

Mentoring in Indian organisations- A revisit to Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale

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Abstract

In this study, we attempted to validate Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale on a sample of 363 managerial employees working in public and private sector organisations in North India. Further, we also analysed the influence of demographic variables on mentoring relationships in the Indian context. The results provided support for the two-dimensional factor-structure of mentoring functions in consonance with Noe's (1988) study and Kram's (1985) conceptualization. In terms of demographics linkage with mentoring functions, managers from older age-groups were found to carry strong perceptions about psychosocial mentoring in contrast to younger managers. Overall, the current research not only highlighted the potential utility of the measure in the Indian context but also suggested useful mentoring specific interventions that could be practised by the Indian organisations for sustaining managers' career growth and development.

Keywords: Careers, Coaching, Development, Managers, Mentoring Functions, Training

Introduction

The increasing global competition coupled with technological advancements has forced organisations to meet the developmental needs of their employees. In this context, workplace mentoring serves as a potential avenue for managerial talent development by enhancing proteges' sense of competence and preparing them for undertaking crucial leadership roles to help them accomplish organisational mission (O'Neill, 2005; Arora & Rangnekar, 2014). The extant research on mentoring provides a broad coverage of various mentoring scales useful for capturing mentoring in general, in addition to capturing mentoring functions in diverse contexts ((Noe, 1988; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Berk et al., 2005; Chen, Watson & Hilton, 2016). Besides this, the developed measures also provide a strong support to Kram's conceptualization which categorized mentoring functions into psychosocial and vocational support functions (Mitchell, Eby and Ragins, 2015; Humberd and Rouse, 2015; Tepper, Shaffer and Tepper, 1996). While, a lot has been examined about developments in mentoring and mentoring scales in the Western settings; there has been scarcity of research on mentoring in the non-western business settings, for example, the Indian business environment. Henceforth, in the present research, we have attempted to analyse about the perceptions of mentoring from the protege's perspective using managerial sample from public and private sector Indian organisations. Additionally, the study has been conducted with two major goals; our first goal is to examine the validity of Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions in the Indian context.

The second goal of the study is to investigate the influence of demographic variables on mentoring relationships. To accomplish these goals, we specifically chose Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale because it is by far the most commonly used measure, as reported by Allen, Eby, O'Brien and Lentz (2008). One of the significant findings of their study showed that of the 44.9% studies that were reviewed, 29.1% utilized Noe's scale for measuring psychosocial mentoring functions followed by Scandura's (1992) scale (25.3%). Likewise, based on reviews of 50.6% of studies conducted by Allen and colleagues (2008), it was found that majority of studies have used Noe's scale (24.7%) for the measurement of career functions. Additionally, the scale has been demonstrated to have very good psychometric properties (Özkalp, Kirel, Sungur and Ozdemir, 2008; Carrera, 2002).

Need and significance of the study in the Indian context:

The objectives of the study were specifically chosen for testing in the Indian business context given the fact that India is a paternalistic country (Salminen-Karlsson, 2015) where Indian managers carry a firm belief in the support and encouragement provided by their mentors. Managers prefer to be nurtured and guided under the mentorship of a senior experienced person who acts as fatherly figure in directing them towards right career path (Sinha, 1980). Along with this, senior mentors/supervisors also take active interest in employee's developmental activities. Indian leaders/superiors follow the philosophy of excelling together with cooperation and harmony based actions (Jain et al., 2008). Besides this, Indian companies strongly invest in employee's training and development with Indian leaders/superiors being role-models for their employees to motivate them in every situation, thereby enhancing engagement and motivation of the employees (Tutton, 2010). Several organisations like *Procter and Gamble*, *Coca-Cola India*, and *TISCO* use mentoring systems for preparing their employees for significant leadership positions at a global level (Rao, 2007). Groups like *Essar* have also incorporated coaching and mentoring practices in to their performance appraisal systems whereby every employee is offered the opportunity to receive mentoring benefits from their immediate supervisor (Tewari and Sharma, 2014). The appearance of these mentoring practises in Indian organisations is strongly influenced by India's high standing on the Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions of power-distance and collectivism. As such the culture of obedience and respect towards the senior authority prevails in such Indian organisations (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). Thus, given the prominence of mentoring practises in Indian organisations, it becomes quite vital to assess the type of mentoring functions as well the perceptions of the Indian employees towards existing mentoring systems.

