IMPACT OF MENTORING ON CAREER SUCCESS – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN AN INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between formal mentoring and informal mentoring that leads to career success of individuals’ in an private colleges in India.

Design/methodology/approach – This study was conducted to examine the impact of mentoring on individuals’ career success using a 50 usable questionnaire collected from employees who are currently working in a private colleges in South India, Tamil Nadu.

Findings – Formal mentoring was significantly and positively related to career satisfaction (r=0.424), (p=.002). And also indicates that informal mentoring was significantly and positively related to career prospect (r=0.382), (p=.006) and career satisfaction (r=0.416), (p=.003). These results provide preliminary support for the hypothesis that formal and informal mentoring significantly predicts career success among individual faculty members in South India.

Research limitations/implications – The findings are based on self-report measures from respondents in private colleges. This underscores the need for further research with career success measures from a wider domain.

Practical implications – An intervention is needed to make formal mentoring and informal mentoring thrive, enhance its quality and ensure career success. And also encourages organizational members to provide mentoring for junior colleagues in establishing and perpetuates a mentoring cycle, which entails benefits for mentors, protégé’s and the organization.

Originality/value – This is the first study to investigate the relationship of formal mentoring and informal mentoring provision with career success in education sector. Additionally it informs on the relative contribution of formal mentoring (as career related and professional development) and informal mentoring (as socio-emotional and psychological support) provided with the career

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success of employees’.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Formal and Informal, Career success, Vellore, India

**INTRODUCTION**

Mentoring is one of the highly researched topics. Through years, traditional mentoring is playing an important role in providing the support from senior person to a junior person for his or her career success. Mentoring has invited a great amount of interest in academic as well as practitioner communities. The advantages of having a mentor have received greater attention (Fagenson, 1989; Godshalk and Sosik, 2003; Higgins, 2001; Hunt and Michael, 1983; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Scandura and Williams, 2001). Studies show that employees with a mentor have more promotions opportunities, earn higher incomes, and develop high work satisfaction than employees without a mentor (Baugh and Scandura, 1999; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Ragins et al., 2000; Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994; Turban and Dougherty, 1994; Whitely and Coetsier, 1993). A meta-analysis found that mentoring relationships were associated with subjective outcomes such as career satisfaction and expectations for advancement (Allen et al., 2004).

"Career success" is a means to through which a person's fulfills his or her needs and desires through achievements, accomplishment and power acquisition (Lau & Shaffer, 1999; Nabi, 1999). Career success refers to both objective and subjective elements of achievement and progress of an individual through the vocational lifespan (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Nabi, 1999; Ng *et al.*, 2005). Objective career success can be measured in terms of extrinsic measures, such as salary and occupational status (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2006). Subjective career success is measured in terms of an individual’s perception of career actualization success (Aryee *et al.*, 1994; Kuijpers *et al.*, 2006).

Career success is very important and meaningful to both individuals and the organizations. From the employees’ point of view, career success can be defined as not only source of power, happiness and satisfaction and also acquisition of materialistic advancement (Gattiker & Larwood, 1990, 1988; Judge *et al.*, 1995; Poole *et al.*, 1991). The, employees those who benefit out of career success feel happier and more successful, using their own internal standards.

This research mainly focuses to study and spread light only on the first two aspects of
mentoring, 1. Formal mentoring (as Career related and Professional development) and
  2. Informal mentoring (as Socio-emotional and Psychological support) with the career
  success of employees’.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptualization and Predictors of Career Success

A career is a series of jobs an individual holds during one’s work life (Feldman, 1996). While
success in one’s career is a natural expectation of individuals, the nature of that success depends
on what one expects from it. Indeed each and every individual have different definitions of career
success based on their assessment of their career prospects (Ebadan & Winstanley, 1997).

Career success is essential for both employees and employers point of view. So, this topic
has become a interest to each one of them who would like to be successful in their work
(Erikson, 1980; Greenhaus, 1971; Super, 1990). By getting to know the factors that lead to career
success, it will be easy for employees and management in deriving better career success plans.

Career success is defined as an individual’s long term satisfaction with his/her career
(Judge et al., 1995). Career success is also the satisfaction individuals derive from intrinsic and
extrinsic aspects of their careers, including pay, advancement, status and career developmental
opportunities (Judge et al., 1995).

Career researchers have operationalized career success to include both objective and
subjective indicators and some argue that extrinsic career outcomes are conceptually distinct
from intrinsic career outcomes (Ng et al., 2005; Arthur et al. 2005).

