Mentoring in the Workplace: Toward a Five-Component Conceptualization

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Abstract

The existence of effective leadership development programs like mentoring which improve organisations' human resources is critical to the success of any organisation. Diversity in the measurement and conceptualization of mentoring has made it challenging to interpret the findings of an accruing body of mentoring research. The art of mentorship needs to be revisited in terms of its different forms but traditionally, it connotes transferring knowledge from a more experienced person to a less experienced person. This review exposed the lacuna in mentoring research in the workplace, provided empirical discourse on five components of mentoring and diagrammatically illustrated a conceptual model for mentoring. The model drew upon research from a diverse body of literature, including interpersonal relationships, career-related support, psychosocial support, pedagogy and informal mentoring. The aim of reconceptualising mentoring in this article is to help scholars synthesize existing research and to serve as a basis for future research.

Keywords*: Career-related support, Mentoring, Pedagogy, Psychosocial support, Retention*

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Background to the Study

Human resources (HR) practitioners should pay special attention to all the core functions of human resource management because this affects organisations culturally, economically and socially and determines the attainment of its goals and objectives. Employees are important assets in any organisation. They play significant roles in the success of any enterprise and their influence cannot be underestimated. Therefore, equipping them with leadership development practices like mentoring becomes imperative to improving their performance for dealing with the challenges inherent in the global work environment and also to ensure the going concern of most business organisations.

Mentoring is critical and imperative especially in the 21st century workforce. However, human resource (HR) practitioners are only just beginning to understand the relevance and challenges of mentoring practices in developing nations and how the HR strategy can be aligned with the business strategy (McKevitt & Marshall, 2017). Moreover, mentoring has been identified by Day (2001) and Jackson & Parry (2011) as a best practice leadership development program. Even with the International Standards for Mentoring Programmes, launched in 2003 for assessing mentoring schemes across several countries in Africa, Europe and North America (Clutterbuck, 2004), the effectiveness of mentoring still depends on the quality of the mentoring relationship (MR) and the setting in which mentoring occurs. The determinants of this quality are whether the mentor has substantial and precise knowledge about the company and protégé's intended career path and how trained and motivated the mentor is (Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). Additionally, mentoring is effective and produces positive outcomes for both parties if it "fulfils the need to belong" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) i.e. the need to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with people through affiliation and acceptance from others (Allen & Eby, 2010). Mentoring in academia is crucial for career advancement, heightened self-confidence of staff, and for providing an increased sense of belonging.

Mentoring relationships can be informal or formal. Informal mentoring relationships are those which evolve naturally from shared admiration, aspiration, values and interests. The formal types are those created to ensure that more employees have the opportunity to reap the benefits of the relationship. They are formed through a planned matching or assignment of mentors and protégés (the younger and less experienced partner in the union) by the organization (Allen, Eby, O'Brien & Lentz, 2008).

Research on mentoring universally has increased and it has created more room for a thorough review of the literature. The intent of this review is to provide a five-component conceptualization of mentoring and to extend current understanding of mentoring relationships in the workplace via an integrative, conceptual model. The first part of the review provides conceptual clarity on the diverse definitions of mentoring and addresses the traditional view of mentoring. It draws upon the social-learning theory. The second part of the review presents a dynamic conceptual framework for rethinking, understanding and examining mentoring relationships.

The Concept of Mentorship

Mentoring is the "traditional relationship between a senior, more experienced person (the mentor) and a junior or less experienced person (the protégé/mentee) for the purpose of teaching the junior employee about his or her job, of introducing the junior employee to contacts, to orient the employee to the industry and the organization, and to address social and personal issues that may arise on the job" (Allen, Eby, O'Brien & Lentz, 2008).

Retrospectively, mentoring is prevalent in everyday life and mentor-protégé relationships can be found in nearly all professions (Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer, 2017; Adair, 2006). Some examples are in Science (Sigmund Freud mentored Carl Jung), Literature (Gertrude Stein mentored Ernest Hemingway) and Entertainment (Whitney Houston mentored Beyoncé Knowles) etc. Organisational mentoring's origin is attributed to researchers like Levinson (1978), Kram (1985) and more recently Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer (2017). Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima (2004) examined mentoring's effects on protégé outcomes. Very few studies (Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Okurame, 2008) in Nigeria have examined mentoring's effects on positive outcomes. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by comparing results from academia in selected private universities in Nigeria.

