

Innovative People Management Strategies

Diversity in Workplace

Mentoring and its role in women's career: a critical perspective

Abstract

Organizations globally are making efforts to value gender diversity in management and are longing to achieve diversity in their workplaces. However the major concentration of attempts has been on the broad issues of diversity rather than development of women leaders. Most organizations lack well defined strategies for developing their women workforce and their leadership roles. Although hiring has been at an equal rate for both the genders, glass ceiling has often been a challenge for mid level career among women.

A recent study of SHRM (2009) revealed inadequate mentoring as one of the major hurdles in developing women in leadership roles. Though cross-gender mentoring is well accepted it is rather complex and has several limitations. Despite an increase in the women workforce the number of women mentors in the Indian context is discouragingly low. Also as pointed out by Ragins (1994) the few available female mentors are overburdened with mentoring requests from women in the lower levels (Hunt & Michael, 1983). This conceptual paper aims to investigate the status of mentoring today and its role in the career of women leaders through a comprehensive literature survey.

The paper critically reviews and outlines different barriers of cross-gender mentoring in the corporate set up. It further argues of the usefulness of "women mentoring women"

leaders”, especially in the Indian business context which is still largely male dominated. The author has proposed a foundation for further empirical studies on how these barriers of male mentors and female protégés can be effectively reduced by “women mentoring women” in Indian organizations,

Key words: *Mentoring, gender diversity, women mentoring women, barriers of cross gender mentoring, women leaders.*

Introduction

India is today a force to reckon with in the global economy, with a high demand for talent. This talent is from various backgrounds and cultures. This highlights the issue of diversity. Organizations worldwide spend millions on diversity today. 71% organizations lack a clearly defined strategy and philosophy to develop their women for leadership (Mercer 2010). Often when addressing diversity in an Indian organization, gender diversity is the most focused on. Organizations need to move beyond the favored “check box mentality” (Forbes, 2010). This mentality as explained by the author states that organizations tend to favor different groups at different times instead of all groups at all times. Diversity will not be taken seriously unless it is embraced and embedded as part of the culture of the organization. Diversity can have a negative connotation some times; instead organizations should encourage and enable employee’s growth and opportunities, through positive experiences and education. With more and more women entering the workforce today, not much progression of women to senior management level is

seen in most countries though (Adler 2002). The biggest challenges women face in developing themselves as leaders are related to work-life balance, lack of role models, lack of opportunities for career advancement and lack of support from the upper management (Mercer 2010). Thus to disengage from the check box mentality and move to a newer approach, organizations need to seriously re-look at mentoring its female workforce. Not just mentoring but mentoring of the female workforce by women mentors, as part of its culture.

This review paper aims to investigate the status of mentoring today and its role in the career of women leaders. The paper further reviews different barriers of cross-gender mentoring in organizations. Taking cues from the relevant literature, the paper argues for the usefulness of women mentoring. It further proposes how these barriers of cross-gender mentoring can be effectively reduced by a “women mentoring women model”, especially in the largely male-dominated Indian business context.

Overview of Mentoring

Mentoring brings us together – across generation, class, and often race – in a manner that forces us to acknowledge our interdependence, to appreciate, in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words, that ‘we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny.’ In this way, mentoring enables us to participate in the essential but unfinished drama of reinventing community, while reaffirming that there is an important role for each of us in it.
-- Marc Freedman (Founder and CEO of Civic Ventures), (1999)

From ancient history to current times, political, civic and spiritual leaders around the world have had mentors or acted as one. History narrates of several mentor-protégé relationships. Archimedes was a mentor to Galileo, Aristotle

to Alexander the Great, Krishna to Arjuna in The Mahabharata, Chanakya & Kautilya to Chandragupta Muarya, Mahatma Gandhi to Dr. Martin Luther King & Nelson Mandela, Ed Roberts to Bill Gates or Robert Friedland to Steve Jobs and as recent as Roger Enrico & Steve Reinemund to Indira Nooyi.