Extrinsic or objective factors of career success which includes salary, promotions and
status are relatively more tangible or observable outcomes than intrinsic or subjective outcomes
of career success. These later outcomes of career success include less visible indicators such as
job or career satisfaction, perceptions of career accomplishments, career commitment, future
prospects and career mentoring and are, therefore, relatively more internally assessed by
individuals’ own subjective judgements of career success (Poon, 2004; Burke, 2001; Aryee et al.,
1994). In as much as individuals define career success based on their assessment of career
prospects (Ebadan & Winstanley, 1997), individuals expect a lot more from their careers other
than compensation, promotion, and other objective measures.

Objective measures of career success are to those that can be observed and verified by
others (Judge et al., 1995). Several researchers have studied career success using objective measures such as total compensation (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993; Kirchmeyer, 1998), number of promotions (Wayne et al., 1999; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1991; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993), current pay grade (Daley, 1996), and size of most recent merit increase (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992).

Subjective measures of career success (Judge et al., 1995) pertain to the individuals’ own judgment of their career attainment. Studies on subjective career success used measures such as career satisfaction (Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Poole, Langan-Fox & Omodei, 1993), job satisfaction (Judge et al., 1995; Burke, 2001), advancement satisfaction (Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002), and perceived career success (Turban & Dougherty, 1994), among others.

Mentoring:

Mentor: A mentor is generally defined as an experienced employee who serves as a role model and provides support and direction to a protégé.

According to Burlow (1991), “Mentor is a more senior individual who uses his or her experience and influence to help the advancement of a protégé. He provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity for the protégé during periods of need”.

Mentors provide feedback regarding career plans and interpersonal development and are committed to helping the protégé succeed in the adult working world (Kram, 1985). According to Kram (1985), mentor"s provide two broad categories of mentoring functions. Career functions include sponsorship, coaching, exposure/visibility, protection and the provision of challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions relate more to the interpersonal aspect of the relationship and include role modeling, counseling, friendship and acceptance (Kram, 1985). Studies exploring the dimensionality of mentoring have supported the existence of these two main mentoring functions (e.g., Noe, 1988).

Mentoring: “Mentoring is a personal relationship in which a more experienced and/or knowledgeable individual (mentor) acts as a counselor, role model, teacher, and champion of a less experienced or knowledgeable individual (protégé), sharing advice, knowledge, and guidance and offering support and challenge in behalf of the protégé”s personal and professional

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF MENTORING:**
Mentoring means, “it is a relationship between two people in which the senior level person (experienced) guides, advices or counsels the junior level person (less experienced)” based on the following elements:

1) Formal help (career functions) – develops his or her career related help/competence and identity within the organization, and

2) Informal help (psychosocial functions) – enhances personal aspects of relationship within the organization, which tend to enhance employees career success (such as career prospects, career satisfaction and career commitment).

**TYPES OF MENTORING:**
The classification of mentoring has been into two types a) Formal or Career development/functions b) Informal Mentoring or Psychosocial functions.

Formal mentoring programs are often encouraged by organization. The mentor–mentee relation is done by personnel selected by the organization. The relationship exists from six months to one year. There is a contract signed by the dyads that usually decides the frequency of meeting between them. This relationship is helpful in achieving short-term goals applicable to the mentee’s present position (Geiger-DuMond & Boyle, 1995; Murray, 1991). Noe (1988), in his work mentions that organizations utilize formal mentoring programs to benefit from developmental aspects of such relationships. The formal mentoring programs mainly focuses on training, employee socialization, personal and professional development, sponsorship or visibility/exposure than on, inner-oriented psychosocial developmental functions (Kram, 1985, Noe, 1988; Fagan & Ayers, 1985; Shelton. 1982; Wilbur, 1987; Leibowitz/, Farren. & Kaye. 1986; London & Mone, 1987).

Informal form of mentoring is the olden form where the mentor selects a mentee whom he can relate with and the mentor forms the role model for the mentee. The relationship depends on the mutual consent between both the parties, which is satisfactory to both and is characterized by closeness. The mentee receives guidance, support, sponsorship etc and the mentor develops a sense of satisfaction and recognition from the organization (Levinson et al., 1978). The mentor provides more psychosocial support and the relationship lasts for a longer duration of time.
(Kram, 1995) and is often unstructured. Phillips-Jones (1983) states that the most of the mentoring relationships are informal as it is developed due to admiration, shared interests, or job demands that require the skills of two or more persons. Whitely, Dougherty & Dreter, (1992) terms it as classical “mentoring, in which the mentoring relationship is for a longer duration, mostly limited, and in which a mentee receives a variety of career-oriented and psychosocial help a one senior manager. Informal mentoring was often implemented by means of individual discussions (i.e., seeking advice, personal meetings and gatherings) after office hours inside and/or outside the workplace.