Furthermore, mentoring also has different forms like youth mentoring and student-faculty mentoring (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2010). Perhaps this may have led to the lack of consensus on the definition of mentoring. However, for the intended research, the focus will be on organisational mentoring whereby more experienced employees help less experienced employees/protégés aimed at the personal and professional growth of protégés (Allen & Eby, 2010; Jackson & Parry, 2011).

Multiple definitions of mentoring exist (see Bozeman & Feeney, 2007, for a brief review) although most are based on Kram's (1985) discussion of mentoring as involving an intense relationship between two people where a more experienced person (the mentor) helps the junior person (the protégé) by providing advice about career development issues as well as personal (psychosocial) support. The researcher utilizes the definition offered by Bozeman and Feeney (2007) whereby mentoring "is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development" (p. 731). Mentoring involves informal communication, usually face-to-face occurring over time "between someone perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)" (p. 731). A mentor is often seen by his or her protégé as a resource person or counselor whose perspectives and judgment are trusted and valued. Mentoring has been linked with beneficial employee outcomes such as affective organisational commitment, job involvement, and lower employee turnover intention (e.g., Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008). Additionally, organisational mentors usually provide career-related and psychosocial support (Kram, 1985) to protégés. Mentoring is usually conceptualized with three components namely Career-mentoring, psychosocial mentoring and role modeling.

Furthermore, formal developmental relationships are respected forms of on-the-job experience utilized for learning (Janssen, Tahitu, Van Vuuren, & de Jong, 2018). Consistent with the social learning theory which posits that people in a social setting learn from one another via observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1977), the majority of formal mentoring programs allocate a junior manager to learn and observe from a senior manager. Mentoring is informal whereby relationships develop naturally or spontaneously without outside assistance (Hu, Wang, Wang, Chen, & Jiang, 2016). Evidence indicates that the development of these relationships depends on the mentor's willingness to provide mentoring, the amount of mentoring assistance provided to proteges, the mentor's and protégé's personality and lastly, the protégé's ability and willingness to learn (Dougherty, Turban & Haggard, 2010)
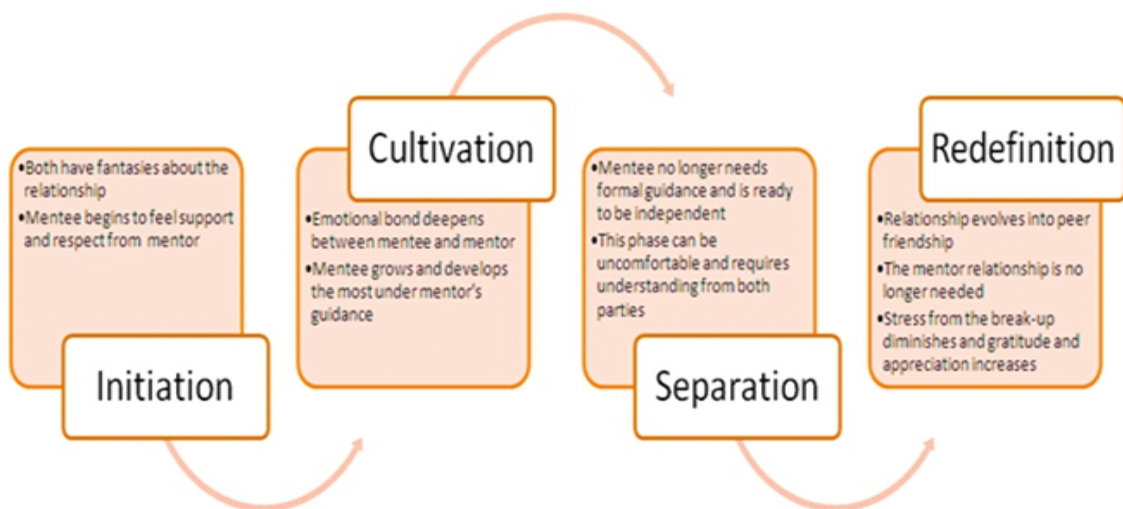

Figure 1: Phases of the mentoring relationship (Adopted from Kram, 1983)