The ancient Indian tradition of students or *shishyas* paying their reverence to their teachers or gurus was very popular.

Mentors are usually individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who facilitate the personal development of the protégé, while benefiting the organization too. She/he also provides upward support and mobility to their protégé's careers (Hunt and Michael 1983; Kram 1985). Thus a mentor provides career related benefits like promotion, career development, increased job satisfaction and increased compensation. Adding to them, psychosocial benefits like increased self esteem, confidence, identity and socialization, strong interpersonal bond are also sought from a mentoring relationship (Mullen, 1998; Ragins et al., 2000; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Verdejo, 2002)

The concept of mentoring is universal, and it is regarded as a highly effective developmental tool. It originates from ancient the Greek mythology which talks of "Mentor" a friend of King Odysseus, who was assigned the responsibility to watch over the king's son Telemachus. This parental relationship of Mentor guiding Telamachus is what we know as mentoring to today. (Ragins & Kram, 2007)

The word "mentor" made its first appearance in the English language in 1750, in Chestere's work 'Letters to Son, 8th

March.’ The economy of medieval England survived on craftsmen who passed on their trade to their pupils. The Industrial Revolution though put an end to the cottage industry, its craftsmen & the informal system of mentoring, as young men joined factories as apprentices (Nayab, 2011).

The rise of the behavioural school of management post the Second World War raised the importance of human resources, and businesses paid attention to training and development of employees (Nayab, 2011).

The downturn of the economy in the 1990s forced several organizations to look at different cost-effective methods to training programs. Most focussed on the individualized approach to personal development as the layoffs post the recession resulted in highly stressed environments without support (Nayab, 2011).

According to Nayab, 2011, the use of mentoring as an effective training and development tool began much earlier, but today more and more people are incorporating the concept to management science. Tim Gallwey's 1974 book "The Inner Game of Tennis" suggests the mind of the player is more important than the opponents. His idea suggested that a psychological orientation was needed. Levinson's 1978 work "The Season's of a Man's Life" mentions a "life cycle" is followed in the process of mentoring, suggesting mentoring as a developmental process.

The works of Lewis, G. "The Mentoring Manager" (1996), and Hay's "Transformational Mentoring" (1995) provided a

theoretical base for the concept, resulting in the application of this concept on an extensive basis.

Post-modern organizational mentorship is seen in the environment of a learning organization, with a focus on developing competence. The traditional notion of guiding an individual on predetermined societal norms of excellence as a mentor, has been replaced by a mentor being someone who is an experienced, objective sounding-board, having the power to influence events, helping and supporting people manage their own learning to maximize potential, develop skills, improve the performance of the protégé and help become the person they wish to be. (Nayab, 2011).

For example, in ‘ancient Africa’ when a child was born everyone in the village shared the responsibility of teaching him or her. Ideally one person, a non-family member, was assigned a special role in bringing up the child. This person was called “Habari gani menta” in Swahili, translated as ‘the person who asks: “What is happening?”’. In Africa young Zulu tribesmen spend time with tribal elders as part of their initiation to manhood, so that the elders can pass on their wisdom and insight.

Whitmore from Asia describes: ‘The Eastern mentoring relationship is more like a dance in the sense that it is an interaction between two actors. I make a movement, they make a movement and we move around. This differs from the traditional Western model where an older person passes on knowledge to a younger one.’ A Buddhist thought that every

person is simultaneously a teacher and a student supports this view.

Japanese view the relational aspect of mentoring. This mentoring relationship is known as the senpai-kohai relationship. It is an informal and organic growth of relationships, based on emotional bonds between senior and junior employees. In the West mentoring is viewed more clinically as a human resource strategy.