Kram (1983), one of the pioneers in the research of mentoring he has been credited with doing the most detailed work on the mentoring process. She identified various functions of -mentoring process and categorized them as a) Developmental functions. Developmental/ Career functions includes career advancement of the mentee like sponsorship, coaching, protection and providing challenging assignments (Noe, 1997). b) Psychosocial functions. Psychosocial functions include the activities needed to balance work and social/family life. These functions include being a role model to the mentee, acceptance, counseling and friendship. (Noe, 1997). Scandura & Ragins (1993), in their work categorized the area of role modeling as a third function different from psychosocial support.

MENTORING IN RELATION WITH CAREER SUCCESS

Mentoring

Originally, a mentor referred to an influential individual with advanced experience and knowledge providing support and mobility to their prote´ge”s careers (Fagenson, 1989; Hunt and Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988). Nowadays, many researchers use the term mentor interchangeably with coach, sponsor and colleague, although these roles may involve different types of relationships (De Janasz and Sullivan, 2004). Often, a distinction is made between informal and formal mentoring. Informal mentoring relationships –focus of this study– are the spontaneous relationships that occur without external involvement from the organization. In contrast, formal mentorships are programs that are managed and sanctioned by the organization (Chao and Walz, 1992).

Research shows mentoring as an important interpersonal determinant of career success (Kirchmeyer, 1998). Mentoring is recognised as an important and a powerful tool of career
management as it has enormous advantages (Levinson et al., 1978; Kram, 1985). They include development of skills, easy access to organisational resources, career satisfaction and clarity of goals for the prote´ge´ (Scandura, 1992; Aryee and Chay, 1994).

Many researchers predict mentoring to positively associated employee outcomes (Kram, 1985; Ragins et al., 2000). Mentoring is considered beneficial by providing career development aid which assists the mentee to progress in the organization and psychosocial functions – which in turn results in mentee’s personal growth and professional development (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). For example, mentee’s are more satisfied with their jobs (Whitely and Coetsier, 1993) and are more committed with their work (Baugh and Scandura, 1999). Mentee not only report of having perceived career success (Turban and Dougherty, 1994), but certainly receive more promotions (Dreher and Ash, 1990), and make more money (Scandura, 1992).

Bozionelos (2004) and Allen et al. (2006) found that mentoring is positively related to career success of mentors. The result of their research indicate that mentoring provided with one’s tenure a single organization was truly related to both objective and subjective career success. Bozionelos (2004) also found that those who had received mentoring (i.e. those who had been prote´ge´s) were more likely to provide mentoring (i.e. to become mentors). Bozionelos and Allen et al., Eby et al. (2006) employed mentors in their study, and found that the benefits these mentors supposed they had received from providing mentoring. There are various empirical evidences that establish relationship of mentoring with objective and subjective career success (Bozionelos, 2004; Allen et al., 2006).

Many, empirical research establishes a strong support for the relationship between mentoring and positive career outcomes such as more promotions, more mobility, higher income and career satisfaction (Kram, 1985; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992). Studies have shown that mentoring significantly influences career success (Cox and Nkomo, 1991; Fagenson, 1989; Whitely et al., 1991; Turban and Dougherty, 1994).

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RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This article aims to investigate the relationship between role of mentoring and career success of employees in an organization. The model for this research consists of one main independent variable, i.e. Formal mentoring (includes, career development, career help or professional development) and Informal mentoring (includes, socio-emotional, psychosocial support), and one main dependent variable, i.e. career success includes, career prospects, career satisfaction and career commitment), as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model of Career Success

![Diagram of Career Success Model]

Based on the framework, it seems reasonable to assume that properly implemented informal and formal mentoring activities will influence career development and psychosocial support among the employees of the selected organization.

The advantage of having a mentor in career development has received more attention (e.g. Higgins and Kram, 2001; Scandura and Williams, 2001; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Godshalk and Sosik, 2003; Simmonds and Zammit Lupi, 2010). For instance, employees with a mentor were found to have more promotions, higher incomes and more work satisfaction than employees without a mentor (Baugh and Scandura, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000; Bozionelos, 2006; Arokiasamy and Ismail, 2008). The relationship between formal and informal mentoring relationships and career outcomes such as promotion and compensation, and to provide even more support for the work of Chao et al.

