

Gender Differences in Mentoring Iranian Female Staff

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Abstract:

This qualitative case study of ten females was intended to approach the ways these females have altered the mentoring to fit their learning style, work environments, and personal lives. The mentoring model, in the past, pivoted around a male model of competition. Females have altered mentoring to incorporate the importance of relationships and their responsibility to these relationships. This study was intended to check out if mentorship has become situational, and mirror the immediate needs of the participants. 10 females were singled out to constitute the convenience sample. Participants were interviewed to expound on the probable gender differences in mentoring based on mentoring criteria. These females displayed how to glean information and of how to achieve in their professional and personal lives. The study indicated that females have developed their own model of mentorship that suits their learning styles, values, and life roles. This study reaffirms that females cherish relationships with other colleagues and they shy away from direct challenge with their colleagues and particularly those who outrank them. Females brook no mistreatment including disparagement, threat, being pushed around etc. All the mentored females trained by veterans realized and believed in the value of mentorship as a significant method that is crucial for them to advance their career. Mentors in this company developed and modeled the needed discourse built on gendered ways of dealing with workplace matters to their mentees. A significant finding was that female mentors in companies can be highly influential in sharpening female staff's skills in attending to common issues.

Keywords: Gender differences, mentee, mentor, mentoring.

1. Introduction

Mentoring is not a new idea. In ancient times it was when masters groomed the workers "how things are done properly". Since the 1970's, mentoring has been most often believed to be effective in business terms; however, mentoring is now regarded vital to success in education, athletics, and in life skills development. Mentoring, according to its most frequent use, is the

guidance, support, promotion, and protection of a less experienced person by an older, wiser, more experienced person whose active experiences surpasses three to five years or more and relationship stages that include initiation, cultivation, and redefinition (Kram, 1980) . These parameters, indicates that mentoring is an informal, but traditional, process. Mentors informally pick out a mentee to help them improve through the corporate structure. The selection is informal, and the process is traditional. In the past, male ways of mentorship have been the model for mentoring.

Daloz (1986) posits that males are more likely to be directive and challenging in their methods used. This model involves male-dominated activities such as sports participation, social gatherings observation, and so forth. But some females find themselves excluded from being mentored because of the tough roles and responsibilities of their daily lives which brings on inconsistent career paths or time breaks within their occupation, epitomizing a lack of commitment to the work world. On account of these inconsistencies and the demands on females, to act a juggling act, time becomes valuable, and it becomes difficult to find the additional hours required to accommodate overtime or project deadlines. Though females may have built up the competency and social skills needed to come along in the business environment, their roles as wives, mothers, and caregivers may hamstring and stultify them.

Learning was planned to fit a male approach, within the scope of males' experiences and feelings. Generally, the males' worldview revolves around individualism whereas the female's worldview hinges on their relationships. Usually, males cherish power and females typically are unaccustomed to dealing with power. (Jerichum & Shapiro, 1992). For males, and some females, the male model has been working in laying the grounds for the culture, protocol and take-over processes. It has also been working in directing males and females through assimilating and absorbing corporate standards and learning how to live up to corporate expectations in work and social settings.

Females in many occasions nearly account for half of the workforce. Mentoring matters to their success in the work environment. They must find a way to adjust the mentoring model to fit into career tracks which meet and fit their needs. Females develop different relationship structures than males (Gilligan, 1982). Helgeson (1990) compared and contrasted six successful females' styles of management to a web of relationships. Because many females are preoccupied with how things go on as well as how and what things are done, some females may go for becoming successful in a business environment that is in line with their value system. To reach this goal, females need to secure role models who display the qualities and traits that they want to mimic. For females to have the same level of success as males, females may have to develop and seize mentoring opportunities having equivalent success parts in effectiveness and include a style and value system which is more suitable and compatible with their own styles, needs and values.