Kathy Kram's (1985), *Mentoring at Work* is particularly of interest as she spoke about a theoretical foundation to understand developmental relationships of men and women at work. 20 years of grappling with the concept of mentoring, today we see an explosion of interdisciplinary and global research on it (Ragins & Kram, 2007). With the changes in technology, organizational structures, globalization, diversity, career paths and newer hybrid forms of mentoring require a new look and some empirical research to support it. (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Mentoring in India

What we know as school today was traditionally known as *gurukul* through which the *shishyas* were absorbed into the learning system by gurus and was trained on various intellectual and physical life skills through scriptures and activities. Once the *shishya* finishes his education and is ready to leave the *gurukul*, she/he is expected to pay back his gratitude for the guru in the form of *gurudakshina*. This relationship has been celebrated as a traditional mentoring

relationship in the Indian culture as Guru Poornima (Neki, 1973; Raina, 2002).

Despite this ancient tradition being so popular, there is a scarcity of mentoring research in India. Shri Narayan Murthy's position as "Chief Mentor" of Infosys Technologies Limited has also given it great significance symbolically today. (Ramaswami A, Dreher G F., 2010). There are limited studies found on workplace mentoring (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Gentry, Weber & Sadri, 2008). These studies found that mentoring was less common than performance appraisal in career planning, though it greatly influences internal labor strategy and an open, dynamic climate in the organization. Ramaswami & Dreher, (2010) also mention that mentoring was more formal in India than Britain and cultures that valued performance orientation like India tended to view mentoring more positively

Sinha's (1980) concept of Nurturant Task leadership discusses the cultural values and needs of Indian employees. NT Leadership is a blend of a nurturing and affectionate leader with the benevolence of a task oriented leader. (Ramaswami A, Dreher G F., 2010).

According to Varma et al. (2005b), the socio-cultural diversity in languages, castes and religions poses a challenge to the idea of having a single, specific style of management in India. Trends like low uncertainty avoidance, high power-distance as a result of caste and status resulting in paternalistic management styles, value of family & group leading to a collectivistic orientation, low masculinity, moderate

assertiveness and ambition were also observed influencing organizational relationships today (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010).

With the need to relook mentoring in different cultures, there has been a rise in the need to understand indigenous mentoring systems than just the United States (Bright, 2005; Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang & Farh, 2004). Researches (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Bhawuk, 2008b; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001) suggest differences in mentoring relationships in the West and India, as a result of socio-cultural, political and interpersonal relationships. Indian culture displays a traditional, hierarchical form of mentoring, high-power distance, collectivistic view, dependency and clannish behavior which is likely to affect mentor-protégé perceptions of one and other's role and behaviors (Bhawul, 2008b).

Such culture is likely to impact the formation of mentoring relationships giving rise to a strong need to examine mentoring in the Indian context, as most studies have used only the Western mentoring concepts and measures to understand it (Ramaswami A & Dreher G F 2010).

Women and Mentoring

Gender is very much a predictor of retention according to Zhang et al, (2002). Thus we can connect mentoring women to retention. The more mentoring programs introduced to help women and create a sense of belongingness, higher would be the retention of women in organizations. Though valuable to all members in the organization, mentoring is especially

important to women (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989). Ragins & Scandura (1994) add that women face greater demands than their male counterparts and hence require mentoring more.

Mentoring women contributes to breaking the glass ceiling and their career advancement (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Catalyst, 1998; Heery, 1994; Morrison et al., 1987; Ragins et al., 1998; Ragins, 1999; Van Collie, 1998).

The New Companies Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha in December last year, mandates a specified class of companies to have at least one woman on the board. With the rise in women holding C-positions in the male-dominated corporate world, we see companies vigorously introducing women-friendly policies.

With the rise in number of women in management positions, unfortunately we do not see the number of mentoring relationships available to women beneficial for their career (Berry, 1993; Shockley & Stanley, 1980). Minus a mentor it is difficult for a woman to understand the reality of the male dominated business culture & hence she is unable to advance in her career (George & Kummerow, 1981; Solomon, Bishop & Bresser, 1986; Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982).

Traditional the model of mentoring being from a male employee advancement perspective, its role is not clear in the advancement of women (Barnier, 1982; Orth & Jacobs, 1971).