These phases are not necessarily mutually-exclusive. Some findings have shown that although there are differences in protégé outcomes in each phase, some phases possess similar protégé outcomes. For instance, as discussed later, although psychosocial mentoring functions occur predominantly in the initiation phase, it is not restricted to only that phase (Dougherty, Turban & Haggard, 2010). Levinson (1978) and Kram (1985) were among the first researchers to explore mentoring relationships (MRs) in the context of adult development in organisational settings. They understood MRs at work as a distinctive relationship between individuals, a learning partnership, a process defined by the types of support provided by the mentor to the protégé with the ultimate goal being the protégé's growth and development, a reciprocal yet asymmetrical relationship and lastly, a dynamic relationship (Eby, Rhodes & Allen, 2010). This conceptualisation implies that support, learning by doing and reflection are core factors of the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. It also buttresses Benjamin Franklin's quote- "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn"

Benefits of mentoring

Any organization where mentoring is institutionalised and a system in a place, the organisation is much better for it (Janssen, Tahitu, Van Vuuren, & de Jong, 2018). Mentoring helps to engender higher employee retention and a sustained competitive advantage with more skilled and well-performing employees. The workforce gets inundated with increased skill set and knowledge levels of the people and there are greater chances of attaining goals. Strengthening of company culture and ethics, full utilization of human resources are other benefits that accrue to the organisation. An organisation that gets it right in establishing and perpetuating an effective mentoring system usually finds its succession planning a better experience, in the long run (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015).

The mentor plays a very important role in transferring knowledge to the individual and helps the person in enhancing his personal and professional growth. The mentor benefits in a number of ways, including increased job satisfaction, enhancement of their own skill level and professional development, enhanced skill in problem analysis and strategic thinking and heightened level of self-esteem and confidence. They equally have an increased sense of being needed and recognised professionally, develop and practice a more personal style of leadership gains additional recognition and respect, learn new perspectives, extend their professional networks and contribute something to others in the organisation (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015).

Through a consistent application of the mentee to the discipline of mentoring, the mentee experiences an increased self-confidence and self- esteem, gains a promotion in professional career growth, enhanced skills which equip them to identify weak areas and turn them into potential successes. Some positive fall outs from all of this is that the mentee develops good relationship with the supervisor, becomes better in problem analysis and sees a reduction in the feeling of low self-worth and frustration (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015).

However, mentoring outcomes can be negative or perceived as inequality amongst non-mentored employees (Okurame, 2011). For example, both parties exploiting the relationship for their own selfish gains outside of what is to be achieved or an instance of backstabbing amongst each other or from non-mentored employees. Also, if the mentoring relationship (MR) is not successful, it may adversely affect the succession-planning mechanism which leads to decreased organisational effectiveness in the organisation (Clutterbuck, 2004).

Conclusively, mentoring relationships in most organisations are not usually formally constituted. However, informal MRs thrives because of the informal work environment created among employees. These relationships develop more in a protégés hierarchical line of responsibility with mentoring dyads made up of same and cross-gender mix.

A five-component conceptualization of mentoring

Mentoring has been conceptualized by several authors (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008) to include majorly career mentoring, psychosocial mentoring and role modelling. It is common for scholars to

view mentoring as a senior employee in an organisation directing a younger employee. Beyond this, however, mentoring could be viewed in terms of reverse mentoring where the younger employee teaches and directs a senior colleague or peer-to-peer mentoring where employees on the same rank cohesively provide advice and support to each other. Also, we believe mentoring employees in a typical work setting can receive mentoring in different form and this served as an impetus for developing a five-component conceptualization of mentoring which include career mentoring, psychosocial mentoring, role modelling, pedagogy and continuous organisational learning.

Career Mentoring
Career mentoring, or career-related support, involves coaching, sponsorship, exposure, and protection of the lesser skilled protégé (Hall, Walkington, Shanahan, Ackley & Stewart, 2018). Career mentoring behaviors involve task-related aspects of work and are often positively linked to more objective measures of success (Van Vianen, Rosenauer, Homan, Horstmeier & Voelpel, 2018). Benefits of career mentoring include extrinsic success factors such as compensation, promotion, and career mobility. There exists a strong link between career mentoring activities and positive employee outcomes (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008), including affective organizational commitment, job involvement, and reduced turnover intention. Individuals with high levels of job involvement tend to find career mentoring appealing and seek out such relationships. IT employees appear to face problems acquiring or benefiting from career mentoring due to work exhaustion, time and resource constraints, and high stress levels (Reid, Allen, Riemenschneider & Armstrong, 2008).