In line with recommendations proposed in previous studies that highlight the need to investigate the phenomenon of mentoring in countries/clusters other than Anglo-Saxon cultures along with varying cultural factors (Bozionelos et al., 2014), we propose to investigate Noe's mentoring scale in the Indian context. Our aim is to analyse whether consistency in factor-structure of mentoring functions, as reported by Noe (1988) could also be observed for India, which stands high on the cultural dimensions of power-distance and as a collectivist nation, in contrast to the Western and Anglo-Saxon countries.

Review of existing scales on mentoring

In the past, several scales on mentoring functions have been developed which capture scenarios of mentoring in general as well as in specific contexts (Crawford, Randolph, & Yob, 2014; Ferro, Wells & Speechley, 2014; Crisp & Cruz, 2010). For example, Schockett and Haring-Hidore (1985) presented eight, fifty-word vignettes portraying psychosocial and vocational mentoring functions to 144 college students. Further investigation using a factor-analytic approach (oblique rotation, principal component analysis) yielded a two-factor solution with psychosocial mentoring accounting for 33.4% of the variance and vocational mentoring functions accounting for 5.9% of the variance. Olian, Giannantonio and Carroll (1986) conducted an empirical investigation and derived

mentoring functions under the two main groups – *instrumental mentoring* functions similar to the career mentoring functions of Kram (1985) and *intrinsic functions* similar to the psychosocial functions that enhanced the intensity and depth of the mentor-protégé relationship (Kram, 1985). Scandura (1992) in her study on 244 manufacturing managers, developed an 18 item five-point scale capturing psychosocial and vocational mentoring using available research on mentoring. This 18-itemed mentoring functions scale produced a three factor solution with first factor representing the vocational function of mentoring (8 items), second factor representing the role-modelling function (i.e., protégé's wish to be trying to become like mentor), and the third factor was labelled as the social support (i.e. sharing personal problems with mentor) component of the mentoring. Further these dimensions were found to relate strongly to salary and promotions level of managers. Similar results were provided by Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) using a sample of 1024 respondents through the deployment of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the 12-itemed mentoring functions scale. Results showed support for three dimensions of coaching, role-modelling, and social support (Scandura, 1992). In another study, Scandura and Ragins (1993) conducted a validation study on the 15-itemed multi-dimensional measure of mentoring that comprised three subscales of career mentoring, psychosocial mentoring, and role-modelling. These 15-items of mentoring measure were then subjected to empirical investigation consisting of content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, along with examination of reliability and inter-item correlations. This resulted in a 9-itemed mentoring measure (MFQ-9), the discriminant and convergent validity was found to be strongly supported (Castro, Scandura and Williams, 2004). Further, MFQ-9 was demonstrated to have good psychometric properties in a separate study by Pellegrini and Scandura (2005).

In addition, the most popular mentoring scale is the Dreher and Ash (1990)'s global measure of mentoring experiences for investigating the differential linkage of mentoring with career outcomes. The 18-itemed scale of global mentoring practices by Dreher and Ash (1990) was constructed based on the items selection from Noe's (1988) and Whitely, Dougherty and Dreher (1988) study with an aim to broadly cover the psychosocial and vocational functions as suggested by Kram (1985). The responses on the items were recorded with a specific focus on the senior organisational members as protégé's mentors (Dreher and Ash, 1990); and these 18 items were later on averaged to get a total score of mentoring (Dreher and Ash, 1990). Further, Dreher and Ash (1990) stressed studying the interrelationships between the various mentoring activities as well as researching general and primary mentoring functions. Similarly, Ragins and McFarlin (1990) also developed a MRI (Mentor's Role Instrument) based on Kram's theory. This instrument not only captured perceptions of career development (coaching, protection, challenging assignments, sponsorship, and exposure) and psychosocial development (friendship, counselling, role-modelling, and acceptance), but also measured the two additional mentor's roles of parent and social with reference to dyadic relationships. The scale was developed by conducting a pre-test on a sample of 69 protégés employed in public and private sector organisations in United States. Initially following Kram's work, 59 items were developed measuring 11 mentor roles, on which confirmatory factors analyses was performed for the testing of the distinctiveness of the model that finally resulted in 33 items.