Mentoring is seen to facilitate the development of career plans and a self identity for women, as Ilgen and Youtz (1986) suggest that mentoring has both career and psychosocial benefits. It further aids in reducing the job and life stress a woman may face in the absence of a peer group for support (Nelson & Quick, 1985)

Vogt et al, (1997) & Seymour et al, (1997) report the tendency of women to have lower confidence and self efficacy than men and require more encouragement & supportive environment. Riley & Wrench (1985) further asserts, women who have had mentors, one or more have been more satisfied on in their jobs than women who lacked a mentor. Jordon (1997) also adds female executive women who had a male mentor in a study were successful in performing functions had a male mentor.

Ragins & Cotton (1991) assert a mentor can further help buffer discrimination at the workplace in general.

There are several examples of mentoring programs such as, "Tata Group's 'Second Life' program which is for women who wish to come back to work after a sabbatical. Mentoring has also emerged as a career developmental tool for entrepreneurs. 'Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development' program by British Council India, in partnership with Diageo Foundation, identifies young women trainers and improves their capacity to train women entrepreneurs.

The Women of Wipro (WOW) Program aims at making itself an equal opportunity employer, while GE has a network that provides career coaching, Intel has formed a group of senior executives who promote efforts to retain women & develop

their careers, and Baxter initiates providing women leadership, technical, functional skills and business knowledge. Citigroup on the other hand has a global program aimed at sharing best practices, creating role modeling opportunities & building a women leader's pipeline. Dow provides a network to women to find mentors as well as networking opportunities. Alchemy at HUL develops women leaders by providing them a mentoring program. This tremendous change in mindset is the results of efforts and determination of second generation women entrepreneurs, for gender diversity in the boardroom.

Despite these initiatives we see a paradox in the area of mentoring for women, as there is a need for mentoring women but with men holding central senior positions and a wider base of power (Woodlands Group, 1980), there is a lack of female mentors. This lack has resulted in female employees being mentored by males in senior positions (Linehall M, Scallion H, 2008). Being excluded from the traditional informal networks of men (Ibarra, 1993; Vinnicombe & Colwill, 1995; Crampton & Mishra, 1999; Selman & Suutari, 2003) we see lesser women taking on as mentors.

Women are equally keen to mentor, but unlike men feel it a risk for their career, involving too much of time with a perception that they lack qualifications and skills to mentor (Parker VA, Kram KE, 1993).

The above findings reconnect us to the earlier paradox of need for mentoring women versus lack of women mentors, which has resulted in majority of mentoring relationships to be cross gender. Unfortunately research by Hunt & Michael (1983)

suggests that a woman's career growth is largely hampered by traditional dyadic cross-gender relationships.

Challenges of Cross Gender Mentoring

Although mentoring has benefits it brings along several challenges that impact the success of it. Researchers are probing to understand the dynamics of the mentoring relationship to determine why it deteriorates or thrives and what can be done to increase its effectiveness (Eby, 2007; Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kalb_eisch, 2007).

Researches (Ragins & Mcfarlin, 1990; Clawson & Kram, 2001; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Levesque, O'Neill, Nelson & Dumas, 2005; Gosh & Haynes, 2008, Kram & Clawson, 1984; Noe, 1988; Chandler, 1996; Obi, 2011) discuss the issue of cross gender mentoring in-depth.

According to Madison & Huston, (1996) traditional mentoring relationships being hierarchical and with males in senior positions, tend to be less helpful to female employees. This kind of relationship is very evident in India.

Male mentors are perceived to have more power than female mentors in the organization say Ragins & Sunderstorm, (1989). Sex-role expectations can colour these perceptions, making one feel women are less powerful. A good performance by a woman is often seen as an exception than a norm says Burke & McKeen, (1990), which leads to the issue of stereotyping and strengthening of sex-role stereotypes.

Negative stereotypes form due to perceiving women to be less competent, emotionally unstable, dependent and irrational (Heilman, Block & Martell, 1995), which further hamper the cross gender mentoring relationship.