Some females have been feeling disconcerted and unsettled with male model use. Jeruchim (1992) puts forth that gender differences are factors in how mentoring is carried out. He presented scenarios of different mentoring programs based on interviews with one hundred six females. Gilligan (1982) stated the differences between the worldview females and males, the significance of relationships to females, and that how goals are carried forward and accomplished are just as important as what was done. This study seeks to pinpoint how females clue others in terms of culture, information, and manners of acting (mentoring). Redefining mentoring to add ways of communicating that are more in line with the way females ruminate, act, and work broadens the scope of the mentorship to incorporate females and minorities being left out in the original studies.

Mentorship, as defined, is an informal, traditional process that can easily leave out some people owing to its duration and intensity. Mentoring has been centering on a male model that is hierarchical, directive, demanding, challenging and traditional. Has this model been transformed due to significant changes brought about in the workplace, and if so, how? Females have showed reaction and response to the need for mentoring among themselves. In what ways have they reacted to this requirement, and how useful and productive are females' manners of mentoring? Because languages are gendered-bound, is mentoring gendered-bound too? If so, what types of discourse do fit females' style?

2. Literature Review

The word mentoring comes from Greek mythology. Odysseus, the king of Ithica, set off to fight in the Trojan War. He entrusted his son with his reliable friend, Mentor. For more than ten years, the young boy, Telemachus, was taught and looked after by Mentor. Since that time, the word mentor has been associated and defined as a smart, wise and trusted teacher or counselor (Anderson, 1998). Mentoring was popularized and rose to fame in the 1970's by Gail Sheehy in *Passages* in 1976 and Daniel Levinson in *The Seasons of a Man's Life* in 1978. Both authors wrote on the importance that mentoring attaches to the professional and personal lives of people. Since that time, there has been a lot of ink on the subject, including thesis, dissertations, business books, and journal articles. In the corporate world, mentoring has been dominated by white executive males mentoring white males (Bell, 1996; Collie, 1998; Jeruchim, 1992; Missirian, 1982).

With few females in executive positions, female mentors were difficult to obtain. Many males grudge having mentor females. Akande (1994) cited gender differences, qualifications, and perceptions which had made females unfit for management positions because of their personalities, traits, sensitivity and femininity as reason for this reluctance. Saltzman (1996) quotes the story of two females talking together are interpreted as "intriguing against the males" and females sitting together were asked to stop doing so because it is disturbing for the males in the group. Without a mentor, females have a difficult time getting somewhere in a firm structure

(Clark, 1998; Jeruchim, 1992). Corporate managements have regarded mentoring programs to press ahead in diversity thus including both females and minorities in their future planning (Drazga, 1998). The mentoring program were developed to be all-in, voluntary, and backed by the executive members. This type of mentoring program was then formalized, well-propped and observed (Colburn, 1993; Gunn, 1995; Jossi, 1997; Jones-Phillips, 1995; Vincent & Seymour, 1995). Partners were matched, one mentor could even have more than one mentee, and either mentee or mentor could ask for a change in the relationship.

Collie (1998) states it is the aim of corporate mentoring to lower the discrimination in the selection of mentees by keeping control of the match and observing the progress of the mentorship. To testify to the significance of mentoring in profession planning, another kind of mentoring program has been designed. Cross-company mentoring is acknowledged to be important in sharpening skills. This type of mentoring program fits participants from various organizations. Side benefits of the program are the removal of fear of rivalry between mentor and mentee and development of a connection outside of one's own organization. The one-on-one mentoring sessions are held on a cross-company basis to nurture non-competitive, open and honest relationships. The mentors are all volunteers, and the mentees must have enjoyed eight to ten years of experience on the job, and must have been viewed prospective senior-level executives (Eagan, 1996; Hickman, 1995).