Related Literature and Hypotheses Development

Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale was originally developed on the sample of educational administrators and comprised 32 items. These items were then subjected to exploratory factor analysis that yielded two factors namely psychosocial mentoring (14 items) and career mentoring (7 items). The psychosocial mentoring functions accounted for explaining 67% of the variance and comprised of coaching, counselling, acceptance and confirmation, and role-modelling functions. The career mentoring functions explained nearly 15% of the variance and comprised of exposure and visibility, challenging assignments, and protection functions. However, friendship items

were not found to be loaded on either of the factors. The two-factor solution obtained in Noe's (1988) study was in alignment with Kram's (1985) mentoring taxonomy that classified mentoring functions in terms of psychosocial and career mentoring with a difference that coaching factor in Noe's study loaded on psychosocial functions rather than career functions. This two-factor structure of mentoring functions was later on confirmed by Tepper et al. (1996) in his study on 568 mentees. In addition, the Noe's (1988) mentoring functions scale has been subjected to empirical investigation in diverse contexts (Allen, McManus and Russell, 1999; Hoigaard and Mathisen, 2009; Smith-Jentsch, Fullick and Bencaz, 2012; Park, Newman, Zhang, Wu, and Hooke, 2015) specifically in the Western cultures. However, there are dearth of empirical studies utilizing this measure in the non-western countries like India.

Based on the above discussion, we thus hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Mentoring functions as defined by Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale, is a two-dimensional construct with well-defined internal consistency for each of the constructs.

Demographic Variables and Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring in the organisational environment represents a complex issue which involves the interaction of several organisational, positional, and interpersonal variables that influence the mentor-protégé relationship (Hunt and Michael, 1983). For example, one of the significant demographic variables that influences perceived mentoring relationships is the age (Finkelstein, Allen and Rhoton, 2003). The evidence in support of this stems from the sociological and developmental theory that regards age as a status characteristic governing an individual's motives and behaviours (Whitely, Dougherty, and Dreher, 1992). Also, the extent of the establishment of mentoring relationships may vary depending upon whether protégé belongs to younger age-group or older age-group. For example, career mentoring support functions may be perceived more important by younger protégés than by the older persons due to varying career developmental needs of the younger and older individuals (Whitely et al., 1992). According to Ragins and McFarlin (1990), younger protégés are more likely to perceive the role-modelling and parental type of mentoring functions than the older protégés.

Hypothesis 2: Mentoring relationships (psychosocial and career mentoring) will vary according to different age-groups of managers in the Indian context.

The empirical investigations from the previous studies provide a mixed support in relation to difference in mentoring relationships across gender (Allen and Eby, 2003). For example, in Noe's (1988) study, female protégés reported receiving greater psychosocial mentoring functions from their mentors in contrast to the male protégés. Similarly, study by Burke (1984) found that female protégés reported having received greater psychosocial mentoring functions than did the male protégés. On the other hand, Koberg et al. (1998) study on health care professionals demonstrated male protégés to have received greater career support functions in comparison to female protégés. This is because women often lack mentors and sponsors who can provide instrumental support to strengthen their career growth and advancement (Burke and McKeen, 1990). As women face more barriers in the development of mentoring relationships in comparison to males (Ragins and McFarlin, 1990); they are likely to perceive less mentoring functions in contrast to male counter-parts. Furthermore, study by Lortie-Lussier and Rinfret (2006) depicted mentor's support to be crucial for both males and females, but greater contribution of mentoring was seen for male's career advancement.