Career support or development opportunities influence voluntary turnover. In a study of skilled workers in public accounting firms, career development reduced turnover intention (Hall & Smith, 2009). Because of the relatively limited pool of qualified lecturers with training and skills, employee turnover intention and the resulting turnover can have salient negative effects on an organization (Reid *et al.,* 2008; Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). Therefore, studies such as this is important to public and private sector universities.

Psychosocial mentoring
Psychosocial mentoring, or psychosocial support, addresses "those aspects of the relationship that enhance an individual's sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role" (Kram, 1985, p. 32). The benefits associated with psychosocial mentoring include affective outcomes such as affective organizational commitment or job involvement (e.g., Williams, 2017 Allen et al., 2004; Reid *et al.,* 2008). Psychosocial mentoring includes intrinsic functions such as role modeling, acceptance, counseling, and friendship (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008). Because mentors provide their protégés with psychosocial support and opportunities for development, they contribute to the general satisfaction of protégés above and beyond the extrinsic rewards they can secure for their protégés (Woo, 2017).

The functions of psychosocial mentoring represent a deeper, more intense mentoring relationship and often depend more on relationship quality than on career function (Allen et al., 2004). Psychosocial mentoring may enhance an individual's ability and effectiveness, help

alleviate work-related stress (Woo, 2017), evolve into a strong emotional bond between the mentor and the protégé, and become a positive, pleasurable interpersonal contact.

Role Modelling

This involves a mentee or younger employee looking to a senior employee as an example to be imitated. A mentor with referent power can impart appropriate behaviour patterns, attitudes, and values to protégés; thus, the mentor can efficiently lead the protégé to adapt to the organization and be seen as a role model to the mentee. A role model is a person who inspires someone else in some professional or personal way and serves as an example to that person (Onyia, 2008).

When the role model is also the individual's mentor, he or she is someone whom the protégé admires or looks up to, a person the protégé would like to be more like. The mentor has reached a level of accomplishment in a role that the protégé aspires to with qualities and attributes that the mentee wishes to acquire. When people assume the role of mentor, they know that they will be role models, whether they like it or not. It will be their behavior that people will watch and emulate. It is their leadership qualities that they will study and want to duplicate. This puts tremendous pressure on you as a mentor to be a good role model. After all, your mentee will hear about how you interacted with someone or how confident you seemed in a specific situation (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015).

Mentors should practice what they preach to mentees/proteges. Consequently, when mentors mentor younger employees within their organizations, and their values reflect the strategic mission of the organization, they can expect the support of their protégés in achieving these missions (Langdon & Ward, 2015).

Pedagogy

Mentoring, as pedagogy, results in enhancing effectiveness of workers in ensuring the transformation of workers into professionals by teaching proteges the requisite skills needed to do the job (Hobson & Malderez, 2013). Pedagogy is derived from paidagogos, a Greek word meaning teacher of children. Various authors have offered various definitions of pedagogy. Alexander (2008) has another definition that suggests that pedagogy requires discourse. He argues that pedagogy is the act of teaching as a discourse involving interaction with students, and not a mere monologue. Pedagogy is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to possess in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions within a teaching setting. Hall (2015) suggested that pedagogy is a joint activity in which the learner has an active role. This is in line with Jones-Walker (2016) description of pedagogy as any conscious activity by one person (the teacher) designed to enhance the learning of another (the learner).

Alexander (2008, p.56) said that pedagogy "is the practice of teaching framed and informed by a shared and structured body of knowledge". This knowledge comprises experience, evidence, understanding moral purpose and shared transparent values. It is by virtue of progressively acquiring such knowledge and mastering the expertise – through initial training, continuing development, reflection and classroom inquiry and regulated practice. Educationally,

pedagogy has been viewed as a combination of knowledge and skills required for effective teaching (Waghid, 2010). In other words, good pedagogy requires a broad repertoire of strategies and sustained attention to what produces student learning in a specific content domain, with a given group of students and a particular teacher.

Continuous Organizational Learning
This is the ability to continually develop and improve one's skills and knowledge in order to perform effectively and adapt to changes in the workplace. Dixon (2017) defined organizational leaning (OL) as the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding. It is especially manifest in the ideal form of learning organizations that link learning to competitive advantage of firms. Organizational learning is a process by which an organization sustains and develops its dynamic capability through cognitive and behavioural change or improvement (Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2018). Given that the primary goal of mentoring is to help protégés function independently, mentoring seems to have a natural overlap with self-regulation, or individuals' self-generated cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward attainment of their goals (Sitzmann and Ely, 2011; Zimmerman, 1998).