Mentoring assumes new dimensions when females stepped in traditionally male jobs. The traditional methods of mentoring left out most females because mentors chose the mentees (Collie, 1998; Kram, 1986; Scheele, 1992). Many factors involved in making the connection difficult. Gilligan (1982) and Belenky (1986) have discovered that many females did not see the success, the same worldview, and the same way of learning as males. To retrieve the situation, females have been obliged to procure other females as mentors and role models. In the 1970's females mentors were difficult to come by. Few females were holding executive positions, who were mentored by males. They could not afford the risk of having picked the wrong person to mentor. This sort of failure was very visible and could endanger future promotions. With few executive positions to be going, females were careful about revealing what they had struggled for (Gallese, 1993). Many executive females steered clear of mentoring younger females.

Females put more emotions and energy into a relationship so that the disengagement phase of mentoring became tougher. Another study evidenced that females may grudge having mentor than males because females felt disqualified enough to adopt a mentoring role. This absence of self-confidence ascertain to a reluctance to do what a woman felt she should be doing, (Cotton & Raigains, 1993), since females thought that interpersonal relationships were of key importance in career development and because females treasure interpersonal relationships were more than males (Gilligan, 1982; Haung, 1995; Heery, 1994). Though females meant to mentor both males and females, males regarded females as having capitalized on less power and status than male mentors and were less likely to accept a woman as a mentor (Ragins and Cotten,

1993). Females are aware of the importance of mentoring. Knowing that the usual paths to mentoring may have been unavailable to them, females have had to think up alternatives to the traditional mentoring model.

Females traditionally have considered relationships to keep themselves update of business activities and the latest in management skills. Matthews (1994) suggested finding several mentors for different times in life. Matthew's suggestion coincided with Jerichum (1992) in that with, as many roles as females adopted, more than one mentor affording the needed role-modeling and guidance. Females look to each other to direct them in unknown settings. Cavender (1990) believes that females tutor when they can. Contrary to the traditional, informal way of mentoring, females mentor on the spot and in small, specific ways. Rather than a prolonged relationship, females mentor on the matter and the need for information as the occasion come into existence. As females develop in their careers, the need for advice shifted from help in working out what and how to carry it out, what to express and how to express it, to creative approach suggestions and introductions. Females communicate differently than males and are more interested in coupling information and personal connection (Drazga, 1981)

3. Methodology

A descriptive qualitative design was employed to carry out this study. The qualitative probe was selected to penetrate situations which were not susceptible to numerical analysis. This study was inductive in that it made use of small units of data to develop larger interpretations, categories, patterns, and findings. It is generative and constructive, which starts off with collection of data through interviews with the selected individuals.

3.2. Participants

A survey group of experts engaged in the Human Resources, accounts, research and development as well as oversee department in Entekhab industrial group in Esfahan industrial zone was singled out. 10 members attended the meeting and surveys were completed by these 10 females. The surveys involved five demographic questions and a request for volunteers for one-on-one interviews concerning their experiences with mentoring. From that group, those requesting a personal interview were called and appointments were set up for the one-on-one interview. All but three females had been mentored. Some of the females were also mentors at the same time with being mentored. Participants were interviewed at their office. Each participant was assigned a number. Information was written down in three of the interviews, and recorded the rest seven interviews by his cell phone. A developed list of questions (Appendix A) helped guide the interviews though interviewees were motivated to express themselves freely of their mentoring experiences as either mentor or mentee.

A semi-structured interview was selected for comments, language and ideas to be brought up during the interview so that interviewees freely express their views in their own terms and provide comparable qualitative data. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to get a clear understanding of the topic of interests necessary for developing relevant and meaningful data while maintaining a belief in its validity and reliability and revealing knowledge and trust which is needed among participants. This already evaluated and established validity and reliability semi-structured interview was reappraised by an expert to ensure its validity and reliability.

3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

The interviews were studied to realize who mentored the subjects. Keywords and phrases were recorded to feature vital characteristics of the mentoring experience. The analysis concentrated on their mentorship experience: who was the mentor, what gains were made from the experience, if the participants regard for mentoring was of value in their occupations, and when and how the mentoring happened. The researcher explored the data concerning numbers of males and females mentored, by which the number of mentors each subject had if they enjoyed more than one as well as gender to record statistical information. The information was decided to establish the reality and accuracy of numbers of females being mentored in this site in comparison with the numbers of males being mentored in the same location.