Hypothesis 3: Mentoring relationships (psychosocial and career mentoring) will vary according to gender (males versus females) in the Indian context.

In addition, we assume that in the Indian business context, *organisational rank* would also serve as one of the potential variables that influence perceived mentorship roles. This is because Indian organisations follow a paternalistic style of management where senior managers act as fatherly figure to the junior level managers and also exhibit a greater control and authority over them (Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). Junior managers also rely on the senior managers for important decision-making. Because of which hierarchical level of the managers is of utmost importance in the Indian organisations. The same has been confirmed by Kondalkar (2009), who mentioned hierarchical levels as one of the significant features of the Indian organisations. With reference to mentoring relationships and organisational rank, previous studies have shown that *upper ranks* emphasize a greater focus on career development and advancement; the *lower ranks* stimulate protégés to put a greater focus on building one's own professional identity (Ragins and McFarlin, 1990). Another study by Whitely et al. (1992) reported that people in managerial positions receive greater career mentoring functions in contrast to their counterparts in professional positions. Likewise, Koberg's et al. (1994) investigation also depicted that managers from upper level management positions received more mentoring functions when compared to those from professional positions. O'Neill (2005) also identified protégés' organisational position as one of the major contextual variables influencing mentoring relationships. Based on this discussion, we thus hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Mentoring relationships (psychosocial and career mentoring) will vary according to hierarchical levels of junior, middle, and senior management among managers in the Indian context.

Methodology

In this study, 363 managers working in public and private sector organisations in North India completed the survey questionnaires. Specifically, respondent managers were surveyed via a convenience sampling method to secure easy access in reaching potential respondents of the study. Though convenient sampling is sometimes considered unfavorable due to its inability to produce replicable and representative results; yet the given study chose convenient sampling because of the following two reasons. First, it is one of the most popular techniques for researchers in the field of counselling and social sciences (Nassar-McMillan & Niles, 2010) and second, it provides ease of access in choosing large samples thereby enhancing the validity of study data (Jones, Nettelton & Smith, 2005). For the purpose of data collection, we specifically chose organisations from North India because North India region states (Delhi NCR, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh) have emerged as the premier industrial hub of various industries and businesses according to recent report by Franchise India (Soni, 2014). Several multinational corporations and IT players manage their operations through their corporate offices located in this region. Moreover, this region is considered as the centre of strategic importance due to its immense contribution towards the financial and economic growth of the country (Soni, 2014). Additionally, there is a vast population of the working professionals in Indian society employed in this region that are likely to possess diverse skills sets, because of which taking the sample from this region was considered as a suitable representation of population.

Participants

The sample comprised 84.6% males and 15.4% females. The age distribution of the participants ranged between - 21-25 years (15.4%), 26-30 years (40.5 %), 31-35 years (11.8%), 36-40 years (6.6%), 41-45 years (8.5%), and above 45 years (17.1%). The respondent managers had the following educational profile with 6.9% as diploma holders; 43.3% as graduates; 46.6% as post graduates and 3.3% held education higher than postgraduate level qualifications. In addition, the sample included employees from different managerial levels: junior level (25.6%), middle level (59.2%), and senior level (15.2%) positions. Of the 363 respondents, 46.6% managers had mentors

allocated under the formal mentorship scheme of the organisations and 53.4% reported to have developed informal mentoring relationships naturally (mentors chosen by themselves depending on mutual compatibility). Further, the majority of the respondents reported their mentors to be their immediate supervisors (55.1%), and some of them mentioned their peers (2.8%), others identified superiors besides their supervisor (22.9%) and people from other organisations (19.3%) as their mentors.

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey based research design that serves as one of the most commonly used research designs in social sciences (Wildermuth, 2008) for the measurement of mentoring functions amongst Indian Managers. Additionally, a cross-sectional survey based research design allows a onetime measurement of the variables (Schwab, 2005).

