship is that it is developmental in nature. The primary focus of mentoring relationship is career development and growth.

MENTORING FUNCTIONS

(K. E. Kram, 1983), one of the pioneers on the research of mentoring has been credited with doing the most detailed work on the mentoring process. According to her studies, Mentors are generally viewed as providing two types of functions to their protégés. First, mentors may offer career functions. Career functions involve a range of behaviors that help protégés "learn the ropes" and prepare them for hierarchical advancement within their organizations. These behaviors include coaching protégés, sponsoring their advancement, increasing their positive exposure and visibility, and offering them protection and challenging assignments. Second, mentors may provide psychosocial functions. Psychosocial functions build on trust, intimacy, and interpersonal bonds in the relationship and include behaviors that enhance the protégé's professional and personal growth, identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy. They include mentoring behaviors such as offering acceptance and confirmation and providing counseling, friendship, and role-modeling. Though (Scandura & Ragins, 1993) in their work categorized the area of role modeling as a third dimension distinct from psychosocial support.

II. IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING IN BANKING INDUSTRY

The voyage of Indian Banking industry has started long ago and became a highly proactive and dynamic entity. This journey has witnessed liberalization and economic reforms that allowed banks to explore new business opportunities. The history of banking industry can be divided into five distinct phases and each phase contributed landmark development in Indian Banking sector. There have been significant developments in banking industry in term of size, products, customer base etc. This favors an increase in the number of employees working in the banking Industry. Large number of employees is recruited every year. Our Banking sector being an integral part of economic growth of the country ha to ensure that it remains efficient and flexible in operational matters, especially in human resource practices. Right technology, systems and processes are not the only catalysts for accomplishing improved productivity and efficiency. Human capital with right skills and attitudes, representing the essential flexibility and adaptability to keep pace with running time.

In 2013, Mckinsey conducted a survey among 20 leading banks including public sector as well as private sector which identified a talent gap in banks. The shortfall for talent gap in public sector banks is because of high average age resulting in high retirements at senior management levels whereas for private sector banks it was due to high attrition rates especially at junior management levels. The average age of employees across levels was 41 years for public sector banks in 2012-2013. (down from 46 years in 2010 - 2011). The same for private sector banks was 33 years in 2012-2013 (again down from 34 years in 2010-11).

The expertise of senior management officials is the reason behind the survival of financial institutions in India during the financial crisis. This factor stresses the need to attract and develop talent in various levels of organizations. The mass retirement of senior officials leads to drainage of knowledge. This knowledge obsolescence can be balanced by mentoring programs. Mentoring can do miracles in making a beginner to an expert. The individuals can be mentored and groomed to take on higher responsibilities.

Many public sector as well as private sector banks have introduced mentoring program as part of their HR practices in order to build skills and required competencies in an employee. This article envisages whether the amount of mentoring received differs among gender, age and educational qualification. . But the literature lacks a study on mentoring in banking industry although many banks have already implemented formal mentoring programs. The implementation of formal mentoring programs demands the investment of organizational resources like money, time, potential and energy of a senior employee. It is surprising that only few studies have pertained to how differences in gender, age and educational qualifications of mentees affect the mentoring relationships. So it is high time to study whether the program differs among different groups and do the banks need to redesign the program employee specific.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

GENDER, AGE and EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION IN MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Previous studies have observed that males and females respond differently to developmental relationships where women give more importance to interpersonal support and intimacy than men. While men responded more heroic and chivalrous forms of helping, women are more prone to affectionate forms of helping (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). These findings can be relate to childhood where girls tend to show intense emotional connections , verbal expressiveness and nonverbal sensitivity (Brody, 1985). In the same line, we can propose that these type of relationships might affect mentoring relationships. Previous literatures found that there are differences in mentoring relationships between males and females. Mentoring is established as a tool that helps the females to advance in the organizations (B R Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Highly successful women report the presence of a mentor and their support in their career path (Belle Rose Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Since women encounter additional barriers and glass ceilings in their career mentoring appears to be more advantageous to them (Wanberg et al., 2003). According to previous literatures, females may not have equal access to developmental relationships when compared to males.