4. Results

All 10 females who were being interviewed were operating in professional settings. Interviewee number one was a 38 aged woman who was a member of the Human Resources group and is currently the Human Resources Manager for the company. She had enjoyed three mentors in her life, two females and one man. All of her mentoring experiences were useful. Interviewee number two was a single 30 aged woman holding a B.A. She worked as an accountant for the company, and was a member of the Human Resources department to recruit new staff. She was going to take a Human Resources exam, an across-the-board test designating a level of expert in the field, three months after this interview. With her mentor's inspiration, she had set herself to work on her Master degree in marketing management in the next two years. She had been trained three times in her job, once by a man and two times by females. All but one of her experiences had paid off and enjoyed her.

Interviewee number three was a married woman aged 50. She worked for a private-financed program for priming young adults in the industrial group. She had gone through mentoring programs three times in her life, once by a man and then by two females. All of her experiences were satisfactory. Interviewee number four was a married woman aged 51. A late candidate into the workforce, she held a position of taking care of add-on insurance policy, bonus etc. She was enrolled at a private but affiliated to Sanaati university of Esfahan in a

graduate program. She had got through four mentoring experiences, including one man and three females, with one experience that work out badly. Interviewee number five was a married woman aged 53. She was a semi-retired and high ranked administrator. She was both a trainer and a trainee. She had got through a good number of mentoring experiences, all but two were good experiences. Interviewee number six was a woman between the ages of 40 and 50. She was in charge of the Human Hygiene and Safety in the company.

Interviewee number seven was a married woman over the age of 60 holding a Ph.D who was a director of the oversee department. She did not seek advice through mentorship but had mentored others on a regular basis. Interviewee number eight had experienced participations in mentoring program herself and mentored many beginners on a regular basis. Interviewee number nine was a woman over the age of 41. She was in charge of a department at the affiliated university and had effectively contributed in several projects about industry. Interviewee number ten had been mentored on many occasions, all of them had left him pleased, and mentored others as she had afforded time. Interviewee number 10 was a woman over the age of 41. She was involved in cultural activities.

4.2. Where Are These Females Being Mentored?

4.2.1. On Their Job

Four of the interviewees pointed out that one of the places they were mentored was on their job setting. Number eight recalls that, her boss, a woman, regarded her as her role to raise and develop people in the company, such as sales' clerk to purchaser, if you sought those ambitions. She would account for how to make it with "being open to shop" advertising, promoting and how the business operates and how the empowered structure would react to you in certain examples" if she risked, that turned out a failure. Her mentor would be soothed over the situation. Later, after she secured her Master in management, she had mentors for long, another woman, who coached her how to be an assertive manager in many different situations. This involved making plans for segments of her job path. Since that time, she has followed a male mentor who have clued her in how to see about office issues, and a female mentor who groomed her how to predict a budget, submit and present it, to the board of the managers.

Number two also got mentored on the job. Two of her four mentoring experiences pertained to job. One of them, a young male, taught her to get the hang of computer skills. "He built up my confidence because I don't want to let people see and treat me like a secretary". Number two had selected a female mentor at the same company, because she was believed to be intelligent to hold a high position and had given a good account of herself but her relationship did not go on well, and the mentor dump her as a mentee. Number nine also had mentors who were her friends and colleagues at the same time. She also had turned to four male formal mentors. "My supervisor, and the main mentor, was not supportive and he kept detracting from me. The other one made light of his mentorship. Lastly, number 10 was also mentored in the

organization. The mentor was a friend who came to help by sending her materials. Though she struck to be good mentor, when she was appointed to head up the department, she was hard to work for because they held and entertained different ideas about how to act.