Tokenism or giving preferential treatment given to women, which can result in resentment, jealousy and threatening among peers (Rosen & Mercile, 1979) is also detrimental to advancement. It harms the self perception of the female protégé. She tends to be less committed to and satisfied with work and people around observed Chacko, (1982). Heilman, Simon & Repper, (1987) found that women took less credit if they perceived preferential treatment. They were concerned with how they are being perceived and tended to perform poorly (Lord & Sainz, (1985). Budhwar, Saini & Bhatnagar, (2005) suggest social, organizational and personal biases work at are what keep women at lower levels in the organization, which is also the reason why we see lesser female mentors.

Male protégés as well as other males can take a female mentor for granted, as they have seen the nurturing role their mother's and women in the family have played (Lean, 1983). Being less aware of the expertise of the female protégé the male mentors may feel they can provide limited assistance says Noe R, (1988).

Role modelling is another challenge in cross gender mentoring relationships says Clawson & Kram, (1984), as the male mentor may find it difficult to understand work-family conflicts of a woman. Women tend to perceive the world differently and have more expectations from the mentoring

relationship than men resulting in a conflict situation with male mentors. Different preferences for leadership styles (Karabik, 1990), communication (Tannen, 1990) and networking (Forrest & Dougherty, 2001) result in additional conflicts.

Ragins & McFarlin (1990), Ragins & Cotton, (1991) found that female protégés were less likely than male protégés to indulge in after work social activities with cross gender mentors, resulting in them being left out from crucial informal male networks like clubs, sports activities and also be less involved in key projects in the organization. This isolates them from most formal as well as informal opportunities to develop a mentoring relationship and developing mentoring and leadership skills.

Dreher & Cox, (1996) in a study found that protégés with male mentors received higher compensation than protégés with female mentors, Ragins & Cotton, (1991), while more female protégés reported receiving lesser challenging assignments from their male mentors than male protégés say Ragins & Cotton, (1999), Perceiving women to be less suitable for challenging roles (Taylor & Ilgen, (1981), resulted in women being excluded from opportunities to advance. All these add to the discrimination factor in organizations.

The initial phase of mentoring being crucial, developing personality traits for female protégés at the lower level in the organization needs attention (Gosh R & Haynes R, 2008) and is a task for a male mentor and much trickier for a woman than a man (Parker, Kram, 1993).

Women protégés tend to build emotional ties with their mentors say Hunt & Michael, (1983), which can often be misconstrued as sexual involvement and encourage male mentors to avoid cross gender mentoring relationships to that can harm their career and reputation. Intimacy issues may further result in altering role behaviours (Walsh & Borowski (1999), which can be detrimental to cross gender mentoring relationships. Trusting friendships do develop but only within formal work settings in to avoid damaging and malicious gossip state Ragins & McFarlin, (1990).

Every male mentor is bound to face a “developmental dilemma”, in which he desires to develop the protégé on one hand and avoid complicated male-female equation on the other (Clawson JG, Kram K E, (1984). It is the perceived level of intimacy by the public and not the actual one that causes a barrier in cross gender mentoring say Clawson JG, Kram K E, (1984).

Socialization makes men have a more internal sense of motivation, while women tend to look at external standards of achievement oriented behaviour according to O’Leary, (1974), which can be another barrier in cross gender mentoring relationship while motivating.

The final problem in a mentoring relationship is how to take the relationship to the next level of growth and power, beyond professional commitments (Blake Beard S D, (2001), which poses a problem for most mentoring relationships.

So cross gender mentoring (Thomas, 2001) is supportive in some cases, but has its pitfalls. It has complexities and limited

use say Parker & Kram, (1993), which leads us to study the need for same gender mentoring, especially in an Indian context.

Women Mentoring Women

The role of mentoring has been clearly defined and related to the career advancement of men, but unclear in case of women and their career development (Barnier, 1982; Orth & Jacobs, 1971). A lot has changed since then but the ambiguity still persists. Women with a role model reported a higher overall satisfaction in their career (Levinson, W., Kaufman, K., Brinton, C., & Tolle, S. W., (1991)

Female mentors are crucial role models to the junior women employees (Ragins & Scandura, 1994, Nelson & Quick 1985) through whom women vicariously learn to handle work & family conflicts and understanding the barriers in the advancement they will face.