Some qualitative reviews analyzed whether males and females have differential access to mentoring relationship. (Wanberg et al., 2003) found out that there is no gender differences in getting mentoring. More specifically males and females equally receive mentoring. There are some literatures that are not in line with this finding suggests that females may receive different amounts of career or psychosocial mentoring. A reason reported for this difference is that most of the key positions in organizations are held by men. (Belle Rose Ragins & Sundstorm, 1989) explains that women have to deal with serious obstacles in receiving a mentor which includes individual, interpersonal, organizational and societal barriers as a result of their lower position. Individual barriers characterizes the inhibitions to obtain a mentor, for eg: women may not realize the importance of having a mentor or lack the skills to obtain a mentor. (Belle Rose Ragins,

1989). Interpersonal barriers includes difficulties faced during the interactions with mentor like lack of perceived similarity. Most of the mentors are in higher ranks and are males, the identification process is a herculean task for women which is significant for the development of mentoring process. Lack of contact with higher officials is the organizational barrier which prevent females from initiating a potential mentoring relationship. (Belle Rose Ragins & Sundstorm, 1989). Societal barriers includes gender typed occupations and self selection and can affect the development of mentoring relationships.

The Relational culture theory is used to explain the issues related to gender and mentoring in recent literatures. The theory explains that people with less power are forced to develop relational skills to recognize and meet the implicit requests of people with higher power. This has significance on mentoring relationships.

To date , there is a dearth in literature systematically examining the role of age in mentoring relationships and the existing studies yielded mixed results. The influence of the absolute age of the protégé on mentoring is rarely discussed, hence this study zooming in on age of each party of the dyad.

Some empirical studies has examined the role of protégés age to mentoring relationships and the outcomes associated with it. (L. Finkelstein, Allen, & Rhoton, 2003) applied Lawrence's organizational theory of age (Lawrence, 1987, 1988) to explain how age may negatively influence mentoring dynamics. Lawrence's theory states that age distributions create age norms which produce age effects within an organization or role (Lawrence, 1987). Age distributions are the patterns of employees' chronological ages within an organization or within a particular role. Both the actual and the perceived distribution of ages within an organization or role may contribute to the development of age norms. Age norms are shared assumptions regarding the 'norm' or appropriate ages of employees within an organization or role (Lawrence, 1987). Expectations are disturbed when a person is not in line with the age norm related with their particular role. Age effects can occur at a micro or macro level within an organization and can be the output of direct physiological processes comes with aging because of indirect social reactions to the breaking of age norms (Finkelstein et al., 2003). In case of mentoring, Lawrence's organizational theory of age is adoptable due to indirect processes. The processes are indirect because there is no physiological base as to why mentors or protégés of typical ages are unable to carry out their functions, instead, there are age norms and expectations linked with what age the individuals should be in their specific role. Developmental research has revealed that people have relatively clear and consistent expectations of when events should happen in life. Because individuals tend to possess perceptions of career progress and what roles people are performed in at particular ages, people are supposed to judge one another in terms of whether they are progressing, in line or they are eating the dust on those expectations (Greller & Simpson, 1999).

(L. Finkelstein et al., 2003) give evidence for a negative relationship between protégé age and the duration of mentoring and a positive relationship with mentor's hierarchical level. Specifically the older protégés have short lived relationships in both formal and informal mentoring relationships. The study also sheds light to the fact that older protégés are more likely to be part of informal mentoring relationships while younger protégés are more often part of formal mentoring relationships. The study points out that older protégés receive less career mentoring when compared to younger protégés. There is evidence for younger protégés receiving more career related mentoring than did older ones. (Whitely, Dougherty, Dreher, & Dreter, 1992).

IV. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT GENDER AND MENTORING RECEIVED

Previous reviews suggested contradictory findings related to the question whether protégé gender influences the mentoring received by them. Specifically , from the qualitative reviews it is difficult to ascertain if protégé gender plays a role in access to mentoring or to the amount of mentoring received (O' Neill, 2002; B R Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2003). These studies provide mixed support for the relationship between protégé gender and mentoring received.

Women encounter greater barriers than men when attempting to initiate a mentoring relationship. The reason behind that may be lack of access to information networks, tokenism, stereotypes and attributions, socialization practices etc (Noe, 1988). (Belle Rose Ragins & Sundstorm, 1989) reveals that individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal barriers are the hindrance to women to develop mentoring relationships.

Based on these understanding some companies have formulated specially designed mentoring programs for women which offers equal chances for men and women to access mentoring relationship (L. M. Finkelstein & Poteet, 2008). This is consistent with the reviews in this area which highlights that males and females are equally likely to have obtained protégé experience (Belle Rose Ragins, 2008).

H1 : There is significant difference between males and females in receiving mentoring

AGE AND MENTORING RECEIVED

Studies related to the impact of absolute age of protégé in mentoring relationships is limited .(Whitely et al., 1992) highlighted in their study that older protégé receive less career mentoring than younger protégés. (L. Finkelstein et al., 2003) indicated that older protégés like to engage in informal mentoring. Since there is mixed results related to age it is necessary to carryout more studies.