4.2.2. In Educational Settings

Another setting females were mentored was in their educational settings. Interviewee number two had also enjoyed educational mentoring experience. Her first experience happened in her high school. Coming from a less-advantaged background, her family had not put value over higher education. Number two had received no or little support from her family for academics qualifications. Though she aced tests in school, at sixteen, following her mother's death, she got crushed and got disengaged from her studies. Her school principal sought out an adviser to meet with her two days a week to get her through the incidents. "I think the most important impact it produced for me was that I felt somebody was caring about what happened to me. Interviewee number four experience dates back to guidance school for her first mentor. This teacher happened to move with her from the abolished guidance school system to the high school and the teacher spent seven years affecting the life of this mentee. The things most recalled by number four about her mentor are her unique enterprising spirit, her trust the teacher showed in the mentee and creativity.

Experiences

Although the interviewees differed in many ways, the words they used to portray their experiences were alike. The researcher asked each interviewee to represent what they felt when they had mentors. The question was intended to tell the difference between general contribution and help or direction and what the interviewees named "mentorship". The following are the ways that words and phrases were used by the interviewees. The two interviewees failing to capitalize on mentorship, but believed they had assisted on some occasions in their career are incorporated as follows:

Table 1

Features of a mentoring experience

Features of a mentoring experience	<i>frequency</i>
The female mentor taught me valuable things, gave sound advice	Seven times
The female mentor cared that I would make it and cared about myself	Eight times
The female mentor believed in my ability and ensured me I would develop	Seven times
The female mentored offered reassurance, encouragement and confidence	Eight times
The female mentor led me by being or giving an example	Six times

Interviewees were asked if they believe gendered-based mentoring had brought about changes in their life and career. They unanimously gave an affirmative answer in that they thought it was extremely important for successful life and career. The mentor showed new horizons that they could not manage it by themselves, by giving advice that could hardly be sought elsewhere, and providing a safe place to speak, let off steam, learn, and unlearn to encourage further developments. What could have taken long to grasp, with many mistakes, trial and errors, took less time with a female mentor enjoyment. Interviewee number 10 believed that "it's important to hold dear those people coming into your life at a time to make good things take place in your life".

5. Discussion

Females, who acknowledge the mentoring to be important to know about company culture, and procedures, are trying to find ways to get what they require to achieve in whatever field they seek to outshine. Some organizations have been offering opportunity for females by organized, observed programs. Females identify their value as a tool of learning the ropes of the company culture. Females mentoring females was mostly practiced one-by-one. Thanks to being situational, and the mentoring came about as the need emerged. Interviewee number six told of a situation in which she mentored a woman in her negotiation on not only her wage but her job as well. The mentoring for females specifically included confidence building, consultation, caring and a chance to practice rhetorical and persuasive techniques in a safe place. Each of the interviewees talked about an example of this sort of mentoring.

Females did not sound to separate work from their personal lives. Work and life are intertwined. Interviewee number two was able to take some time off for family needs because her mentor discerned that need and perceived its value while she was not penalized for taking the time off by losing career opportunities. She kept herself update and filled in on company events and pushed ahead with her career when she went back to work. Interviewee number five was able to juggle her job with personal life with the prop of her family and by observing her role model and mentor while securing her Ph.D. These two examples denote a fostering spirit and the encouragement as well as improvement of relationships in mentoring programs and in the workplace.

Interviewee number four watch closely her mentor and her relationships with her mentor and the ways of getting things realized. Through these care-taking measures she evolved her own manner of handling and working things out more effectively. This type of learning and picking up by keeping a watchful eye on what works more effectively and what does not to modify the process when necessary to suit the learners' and staff's style.

The interviewees made use of the group for information and discussion about issues concerning them and ideas of how to control situations to achieve. From these groups solutions,

introductions, and assistance were thought up. In the traditional view of mentoring, one mentor provided all the support and assistance under every circumstance to the mentee. However, in this new model, several mentors provided situational assistance to the mentees either singly or as a group. Females sought out those who had the expertise, the values, and the roles that they needed for the situation at hand. Because they were relationship-based, females built the relationships as they grew. They developed caring, trusting, and believing in themselves and in others because they knew how important these traits are to achieve a success in any of its forms. They looked to share willingly what they have learned and seemed to willingly share their resources as well. These females also managed to recognize their own ways of learning and of getting things done. This is where they considered each other as teachers, role models, and supporters.