The female mentor benefits in terms of recognition in the organization, a loyal support base, rejuvenation in her career and better job performance (Kram 1985).

Women have to manage two levels of the mentoring relationship: Internal & External relationship. (Clawson & Kram, 1984). The Internal relationship is between the mentor and protégé and the External relationship is between protégé-mentor and the rest of the organization. Both affect the overall relationship between the female protégé and mentor, in cross-gender mentoring it even more evident.

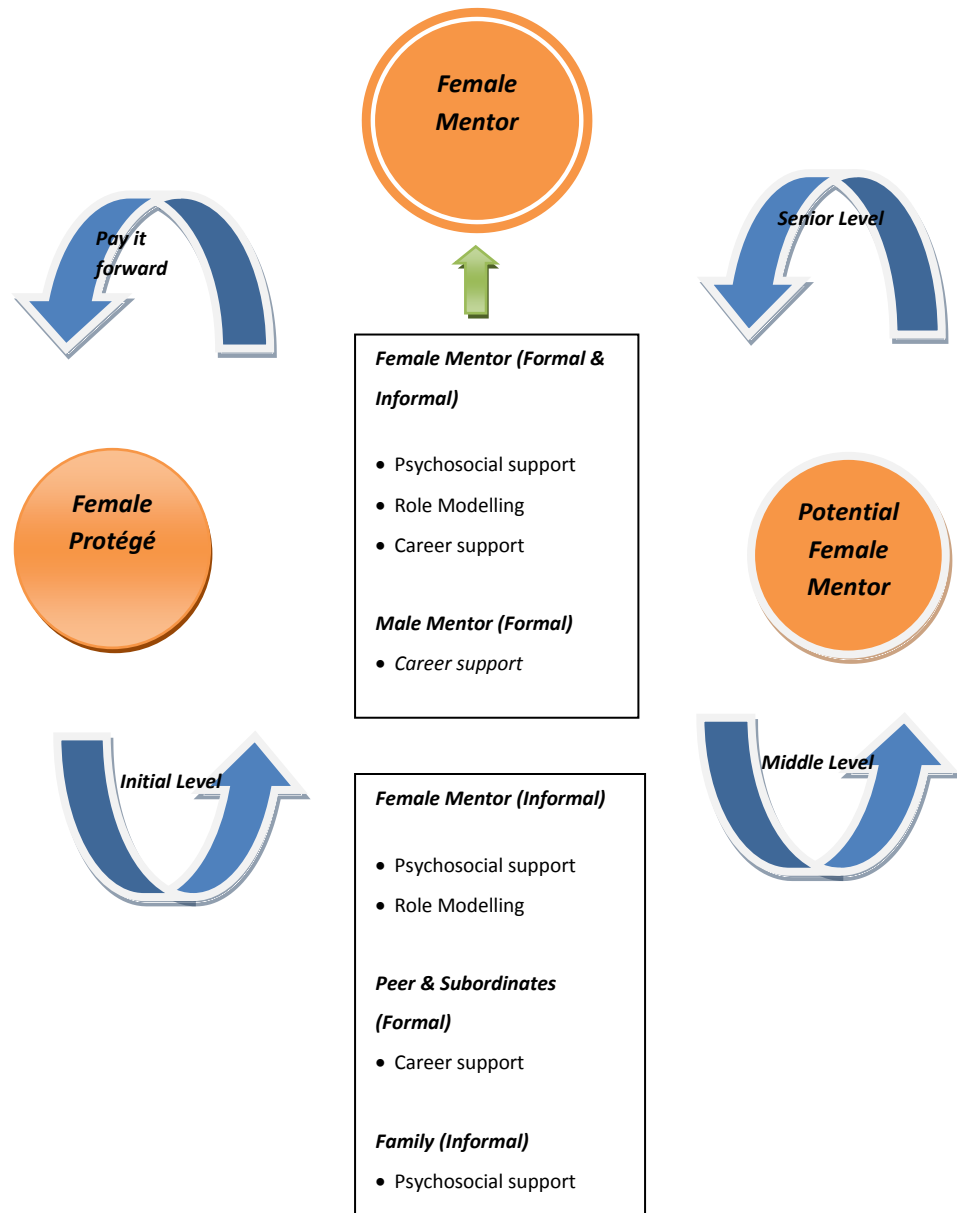
Overview of the Women Mentoring Women (WMW) Model

