Original Research Paper

Comparison of Formal and Informal Mentoring in Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

Present study aim is to comparison formal mentoring with informal mentoring in education sector of Jammu province. Dyadic approach has been used (one guide and one scholar) for data collection. Independent t-test has been used to check significance of difference in the mean scores of two set of respondents. Results revealed that there exist significant differences in the perception of mentees regarding mentoring function in formal and informal mentoring. The mean value is higher for informal setting than the formal setting. Informal mentor provides more career development, role modeling and psychosocial support to mentee than formal mentors. Although the study contributes to the mentoring literature but the study is limited to education sector in Jammu province only. For future research same study should be conducted to other service sector.

Various types of mentoring exist in the organisations like formal mentoring, informal mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, situational mentoring, supervisory mentoring, self-mentoring, virtual mentoring or e-mentoring, (Ensher et al., 2003) team mentoring and reverse mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 2011). But the main categorization is in the form of formal and informal mentoring. A formal mentoring program is described as structured and coordinated relationship between mentor and mentee, using standard norms, continuous action plans, time frame, and particular objectives (Bahniuk & Hill, 1998; Hansford et al., 2003; Noe et al., 2002). According to Wanberg et al. (2006) in formal mentoring programs employees are matched according to their development process, and then these employees are encouraged to know one another. In this type of mentoring mentor is defined as a more knowledgeable and experienced person, whereas the mentee is defined as a less knowledgeable and less experienced person (Kram, 1985; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Noe et al., 2002). On the other hand Informal mentoring relationship develops on its own (Hansman, 2000), when a person approaches a favored person (mentor) and that person agrees to form a mentoring relationship. Informal mentoring relationships develop through mutual interaction

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or attraction (Hu et al., 2016; Parise & Forret, 2008). According to Wanberg et al. (2006) informal relationships occurred as a result of interpersonal comfort and through unstructured social interactions and are not time bound or governed with external or internal rules. Kegen (2013) stated that informal mentoring is important and integral precondition for succeeding and for fulfilling scientific jobs. McDonald et al. (2007) viewed informal mentoring as the relationship that occurs naturally among youth and the adults with whom they come in contact. Both parties are motivated to enter the relationship in order to meet developmental needs. Giving the importance to formal and informal mentoring present study aim is to comparing the impact of formal and informal in education sector of Jammu province.

Hypothesis development
Formal and Informal Mentoring

Formal mentoring is different from informal mentoring in several ways. First, the informal mentoring develops as a result of mutual identification and interpersonal comfort (Ragins, 2002). Opposite to this formal mentoring program match two individuals to get to know one another as part of an employee development process. According to Ragins & Cotton, (1999) formal and informal mentoring relationships also differ according to the timing and structure of the relationship. Informal relationships are not governed by a timeline; there are no external rules and regulation. In contrast, formal mentoring relationships are arranged for a specified duration and participants must initiate interaction and establish rapport within this context. Further research has suggested that on average, informal mentoring may be more effective than formal mentoring (Chao et al., 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2006; Joshi & Sikdar, 2015; Hart, 2016). On the same line Ghosh, (2014) found that compared to informal mentors, formal mentors tend to provide fewer mentoring functions (i.e., career-related support, psychosocial support, and role modeling) to protégés. He also found that one important reason why this happens is that formal mentor–protégé dyads are typically paired by the organisation and they lack the "mutual attraction" that is often reported by informal mentoring pairs as the foundation of their relationship development (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Lankau et al., 2005). Mutual attraction may result in higher trust and psychological safety, which are critical to nurturing mentoring relationships (Kram, 1985; Armstrong et al., 2002; Chun et al., 2010). Thus based on the above discussion perception of mentee about mentoring is higher in informal mentoring than in formal mentoring type.

H1. Perception about mentoring is higher in informal mentoring than in formal mentoring

METHODOLOGY
Measure

Mentoring has been measured with 15 items scale (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). The word mentor has been replaced with guide for formal mentoring in education sector. Some sector specific changes have been done in education sector like word assignment has been replaced with work (cf2), promotional and professional (cf2 and cf5) has been replaced with career etc.

Sample size

Dyadic approach has been used (one guide and one scholar) for data collection. Out of 267, 259 complete sets for the formal mentoring have been received back. Same respondents have been contacted after six months to generate information about informal mentoring and 156 complete questionnaires have been received back.

RESULT

Study hypothesised that perceived mentoring is high in informal setting then in formal setting. To test this hypothesis comparative analysis of the mean difference of mentoring functions i.e. career function, psychosocial functions and role modeling have been analysed. Independent t-test has been used to check significance of difference in the mean scores of two set of respondents. Results revealed that there exist significant differences in the perception of mentees regarding mentoring function in formal and informal mentoring (t value= 4.003, $p<.001$). The mean value is higher for informal setting (M= 3.9) than the formal setting (M=3.6). Therefore this hypothesis is accepted. The reason may that formal mentoring relationships occur for shorter duration with pre-specified goals and objectives, whereas informal relationships are of longer duration so, in shorter duration mentor and mentee are not able to fully understand each other and mentee is not able avails more benefits in formal mentoring relationship. Informal mentor provides more career development, role modeling and psychosocial support to mentee than formal mentors. Further in formal mentoring mentor are formally assigned by the university, where as in informal mentoring mentor and mentee build a relationship according to mutual attraction and interpersonal comfort. Formally pairing of mentee with mentor is less motivated and less personally interested, which reduces perception about mentoring functions (Joshi & Sikdar, 2015; Hart, 2016). Thus perception about mentoring function is higher in informal mentoring setup then in formal mentoring setup.

Table 1: Perceptual Gap between Informal and Formal Mentoring

Constructs	Mean (Informal Mentoring)	Mean (Formal Mentoring)	t-values
Mentoring	3.90	3.61	4.00***
Career function	3.88	3.84	2.00*
Psychosocial functions	3.61	3.14	4.82***
Role modeling	4.21	3.86	2.86*
*Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, ns= not significant*			

CONCLUSION

Present study aim is to comparison formal mentoring with informal mentoring in education sector of Jammu province. In informal mentoring, mentee select mentor according to mutual attraction, similarity of interests and personality characteristics. Thus mentee take more mentoring support from their mentor, which helps in enhances more benefits as compare to formal mentoring.

Results from this study have practical implications for the education sector. The results revealed that mean value of mentoring is higher for informal mentoring then formal mentoring. In education sector informal mentoring should be supported by encouraging scholars/mentees to take mentoring support not only from their guides but also from other persons. Guide should himself support his/her scholars/mentees to take mentoring support from other person, whom they feel comfortable. Department heads should develop a culture in which scholars interact with other freely regarding their research related and other issues. Although the study contributes to the mentoring literature but the study is limited to education sector in Jammu province only. For future research same study should be conducted to other service sector.

Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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