Organizational learning, analyzed from the perspective of a process not a result, can lead to different results; it can also be dysfunctional (Nyström, Höög, Garvare, Bäck, Terris, & Hansson, 2018). It has been postulated that organizational learning is desired. However, numerous factors (e.g. cultural, personal, political, structural) lead to the discontinuation of the organizational learning cycles; some models and methods dedicated to the improvement of the conditions which would support learning that is free from any dysfunction have been suggested. It has been suggested that various types or levels of organisational learning have drastically different organizational results. For example, the results of adaptive learning (single loop) is different from the result of creative learning (double loop) and the compatibility of learning types depends on the dynamics and complexity of the organization's reality (Dixon, 2017).

Similarly, Bibi & Jadoon (2018) proves that explorative and exploitative learning will produce different results. The essence of explorative learning is the improvement and expansion of existing competences, technologies and paradigms and the results are predictable, close and positive. The essence of exploration is experimentation with new alternative proposals and the results are uncertain, postponed, often negative and not so unambiguously related to a specific activity. Thus, maintaining balance between exploration and exploitation is a key determinant of system survival and development (Bibi & Jadoon, 2018).

It is commonly agreed that, on the one hand, organizational learning is not simply the sum of individual learning (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2014), on the other hand, organizations cannot learn without individual learning. This involves a process of transforming individual level learning to organisational level learning. This process is complex and involves dynamic and sophisticated interaction between the members of the organisation. For example, organisational learning cycle (i.e. generating, integrating, interpreting and acting) is a

continuous process to transform the organization at the individual, group and system levels in order to engage all members of the organisation in all the steps. Some studies (Brodeur, Larose Tarabulsy & Feng, 2017) showed that the relationship between organisational learning and the financial results is not unambiguous, some showed no relationship, for example, Roegman, Reagan, Goodwin & Yu (2016) or those, according to which this relationship is very weak, for instance, Cameron & Grant (2017).

Theoretical Background of Mentorship
Traditional theoretical perspectives conceived of mentoring as occurring in one-to-one mentor– protégé interactions (dyads) and through informal contacts (Shanks, 2017). Mentoring has been classically viewed as a means of fostering protégés' acquisition of knowledge and skills to be used in trades and professions. Contemporary theories of mentoring share some commonalities with theories of learning, self-regulation, adult development, organizational behavior, leadership, and systems operation (Ragins, 2010).

Mentoring theory claims that the mentor is able to help the protégé develop a sense of competence, confidence and self-esteem through the provision of psychological support (Day & Allen, 2004). This view is clarified by the principles of social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977) "Learning would be laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22).

Simply put, the process of mentoring is facilitated by the protégé observing and modeling the behaviour of the mentor in the relevant social context. Carafarella (1999) further express the relevance of the social learning theory in reference to mentoring by stating "Social learning theories contribute to adult learning by highlighting the importance of social context and explicating the process of modeling and mentoring" (p. 139). In the same vein, the social cognitive theory supports the understanding of the mentoring theory. It states that knowledge can be enhanced by a close identification between the observer and the model as obtains between a protégé and a mentor. With adequate identification a connection that enables imitation is initiated. Bandura (1989) explains that behaviour, cognition and personal factors interact to produce the desired behaviour. The mentoring relationship is thus a reflection of how observation, imitation and identification of the mentor by the protégé are directed expertly to bring about a change in attitude, outlook and values in the protégé.

Conceptual Model for Mentorship
The researchers' conceptual model below is inductive and deductive in nature and is recommended to aid the mentorship process:
1. Career-related support
2. Psychosocial support
3. Role modelling
4. Pedagogy
5. Continuous organisational learning