Apprenticeship, Hierarchical, Citizen, Cloning, Co-Mentoring, Friendship, Nurturing, Relational and Peer are a few types of mentoring models. The developed model is an amalgamation of all the above models. Relational Model by Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, (2002) is largely connected to it as it is characterized by shared discussion and ideas accentuating on mutual engagement, authenticity, and empowerment. It is apt for females as women benefit largely from a holistic mentoring that takes into account psychological and vocational needs.

I developed the WMW model in 2014 on reviewing relevant literature. The overhaul of the traditional mentoring model to suit women was suggested by McGruire & Reger, (2003). The traditional, hierarchical model focuses on the belief that an older and wiser individual would mentor the employee, which is largely male centric as it focuses on competition and objectivity. Both suggest a need for a woman centric model based on values like cooperation, development and equality, through which emerged the concept of co-mentors sustaining and growing together. Taking from the research of these authors I have looked at developing a transformational model of mentoring. The proposed research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for a new Mentoring Model for Women

Radhika Nadkarny 2014



Levinson's (1978) liner model is more suited for men than women who face the challenge of absence from their career due to family pressures and motherhood breaks. He suggests

that men work towards their dream through a mentor who is a role model, advisor, counselor and sponsor to them. Their focus is individual and professional achievements, whereas for women Gallos, (1989) states dreams are related to relationships and family. The female mentor having dealt with the same dreams and challenges would be able to support and guide the female protégé better.

The WMW model adapts from Kram's Model of Mentoring which is a male mentoring model and is tailored to meet the mentoring needs of women, especially in the Indian context. It provides a structure and foundation to introduce women to mentoring and then build a sustainable female mentor pipeline within the organization. It considers the women's mentoring needs at different developmental levels in the organization and suggests mentors accordingly. It is cyclical in nature as it moves from the initial phase of a female employee's career and eventually results in the female employee developing into a female mentor who will guide and pass her skills to other women in the organization. The WMW model in addition considers the peer and family as a part of the mentorship process, as both are crucial aspects of the life of a women as suggested from Kram's, (1985) research.

Kram's (1985) in her two dimensional model classified two types of mentor support behaviors. Psychosocial and career support, were the two behaviors. Career functions were coaching, sponsoring, providing challenging assignments, protecting and guiding the protégé through organizational politics and fostering visibility to the key players in the organization. Psychosocial functions related to personal

aspects like building self worth, feelings of competency, personal and professional identity via role modeling, while accepting, confirming, befriending and counseling the protégé. Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Ragins, 1993; also added role modeling as a function of mentoring. Networking is the latest addition made to the functions of mentoring by Tenenbaum, Crosby & Gilner in 2001. Allan & Eby, (2004) found that female mentors tended to provide more psychosocial support, while male mentors provide more career related support, while Noe, (1988) & Zey (1984) deny this assumption.

Noe (1988) suggests that functions of a mentor at each stage need to be researched further, keeping gender in mind, as women need to work through the accommodation phase laden with anxiety, role ambiguity and new relationships.

Identification is a key element in selection of a protégé by a mentor (Blackburn et al., 1981; Bowers, 1984; Megginson et al., 2006), as she/he wish to perceive a younger version of self in the protégé. Identification and a good chemistry between the mentor and protégé are fundamental to a successful mentoring relationship (Straus S E, Chatur F, Taylor M, 2009).