Instruments

Before the beginning of mentoring functions scale items, participants were asked to respond to whether they currently had a mentor coded No [1] and Yes [2] (Bozionelos and Wang, 2006). Further, an established definition of mentor was also provided to the participants as —A mentor is generally defined as a higher ranking, influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to provide upward mobility and support to your career (Ragins, 1989). Your mentor may or may not be in your organisation and may or may not be your immediate supervisor (Ragins, 1989). Based on this definition, participants, who responded to have been involved in a mentoring relationship, filled their responses on mentoring functions scale items.

Noe's (1988) mentoring functions scale comprise in total 21-items that include 14-items of psychosocial mentoring and 7-items of career mentoring. The wordings of the scale items were subjected to modification to fit the organisational context. Illustrative items were, —My mentor has demonstrated good listening skills in our conversations (*psychosocial mentoring*) and —My mentor gave me assignments/ tasks that help prepared me for a leadership role (*career mentoring*). The responses on the scale items were tapped using the five-point Likert Scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The two categories of mentoring relationships- psychosocial mentoring and career mentoring were obtained by Noe (1988) as a two-factor solution through the application of factor analysis technique. The alpha reliability of psychosocial mentoring and career mentoring support functions on our study sample was found as .92 and .90

Analysis

The analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21 and AMOS statistical package version 20.0 (Arbuckle, 2011).

Results

Noe's (1988) mentoring functions scale was originally developed and empirically tested in the context of Western cultures; henceforth, it was important to validate the scale in the Indian context. Therefore, distinctiveness of the two-factor solution of this mentoring relationships measure in the Indian context was confirmed by performing confirmatory factor analyses using Amos software version-20. We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using the maximum likelihood estimation methods. As per the recommendations of Hair et al. (2009), we took into account both relative and absolute fit indices for evaluating the model fit of the hypothesized model in comparison to the one factor model including- (1) χ^2 goodness-of-fit statistic; (2) the root mean square error

approximation (RMSEA); (3) the goodness-of-fit index (GFI);(4) the comparative fit index (CFI); (5) the incremental fit index (IFI); and (6) the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI).

CFA results showed that in the Indian context, the hypothesized two factor model (i.e psychosocial mentoring and career mentoring) demonstrated adequate model fit in comparison to one-factor model (psychosocial and career mentoring functions clubbed as a one factor) (Table 1) (Kenny, 2014). Additionally, both the categories of Noe’s (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale exhibited good internal consistency on the Indian sample. While reliability coefficient of psychosocial mentoring was found .92, career mentoring support was reported to have reliability coefficient of .90. Furthermore, descriptive statistics results showed that a strong correlation exists between psychosocial mentoring ($M = 3.8, SD = .70$) and career mentoring ($M = 3.6, SD = .83$) in the Indian context ($r = .670, p < .01$). Together, these results provided support to Hypothesis 1.

Table 1 CFA Results of Mentoring Relationships in the Indian Context

Scale	χ^2	df	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	IFI	TLI
1-factor model	614.97	173	.084	.855	.896	.897	.874
2-factor model	361.46	168	.04	.909	.955	.95	.943

$N = 363$; $\chi^2 =$ chi square, $df =$ degrees of freedom, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation GFI= goodness-of-fit index, CFI= comparative fit index, IFI = incremental fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index

For the testing of Hypothesis 2, one-way ANOVA test was deployed to analyse whether a significant difference exists in the perceptions of managers about mentoring relationships based on the different categories of age-group. The fundamental assumption of ANOVA test was also met by performing Levene’s test of homogeneity that ensured equality of variances across the groups. Results shown in Table 2 indicated a significant difference in the perceptions of managers about psychosocial mentoring support across different age-groups ($F = 2.839, p < .05$). In addition, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey’s HSD test showed that perceived psychosocial mentoring support specifically varied significantly between managers from 26-30 years of age-group (Mean = 3.71) and managers from 41-45 years of age-group (Mean = 4.09). Besides this, one-way ANOVA test also demonstrated that perceived career mentoring did not differ significantly across managers from different age-groups. Henceforth, Hypothesis 2 could be partially accepted.