Allen et al. (2004) also found that objective career success was more related to career mentoring than to psychosocial mentoring. In addition, it was found that career and psychosocial mentoring had similar relationships with job and career satisfaction. The study of Chao et al.
(1992), Merriam (1983), Ragins and Cottons (1999), and Scandura (1992) concluded that mentoring relationships improved the career outcomes of mentored individuals.

There are various research studies supports that an individual who receives mentoring will have several benefits, such as organizational commitment, intent to stay, job satisfaction, tenure with the organization, number of promotions, self-esteem, perceived alternative employment options, income, work stress, work-family conflicts, and promotion or career opportunities.

The various studies show the relationship of mentoring and developmental relationships with intrinsic career success (i.e. intrinsic work satisfaction and career satisfaction) (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Seibert et al., 2001; Thomas and Lankau, 2003).

The hypotheses will be tested on a sample of university and college faculty members. The academic career system has unique features, which have made it different form conventional bureaucratic model of careers and which now make it a kind of leading indicator of changes in the career systems in other sectors (Baruch and Hall, 2004b). However, although at the one hand it can be observed that recent boundaryless or protean career models represent a move towards the original view of academics as autonomous professionals (Baruch and Hall, 2004a).

Existing theory predicts mentoring to be associated with positive employee outcomes (Kram, 1985; Ragins et al., 2000). Mentoring relationships are thought to be beneficial by providing career development aid – which facilitates the protégé’s advancement in the organization – and psychosocial functions – which contribute to the protégé’s personal growth and professional development (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). For instance, protégé’s indicate to be more satisfied with their jobs (Whitely and Coetsier, 1993) and show more commitment (Baugh and Scandura, 1999). Moreover, protégé’s do not only report more perceived career success (Turban and Dougherty, 1994), but actually receive more promotions (Dreher and Ash, 1990), and make more money (Scandura, 1992). In the present study, it brings the direct relationship between mentoring and career success in the first hypothesis:

H0. There is no significant relationship between formal and informal mentoring of the respondents and career prospect, career satisfaction, career commitment.

METHODS

Population, sampling and data collection procedures
The study population consisted of 50 full-fledged faculty members in private university and colleges. The study used convenient sampling. Thus, the sample size of 50 was sufficient to be used of the purpose of the study. This study used a survey method in which questionnaires were provided to the respondents personally by the researcher. The data collection was based on a self-administered questionnaire. A self-administered questionnaire is very suitable for measuring constructs that are based on scales (Aryee et al., 2006). The purpose of data collection was explained on the cover of the questionnaire together with instructions and assurance of the confidentiality of the data collected. The language used in the instrument was English. Of the total sample, 21 were male respondents and 29 were female respondents.

**Instrument**

In this study, responses to the questionnaire were based on five-point Likert scale; the scale ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The reliabilities of the test measures were taken during a pilot study of which all groups of questions were above the acceptable minimum Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.78 (Hair et al., 2006). The study used 50 respondents. Data was collected through a questionnaire containing measures of demographic consists of 11 questions focusing on respondents’, formal and informal mentoring and career success variables.

**Formal mentoring and Informal mentoring.** Formal mentoring was measured with a 6-item measure and Informal mentoring was measured with a 5-item measure developed by Scandura and Ragins’(1993). The instrument is rated on a five-point Likert scale with the response ranged varying from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree to measure the level of formal mentoring functions a respondent feels he or she has received. In this study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.78 was established for the 11-item measure.

**Career success**

**Career prospect.** Career prospect was measure with a 3-item measure developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). The instrument is rated on a five-point Likert scale with the response ranged varying from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree to measure the level of career prospect a respondent has a vision towards future for his or her career. In this study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.88 was established for the 3-item measure.

**Career satisfaction.** Career satisfaction was measure with a 5-item measure developed by
Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). The instrument is rated on a five-point Likert scale with the response ranged varying from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree to measure the level of career satisfaction a respondent has in his or her satisfying career or in the work place. In this study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.91 was established for the 3-item measure.

Career commitment. Career commitment was measure with a 7-item measure was developed by Blau (1989) was used as was in the previous studies on career commitment (Arye e & Tan, 1992; Aryee et al., 1994; Bedian et al., 1991; Blau, 1989; Cherniss, 1991). The instrument is rated on a five-point Likert scale with the response ranged varying from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree to measure the level of career commitment a respondent is committed towards his or her career. The items have proven validity (Blau, 1989), and thus are regarded as the cleanest measure (Morrow, 1993). Alpha reliability for the items is 0.76.

RESULTS
The first stage of the analysis examined relationships among variables used in the present study. The researcher has done analysis to find out the hypothesis setting whether there is any relationship between formal and informal mentoring on career success (i.e., career prospect, career satisfaction, career commitment).