It is observed that junior women tend to report more supportive relationships with their peers (Ely, 1989), so I have suggested initiating peers along with family and supervisors as mentors to the female protégé as part of the model in the initial, as well as later phase of the mentoring process. Since there are no studies that examine the role of family as a source of mentoring support, though extensive research on work-

family interface (Greenhouse & Parasurmanan, 1999) is there, a need for more research on various sources as mentors and such a model is felt.

The model also includes men in the mentoring process, as mentors, peers, supervisors and family members. It does not eliminate their role in mentoring process, as Parker & Kram (1993) have stated that self awareness will help male members in the organization alter the harmful dynamics of relying on stereotypes. This will expose them more to women in the work setting, familiarize them with the challenges they face and become more acceptable of women protégés and mentors alike.

Mentoring relationships can be both formal and informal (Cobb et al., 2006). In formal mentoring relationships the mentor-protégé is brought together through a formalized program or series of activities, that maybe assigned or chosen. They are brought together spontaneously through mutual interests as part of informal mentoring (Pollock, 1995; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The model suggests formal as well as informal mentoring at different stages of the developmental cycle of a woman at the workplace, as well as by different mentors. This suggestion is made in accordance with the function/s of the mentor as well as the phase of the mentoring relationship.

The final phase of the model the author suggests “Pay it forward” as an approach to transmit the skills imbibed through the mentoring process by the female mentor to new female protégés. This concept has already been studied by Catalyst

and successfully adopted by Coca Cola in their mentoring and apprenticeship process.

Applications and Implications of the WMW Model

Mentoring is one of the effective and powerful tools to help women break the glass ceiling challenge. Findings from the review of relevant literature establish and support this suggestion.

The application of this model can be a part of an organizations mentoring program. It involves a female mentor, female protégé and significant others like peers both male and female, supervisors, family and a male mentor are a later stage, who can provide holistic support which is lacking in the traditional mentoring model.

The female protégés can be invited to be part of the mentoring program formally as well as informally. The contact is initiated by bringing the female protégé with all the concerned mentors in the different functions (psychosocial and career). With the mentoring the protégé will move to the next level of a potential mentor.

Here on the female mentors besides the support will also serve as role models. The male mentors will assist the female mentors in providing career support, which they are more apt at providing as studies suggest. Once they imbibe the mentoring skills and are advancing with the psychosocial and career support, they take on the role of a mentor. The mentoring relationship is cyclical and does not have a definite

end as seen by the “Pay it forward” concept. The mentors further enter the cyclical relationship of mentoring newer women in the organization. Programs like these work at handling diversity issues in the organization.

The core implications of this study for organizations are that more women need to become mentors, thus greater the need to experience the relationship of mentoring to perform more effectively and pick up the skills of mentoring to pay them forward to new female employees. Dreher & Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992 suggest the benefit of a mentor in career advancement, so women mentors can help in the career advancement of their female protégés

Women are equally open to being mentors but tend to avoid mentoring assignments as they perceive it impinging on their time and personal struggle to succeed in their career. Through this study we see how the WMW model can help reduce this anxiety faced by women mentors. The mentor can identify with the female protégé facing similar issues and collaborate to work out the challenge of time and grow in the relationship.

There are several barriers like cross gender mentoring which need to be explored individually in the Indian context. Exploring the mentoring needs of women at different developmental stages of their career is also essential.

The three aspects of a mentoring relationship like career support, psychosocial support and role modeling need more delving into in relation to women employees.

More research on the suggested model for mentoring women can be done. Research could investigate the effectiveness and value of the WMW Model suggested in this study. Newer models can be suggested for creating a foundation keeping in mind barriers to mentoring suitable to various cultures. Models can be created to suit diversity of all kinds, including disabilities, gender orientation, class etc.

The constellation aspect of the model can be further investigated in depth to design mentoring programs in organizations, especially in collectivist cultures. Mentoring circles should be researched to promote diversity, non-hierarchical, collaborative and holistic relationships.

Equally important to study is how this model can assist organizations manage costs and add benefits to women who mentor through rewards and recognition. Not just financially but other benefits through a WMW relationship to an organization to retain and build its talent pool needs greater examination.

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