Table 2 One-way ANOVA test of Equality of Means for Mentoring Relationships by Age

<i>Age as demographic variable and psychosocial mentoring</i>								
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
21-25	56	3.6913	.73579					
26-30	147	3.7133	.75644	Between Groups	6.807	5	2.839	.016
31-35	43	3.9568	.54267	Within Groups	171.211	357		
36-40	24	3.7946	.71376	Total	178.018	362		
41-45	31	4.0922	.50210					
above 45	62	3.9528	.65592					
Total	363	3.8174	.70126					
<i>Age as demographic variable and career mentoring</i>								
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>

21-25	56	3.3827	.81866					
26-30	147	3.6560	.82790	Between Groups	6.145	5	1.801	.112
31-35	43	3.7143	.69358	Within Groups	243.541	357		
36-40	24	3.5536	.82798	Total	249.686	362		
41-45	31	3.8802	.80229					
above 45	62	3.6959	.91728					
Total	363	3.6399	.83051					

$N= 363$; $df=$ degree of freedom

For the testing of Hypothesis 3 that stated that perceived mentoring relationships will differ between males and females, independent sample t-test was used. Results from the Table 3 indicated that perceived mentoring relationships did not differ significantly across the gender. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 could not be accepted.

Table 3 Independent Sample t-test of Equality of Means for Mentoring Relationships by Gender

		N	$Mean$	SD	t value	df	$Sig.$
Psychosocial Mentoring	Males	307	3.8236	.70010	.397	361	.692
	Females	56	3.7832	.71298			
Career Mentoring	Males	307	3.6417	.85756	.096	361	.924
	Females	56	3.6301	.66938			

$N= 363$; $SD =$ standard deviation, $df=$ degree of freedom

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Likewise, one –way ANOVA test was used for the testing of Hypothesis 4 to analyse whether perceived mentoring relationships of the managers differ significantly according to the hierarchical levels of junior, middle, and senior level management. Results presented in Table 4, showed that no significant difference exists in relation to perceived mentoring relationships (psychosocial and career mentoring) for managers from junior, middle, and senior level management. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 could not be accepted.

Table 4 One-way ANOVA test of Equality of Means for Mentoring Relationships by Hierarchical Levels

<i>Hierarchical levels as demographic variable and psychosocial mentoring</i>								
	N	$Mean$	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	F	$Sig.$
Junior Level	93	3.6928	.79587	Between Groups	2.105	2	2.154	.118
Middle Level	215	3.8728	.65295	Within Groups	175.913	360		
Senior level	55	3.8117	.69923	Total	178.018	362		
Total	363	3.8174	.70126					
<i>Hierarchical levels as demographic variable and career mentoring</i>								
	N	$Mean$	Std. Deviation		Sum of Squares	df	F	$Sig.$

Junior Level	93	3.5069	.93477	Between Groups	2.279	2	1.658	.192
Middle Level	215	3.6777	.77147	Within Groups	247.407	360		
Senior level	55	3.7169	.85692	Total	249.686	362		
Total	363	3.6399	.83051					

$N= 363$; $df=$ degree of freedom

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion and Implications

The objectives of the current research were two-fold. The first objective was to validate the Noe's Mentoring Functions scale in the Indian context. The second objective was to investigate the relationships of both the categories of mentoring support functions with demographic variables of age, gender and hierarchical level of the Indian managers. Using *Hypothesis 1*, our focus was on investigating and validating the Mentoring Functions scale given by Noe (1988) in the Indian context. The findings provided confirmation to the two-dimensional structure of the Mentoring Functions scale on the Indian sample in alignment with Noe's study as well as Kram's (1985) conceptualization that categorizes mentoring in two broad categories of psychosocial support and career support. In addition, both the support functions demonstrated adequate internal consistency on the Indian sample.