Correlation

The results in Table I indicate that formal mentoring was significantly and positively related to career satisfaction (r=0.424), (p=0.002). And also indicates that informal mentoring was significantly and positively related to career prospect (r=0.382), (p=0.006) and career satisfaction (r=0.416), (p=0.003). These results provide preliminary support for the hypothesis that formal and informal mentoring significantly predicts career success among individual faculty members in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. They also shows that there is no significant relationship between gender (male and female) in achieving career prospect (p=0.777), (r=0.335), career satisfaction (p=0.252), (r=0.164), and career commitment (p=0.904), (r=0.690). And also shows that there is no significant relationship between marital status (married and unmarried) in achieving career prospect (p=0.757), (r=0.126) and career satisfaction (p=0.254), (r=0.834), and career commitment

Discussion

The study aimed to determine the relationship of formal mentoring and informal mentoring provision with career success; and the role of mentoring provision in the long established association of formal mentoring and informal mentoring receipt with career success. Mentoring
provided was related to career success (career prospect, career satisfaction, career commitment and to the amount of mentoring received. These findings were in line with part of earlier research (i.e. Allen et al., 2006; Bozionelos, 2004).

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 - Formal and Informal mentoring on career success (i.e., career prospect, career satisfaction, career commitment).

(p=.839), (r=0.841).

Therefore, the present study contributed towards the consolidation of evidence that having been mentored increases the likelihood of becoming a mentor, and that becoming a mentor yields tangible benefits for one’s career. The former stresses the importance of providing informal mentoring as a way to cultivate a mentoring culture in the organization (see Ragins and Scandura, 1999). The latter indicates that becoming a mentor benefits one’s own career from a subjective (i.e. personal gratification) perspective. This can serve as an incentive for supervisors
and managers to provide mentoring for subordinates. Enhanced career prospects can act as a strong incentive to become a mentor in the present era in which increased work pressure and reduced employment certainty act as demotivating forces for managers and supervisors to dedicate time to the development of less senior organizational members.

Another suggestion of the findings is that providing and receiving mentoring make complementary contributions to career accomplishments and prospects. The practical implication is that receiving mentoring continues to be important for career progress even when individuals have reached organizational positions that allow them to be mentors.

Further, the researcher have initiated this research paper with the notion that the benefits of having a mentor have received ample attention (Baugh and Scandura, 1999; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Godshalk and Sosik, 2003; Higgins, 2001; Hunt and Michael, 1983; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Ragins et al., 2000; Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994; Scandura and Williams, 2001; Turban and Dougherty, 1994; Whitely and Coetsier, 1993).

Accordingly, one important basic objective of the present study was that there is a positive relationship between formal mentoring, informal mentoring and career success. Here, formal mentoring (career related) and informal mentoring (socio-emotional) provided contributions to career success. This finding suggests that the benefits for the careers of mentors are mainly accrued by the career-related functions of mentoring and socio-emotional functions of mentoring.

Therefore, it can be tentatively concluded that empirical evidence is accumulating towards the fact that in formal mentoring relationships it is predominantly career related mentoring that is linked with career outcomes for mentors and also informal mentoring relationships it is predominantly socio-emotional mentoring functions play as a major role. However, when mentoring was considered in terms of its career-related and socio-emotional component an intriguing relationship pattern emerged.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

For this study, data were collected with the single administration of a survey. Due to time constraint, this study was done with the respondents of a private university and colleges alone. Future research efforts need to consider using longitudinal and multi-actor data, for instance,
information from both supervisor and employee collected at different points in time. However, future research should investigate the relationships of formal mentoring and informal mentoring linked with career success should include more differentiated measures with huge samples from a wider perspective or domain. For example, by differentiating mentoring functions aimed at achieving objective career outcomes such as promotion and compensation, and subjective career outcomes, such as career satisfaction, career commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Allen et al., 2004).

Finally, the bulk of extant research on mentoring needs to be conducted within the Indian cultural context, whose characteristics with respect to factors that may affect the development and outcomes of mentoring relationships differ from those of other cultural clusters. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that it is not certain that mentoring has the same relationship with career outcomes across cultures (e.g. Bozionelos, 2006; Bozionelos and Wang, 2006). It is, therefore, necessary to conduct investigations on outcomes and antecedents of mentoring provision in cultural clusters other than the particular state Vellore, Tamil Nadu India. This will -provide information on the extent to which formal mentoring and informal mentoring provision is associated with positive outcomes for mentors and organizations across cultures.

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