Some females were reluctant to utilize the mentorship of males. These females valued the support of their female mentors and were not able to choose male mentors even those whose values and styles were in full agreement with or acceptable to their own. This reluctance is more noticeable in more religious females which discouraged and inhibited them from turning to the opposite gender for advice. In other cases those who were not deterred by religious considerations, the fear of looking unable and incompetent in the males' eyes stood in the way of a successful mentorship. A few also held back out of being accused of having affair with male mentors. Since successful mentoring hinges on good conversations, it came to light that in this workplace setting there are huge differences in the way males have a talk with each other in contrast with the talk they have with females as well as the existence of different purposes among males and females which lie within the reasons for talks.

For males conversations are regarded as negotiations by which males attempt to accomplish and maintain the upper hand they have obtained. Life for males is seen a struggle and contest to maintain and preserve independence and avoid failure (Hudson, 1996). Males in this company try to not reveal the strategies they have learnt to deal with workplace problems. They rarely make the technical know-how known by glossing over the questions. Males view other males and females as a potential threat to usurp their position. Females are stereotyped to fill other unemployed males' jobs or as well as those males remaining on the lower grades and this accounts for the reasons behind females' reluctance to get advice from males. Those females turning to males may be seen as incompetent whose position has been obtained through connections. Females seeking advice from males may even be branded as immoral and dissolute ones signaling for tabooed relationships. Males consider mentees as audience and opt to have a one-to-many pattern. However, conversations in mentoring programs for females develop closeness in which females give confirmation and support to each other.

Females hardly push each other away in mentorship. Mentors see grooming mentees as a way of building up and preserving intimacy and avoiding isolation. Female mentors regard mentoring a win-win game. Females put more attention, time and effort in keeping a reciprocal conversation in mentoring programs by giving supportive feedback, asking questions and

hammering away at important points. It sounded that females, for the most part and for a period of time, were left out from the mentoring programs. This research denotes that many females were aware of being mentored. Females ascertaining and recognizing the significance of the mentoring process, were more flexible in using available mentorship programs, and were more creative in establishing their own. They have discovered that they may not make it entirely by themselves and did look to others for the information, and advancement.

Today's woman should not be fazed and unnerved by not knowing, nor should she be disconcerted to ask or look for the needed information. Their awareness should be raised that they bear a responsibility in the mentorship relationship, and once being mentored, they would tend to do the same for others. In this research, the interviewees talk about actively partaking in seeking out mentors. Females talked about holding an attitude that allowed the mentorship and the learning to come about. Mentoring, is a learning process that calls for active participation. The interviewees also talk about the caring that cannot be forced or monitored. They viewed themselves fortunate to find such people caring about them and wanted them to succeed. Though Jerichum (1992) donates that power is of importance in career development, none of these interviewees make any mention about power, its use, or its importance. These females were concerned about how to set about getting things done and how to work with other people to get things done. Helgeson (1990) maintains "power with" rather than "power over". This attitude was mirrored in these interviewees' views. This attitude may be modified in the future when females accept and take "power" as a force and feel more comfortable in dealing with power. It would also show a change in the orientation of females from childhood into adulthood.

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Appendix

1. Have you ever become mentored?
2. What do you make of your main mentor? Was the mentor a female or a male?
3. If you were mentored by others, were they females, males or both?
4. Please describe your mentoring experiences?
5. How did your mentor behave or what did s/he say to cause you to feel this differed from other types of advice-giving and was a mentoring experience?
6. Did your mentor enjoy any particular trait that stirs you to share?
7. Do you think that there exists features that mentee need to possess?
8. Do you think mentoring is a valuable experience and do you now or do you plan to mentor others?