The mentee has to identify their specific needs and determine the most efficient way to get it from their mentor as seen below (Figure 2).
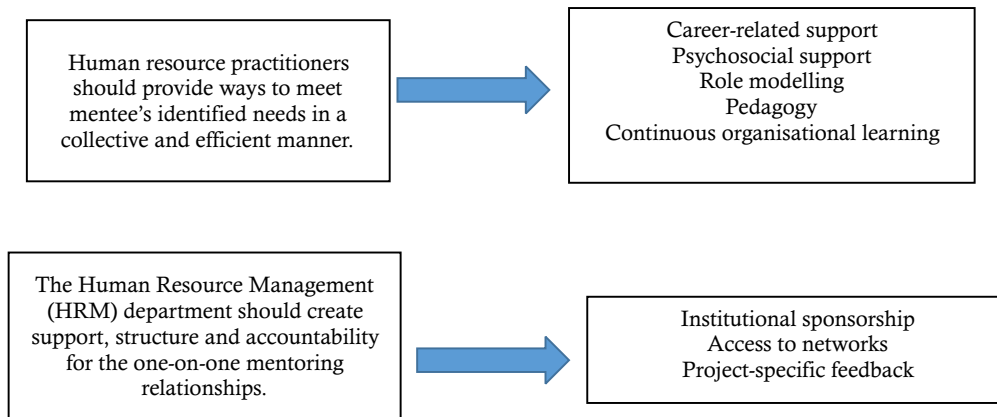

Figure 2: Researcher's conceptual model for mentorship (2019)

Implications
While it has been noted that the issue of mentoring has not been reconceptualised in contemporary times, the article indicated that mentoring is a viable tool for developing skills and leadership in different workplaces and it has behavioural implications for employees. Therefore, human resource directors, practitioners and the entire management of several organisations should develop mentoring programs and evaluate them properly in order to lead to desirable employee outcomes like commitment, job satisfaction, performance and skill development. Organisations will benefit from this study so as to help them develop formal structures, policies and procedures for mentoring to increase employee commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance, skill development and reduce employees' intent to leave.

This article will also enable various sectors to proactively respond to changes within the work environment more effectively as well as enable them implement better business strategy that aligns with Human Resources (HR) strategy. Furthermore, this article will enable the government in policy making with regards to mentoring across all industries to give a mandate that mentoring programs be adequately structured in their systems to track career progression and improve employee performance.

It is also helpful to human resource managers to properly implement human resource development practices by integrating individual, career and organization development roles in order to achieve maximum productivity, quality, opportunity and fulfilment of employees as they work to accomplish organizational goals.

Furthermore, for successful departmental mentoring programs in organisations, human resource managers should assign a departmental mentoring committee. Human resource managers should also initiate and model difficult conversations. There should also be alternative and additional mechanisms for mentoring programs' evaluation and assessment.

Human resource practitioners should also designate the service mentor to monitor the cumulative total of service requests and should advise when or how to say "no". Furthermore, feedback loops must be built in every semester with consistent, clear, and meaningful annual evaluation. Finally, achievements should be recognized and success celebrated.

Lastly, it will enable the society to be more informed about the tenets of mentoring literature and also provide them with more conceptual knowledge with regards to mentoring and employees' behavioural outcomes in both the public and private sectors.

Conclusion

This review explored the lacuna in mentoring research in the workplace, provided empirical discourse on five components of mentoring and diagrammatically illustrated a conceptual model for mentoring. The model draws upon research from a diverse body of literature, including interpersonal relationships, career-related support, psychosocial support, pedagogy and informal mentoring. Through extensive review of existing literature, it was observed that the issue of mentoring has become a global phenomenon.

Mentoring research needs an overhaul in its approach to yielding employee behavioural outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment. There can be organisation-wide mentoring programs that start with a needs assessment of each employee. Organisations generally should also democratize needed professional development information. Additionally, supervisory panels can be created whereby each panel focuses on the different aspects of mentoring (career-related support, psychosocial support, role modelling, pedagogy and continuous organisational learning). Also, formally organized mechanisms to support daily writing, productivity, and provide writing accountability should be encouraged. This then will make mentoring in the workplace a highly strategic practice that fosters organisational growth and employee loyalty.

Directions for Future Research

The development of the five-component conceptualization of mentoring intended to give a summary of mentoring research to date. It is clear that there are gaps in the mentoring literature yet to be filled. Identification of these gaps should give a direction for further researchers. To begin with, there should be more causal effects and relationship studies with mentoring and other employee outcome variables. Further studies should also be carried out comparatively to ensure robustness and specificity of the relationship between mentoring components and employees' behavioural outcomes. The moderating effect of organisational culture could also be examined. Further studies can also consider including other models linking the mentoring components using quantitative methods like structural equation modelling.

Also, for the advancement of this study, future research might adopt an experimental or longitudinal research design (i.e. creating scenarios for each of the mentoring dimensions). This would help in drawing a better conclusion as the environment can be controlled and future researchers would be able to observe any differences in employee behavioural outcomes as it relates to mentoring.

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