Hypothesis 2 proffered that in the Indian context, perceived mentoring relationships will vary according to the different age-groups of the managers. The results showed a significant difference in the perceptions of managers from different age-groups specifically with respect to psychosocial mentoring support. Further examination indicated perceived psychosocial mentoring support to vary between the managers from 26-30 years age-group and 41-45 years of age-group. These results highlighted that in the Indian context, older managers perceive greater psychosocial mentoring support in contrast to younger managers. Plausibly, this might be attributed to the affective component of the psychosocial mentoring functions that play a crucial role in fulfilling the intrinsic developmental needs of the managers. Further, in this regard, Bhatta and Washington (2003), also stated that mentoring is recognized as an important tool at all career stages in such a way that at earlier stages it helps people in setting their career paths and at later stages, to solidify their credentials and further advancement in the management ladder. This contrasts with, Finkelstein, Rhoton, and Allen (2003)'s study that stated that older employees, being more experienced, are less likely to feel the inherent need to get the developmental support than young employees, who are typically less experienced and more likely to seek out mentoring support. Further, we also found that perceived career mentoring support did not differ across the different age-groups of the managers. Though these findings were unexpected possibly, it seems that career mentoring support and the benefits linked with it are perceived as less important among the managers belonging to different age-groups. This might be because there are many factors in addition to protégés' age that are likely to influence the perceptions of career mentoring support. For example, considering the socio-demographic characteristics offered in the Indian cultural environment, facilitation of career support functions might also be influenced by factors such as, similarity in mentor and protégé's socio-economic origin, the extent to which mentoring programs have been formalized in the organisational system, frequency of interaction between mentor and protégés, and others (Eby et al., 2013; Murugan, Teo and Simmers, 2014).

Hypothesis 3 asserted that males and female managers differ in their perceptions regarding mentoring relationships. The results obtained using the independent sample t-test analysis showed no significant difference in the perceived mentoring relationships between males and female managers. This implies that males and female managers tend to have similar perceptions regarding the prevalent mentoring relationships in the Indian business environment. In this context, the available literature provides mixed support in relation to varying perceptions of mentoring across gender. For example, according to Ragins and McFarlin, (1990), female protégés face challenges pertaining to career advancement and career assistance. Likewise, Washington (2007) stated that it is more difficult for females to find and commit to get the guidance of a mentor and also in getting the desired feedback of mentors. On the other hand, our results have support from the Cox and Nkomo's (1991) research that reported males and females to have equal access to mentors. Similar results were also reported in the meta-analysis conducted by O'Brien et al. (2008) as well as in Patel et al. (2008) study that found men and women to have received same levels of career mentoring (Reilly et al., 2012). This finding was unexpected as gender is considered an influential factor in the formation of mentoring relationships and the kind of perceived gendered career barriers is expected to influence the consequences associated with mentoring relationships (Leck, Orser, and Riding, 2009; Gunz and Pieperal, 2007). One possible explanation that accounts for the similar perceptions of males and female managers about mentoring relationships is that as it is expected that male managers receive mentoring support from their respective male mentors owing to gender-similarity perceptions, given the fact that the Indian culture represents a traditionally male-dominated society and male members occupy the positions of power and seniority. In addition, there may be a greater likelihood of female protégés relying on male mentors for guidance due to lack of autonomy and being less powerful (O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002). Plausibly, these findings also show that how both males and female managers working in the Indian organisations consider the need and importance of mentoring functions offered to them. This way, mentoring has a crucial role to play in influencing the gender diversity of the workforce in the Indian context. To further strengthen this, following initiatives should be taken by Indian organisations:

