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Title: **Mentoring Relationships in Higher Education**

Abstract

Keywords: mentoring relationships, higher education, professors, doctoral students, career, mutuality, comprehensiveness

Background: The study aims to explore the prevalence and nature of mentoring relationships between professors and doctoral students; and among senior and junior professor in the universities of higher education in India. The study contribute towards a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing mentoring relationships from both professors' and doctoral students' perspective. The study also examines congruence in the perception of professors and doctoral students regarding functions occurring in the relationship. Present study also finds out the significant difference between all the possible groups of gender dyads of professors and doctoral students and between homogeneous and heterogeneous mentoring dyads with respect to functions occurring in the relationship.

Research Methodology: A cross-sectional study was carried out on dyads of professors and doctoral students across various disciplines in four selected central and state universities situated in India. The mixed study design (triangulation design) was adapted to examine the nature of mentoring relationships between professors and doctoral students; and among senior and junior professors in the universities of higher education. Mentoring relationship between professors and doctoral students was carried out by quantitative inquiry through questionnaires; and faculty mentoring between senior and junior professors is carried out by qualitative inquiry through semi-structured interviews. A likert-scale instrument adapted from J.W. Busch (1991) based on psychological and career models of mentoring is used to access the students report of mentoring functions received and professor report of mentoring functions provided. For faculty mentoring, semi-structured interview schedules were developed for both faculty mentors and faculty

mentees considering the objectives of the study. For faculty-student mentoring, full professors and associate professors are selected as faculty mentors and doctoral students are chosen as student mentees. For faculty mentoring, full professors and associate professors are selected as faculty mentors; and associate professors and assistant professors are chosen as faculty mentees. Hence, one-hundred fifty dyads of faculty mentors and doctoral student mentees; and twelve pairs of faculty mentors and faculty mentees are included for the purpose of study.

Results and Discussion: The study found the considerable prevalence of mentoring relationship between professors and doctoral students in the universities of higher education in India which is, 86.32 percent but prevalence of faculty mentoring is very limited in the universities of higher education, which is 5.6 percent. Three determinants identified as influencing mentoring relationship between professors and students denoted as career related support, psychological and professional mutual support and comprehensiveness.

A statistical significant difference ($p < .05$) was found between the perception of doctoral students ($n = 150$; $M = 4.146$; $SD = .967$) and professors ($n = 150$; $M = 4.301$ $SD = .786$) regarding career aspect occurring in the relationship. Students were not satisfied with the extent of career mentoring received from their professors. Professors evaluated themselves as facilitating career related support significantly more than their students assessed them. Results suggest no statistical difference ($p > 0.05$) between professors' ($n = 150$; $M = 4.108$; $SD = .697$) and doctoral students' ($n = 150$; $M = 4.018$; $SD = .826$) perception related to mutuality aspect occurring in the relationship. Present study shows that both professors and doctoral students possess mutual respect, trust and affection for each other. Results also indicate no statistical difference ($p > 0.05$) between professors' ($n = 150$; $M = 3.458$; $SD = 1.193$) and doctoral students' ($n = 150$; $M = 3.512$; $SD = 1.075$) perception related to comprehensiveness aspect occurring in the relationship. Mean values indicate that both the participants have limited interaction in both professional and personal realm. The study found significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between all the possible groups of gender with respect to career support ($F = 3.792$, $p < .05$); mutuality support ($F = 29.060$, $p < .05$); and comprehensiveness aspect ($F = 15.620$, $p < .05$) of the relationship. Results indicate significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between homogeneous ($M = 92.975$, $SD = 7.242$) and heterogeneous ($M = 87.304$, $SD = 13.072$) groups of gender related to career aspect of mentoring. Results also suggest significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between homogeneous ($M = 80.172$, $SD = 4.931$) and

heterogeneous ($M=71.942$, $SD=7.431$) groups of gender with respect to mutuality aspect. Significant difference is also found between homogeneous ($M=37.889$, $SD=3.090$) and heterogeneous groups of gender ($M=33.159$, $SD=5.282$) related to comprehensiveness aspect of mentoring. Hence, mentoring relationship is observed to be better in homogenous dyads (male professor-male student and female professor-female student) than heterogeneous (male professor-female student, female professor-male student) groups of gender.

Of the same sample, twelve cases are identified of faculty mentoring in the selected universities of higher education. Of them, one-fourth cases are identified where faculty mentoring precede faculty-student mentoring. About 42 percent cases are identified where faculty mentoring succeed faculty-student mentoring. About 33 percent cases are identified where faculty mentoring evolved over time in the department. Common specialisation is marked as an important parameter for formation of faculty mentoring. In most of the cases, assistant professors are recognised as faculty mentees. Faculty mentees consider the senior professor as role model and desire to emulate some qualities of mentor in professional and personal aspects of life. Three-fourth of the senior professors are observed to mentor only one faculty mentee in the department. Few senior professors are observed to support other junior faculty in the department but they consider the relationship with the described faculty mentee as extremely special and exceptional. Above 90 percent of the faculty mentees are mentored by only one senior professor in the department. Hence, traditional dyad mentoring seems to exist for faculty members in the universities of higher education in India. Relationship is found to be completely informal in nature and there is no formal procedure of assigning mentors to junior faculty members in the universities of higher education. In cases, where faculty mentoring succeeded faculty-student relationship, faculty mentee believes that their relationship initiated formally with advisor-advisee relationship but gradually it evolves into a much deeper relationship. In cases, where faculty mentoring preceded faculty-student relationship, faculty mentees never felt they have been in an officiating relationship of a faculty and a student. Mentoring is considered as a learning partnership for both faculty mentors and faculty mentees and hence, both faculty mentors and faculty mentees are benefitted from the relationship professionally and personally.