H2 : There is significant difference among age groups in receiving mentoring

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND MENTORING RECEIVED

People with more education have more chances to have a mentor because they appear to have greater career mobility and are more likely to develop an “occupational identity”(K. E. Kram, 1983) and to enter into professions involving apprentice- type work relationships such as higher education, law, medicine, nursing, athletic coaching, and university teaching (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Belle Rose Ragins, 1989).

H3: There is significant difference across educational qualification in receiving mentoring.

IV. METHOD

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

The sample for the hypothesis testing consists of employees working in select commercial banks in Kerala. A quantitative approach was adopted. Employees completed the questionnaire capturing the constructs researched. Of the 150 sample requests sent, only 131 questionnaires were returned giving us a response rate of 88%. Demographic data received shows that 54.96% are male respondents while 36.4% are females. Respondents ranged in age from 20 to 35 with a mean age of 30.Of the respondents 28.4% have post-graduation ,59% have graduation and 11.2% have other qualification.

MEASURES

Mentoring was measured using Dreher’s 18 item scale ,(Dreher& Ash, 1990) responses were rated on a 5 point likert scale with anchors “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (5)”. The overall alpha quotient for 18 item mentoring scale is .916.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

COMPARISON OF MENTORING RECEIVED AMONG GENDER

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
mentoring	MALE	72	3.0448	.59129	.009
	FEMALE	59	2.7623	.61908	

Source : Survey

*Denotes significance at 5% level

The t test was applied to find whether the average scores of mentoring, differs significantly between male and female respondents. The results revealed that mentoring received significantly between genders (t=2.652; p < .05). It was found that male respondents receive more mentoring than female respondents. So we can say that the hypothesisH1 is accepted and there is significant difference between male and female respondents.

COMPARISON OF MENTORING RECEIVED ACROSS AGE GROUP

Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F VALUE	Sig
20 - 25	56	2.8454	.68112	F = 1.522	.212
25 - 30	64	2.9188	.57307		
30 -35	10	3.2833	.43623		
above 35	1	3.2222	.		
Total	131	2.9175	.61794		

Source : Survey

*Denotes significance at 5% level

One way anova was applied to test whether the mean score of mentoring receives vary significantly among age group of respondents. The results explained that the mean score do not differ significantly among the age group, (F = 1.522, p > .212). Therefore hypothesis H2 is rejected.

COMPARISON OF MENTORING RECEIVED AMONG EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

QUALIFICATION	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F VALUE	Sig
BE/BTECH	71	2.8615	.64597	4.387	.002
ME/MTECH	6	3.4352	.42078		
BSC/BBA	8	2.3264	.45176		
MSC/MBA	32	3.1198	.46782		
OTHERS	15	2.8281	.62688		
Total	132	2.9140	.61696		

Source : Survey

*Denotes significance at 5% level

One way anova was applied to test whether the mean scores of mentoring received vary significantly among the educational qualification of employees. The results indicated that the mean scores differ significantly with the educational qualification of employees,($F = 4.387$, $p < .002$). It was found that respondents with post graduation receives more mentoring than graduates.

V. DISCUSSION

Findings of the study from the bank employees indicate that mentoring received vary significantly among gender and educational qualification. About gender, male respondents receive more than females, which is in line with previous studies (Belle Rose Ragins & Sundstorm, 1989). Regarding age group, there is no difference in receiving mentoring which against the findings of (Whitely, Dougherty, Dreher, & Dreter, 1992) Even though the scenario has changed , there exists inequality among men and women. The glass ceilings in organizations hinder women from approaching higher officials and receiving mentoring. Also the issues related to cross gender mentoring may be another reason for women receiving less mentoring than men. Balancing work life and professional life is still a problem faced by women, So they may not be able to use the existing mentoring program in an effective manner. From the results it is clear that post graduates receives more mentoring graduates. The result is consistent with the finding of (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Belle Rose Ragins, 1989) that the post graduates may be more confident enough to approach and initiate the relationship than graduates. In addition to that they are matured enough to utilize the opportunity and reap the benefits of the relationship.

VI. CONCLUSION

It has observed that males and females respond differently to developmental relationships and also mentees with different educational background. But mentees from different agegroup respond equally to the mentoring programs. The study helped to extend the theoretical horizons of mentoring. These understandings offer an exciting insight into the new meaning of mentoring. While mentoring relationships are as old as the hills, the terrain in which they reside has certainly changed since Odysseus set sail for Troy thousands of years ago. The study allows us to grasp the subtle and stark changes in the evolution of mentoring relationships.

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