- Indian organisations should provide working environments to managers that nurture trust, support belongingness, and also empower them to share their concerns and anxieties without any hesitation with their respective mentors. In this regard, diversity initiatives should be adopted by organisations to guide the operational activities of the mentoring process. For example, when *Deutsche Bank* realized that managing a diverse workforce had become a top priority for financial service companies due to the post-financial crisis; they specifically created sponsorship programs for assigning critical posts to the women executives in their company (<https://www.db.com/cr/en/concrete-diversity-management.htm>).
- Similar kind of philosophy is reflected from the diversity initiatives of *CSC India* which emphasize that gender diversity helps in fostering a creative, innovative organisation in tune with the market as well as society. This company believes that productivity of working relationships can be better maintained by giving recognition to the strength of each gender. Moreover, the mentoring program of this organisation also puts a major emphasis on the skill and career development of women employees with senior organisational members serving as mentors for this initiative (http://www.csc.com/careersin/ds/11948/15713-gender_diversity_attracting_and_retaining_women).
- Moreover, new trends such as "management mentoring" can also be adopted by organisations to aid junior less-experienced employees gain valuable insights from senior experienced managers in an environment that emphasizes the building of interpersonal, technical, and organisational skills. In this way, individuals are better able to learn key behaviours from their mentors and the mentors also get opportunities to share their wisdom (Mathis, Jackson and Tripathi, 2012).

Besides this, we also evaluated *Hypothesis 4* to study whether there is significant difference in the perceptions of managers with respect to different hierarchical levels (junior level, middle level, and senior level). Results showed no significant difference in the perceived mentoring relationships according to the hierarchical levels in the Indian context. In this regard, previous studies also provide evidence of no linkage between the protégés' organisational rank and mentoring relationships (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003). This reflects that in the Indian context, mentoring functions are instrumental by employees at all the levels of management. This also highlights strong willingness and readiness of Indian managers to receive mentoring.

Directions for Future Research and Limitations

Overall though our study results provide preliminary investigation of the varying levels of perceived mentoring relationships across gender in the Indian context. Some of the earlier studies also suggest that in addition to gender, there are several other factors that are likely to govern the perceptions of males and females at workplace, such as interpersonal skills, competence, and work-habits (Young, Cady and Foxon, 2006) which could be incorporated in to the study to arrive at more concrete conclusions. Another limitation is that women are not adequately represented in our data set due to low female sample size of 15.4%. Therefore, one must be cautious when considering the applicability of the findings to female employees. Future research may be conducted separately for women when sufficient data are available. Another potential limitation is that since the current study considers workplace/organisational mentoring when analysing perceptions of mentoring; a similar research investigation is recommended for other sectors such as nursing, policing, medical and education to test the generalizability of the findings.

Summary and Conclusions

The current study was conducted with an objective of studying the scenario of mentoring relationships in the context of the Indian business environment. To accomplish this purpose, the authors deployed Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions measure which has been most extensively utilised by researchers working in mentoring and is also recognised for its well established psychometric properties in the diverse contexts. Considering the potential cultural factors that might influence the perceptions of mentoring functions amongst people across different countries, it was important to assess the validity of the Noe's (1988) measure on the sample of Indian managerial employees. As hypothesised, the scale validation results were in line with the Noe's (1988) study as well as Kram's (1985) conceptualization that classifies mentoring functions in terms of psychosocial support functions and career support functions. Further, results were also obtained for examining the influence of demographic variables on mentoring relationships amongst Indian managers. Particularly, managers from older age-groups were reported to have high levels of perceived psychosocial mentoring in contrast to the younger managers. However, no difference was found across male and female managers as well as across the three hierarchical levels in relation to mentoring functions. Although, this finding reflects similarity in the perceptions of the Indian managers for mentoring according to demographic variables of gender and hierarchical level; future research studies are recommended to confirm this using samples from specific sectors or specific industries. Besides this, since the given study had restricted sample of female employees, future studies are encouraged to undertake similar kinds of study using large samples of female employees to check for the generalizability of the current research findings. Additionally, further studies should focus on conducting scale validation of the instrument using data collected from the respective mentors/ senior managers/ supervisors. This would be helpful in overcoming any concerns pertinent to the use of self-reported measures or the use of single source data. Overall, the given research

provides encouragement to the academics and management practitioners for utilising Noe's (1988) mentoring measure for knowing perceptions of managers in relation to mentoring. It also suggests useful mentoring specific interventions that could be practised by Indian organisations to sustain managers' career growth and development.

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