

Career and Psychosocial Mentoring as Differential Pathways to Promotability: The Mediating Role of Employee Development and Moderating Role of Job Level in Indian Corporate Sector

Isha Mehta* Shabnam Saxena**

Abstract

Purpose: Mentoring is widely recognized as an important tool for employee career growth. However, most previous studies have treated mentoring as a single construct, making it difficult to understand whether career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring contribute equally to employee outcomes. The present study examines these two mentoring functions separately and investigates how they influence promotability through employee development. It also examines whether these relationships vary across different job levels in Indian corporate sector.

Design/methodology/approach: The study is based on cross-sectional data collected from 330 employees working at entry, middle, and senior levels in Indian corporate organisations. The measurement scales were adopted from established studies and refined through a pilot study involving 40 respondents. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted to validate the measurement model. The hypotheses were tested using PROCESS Model 7 with 10,000 bootstrap resamples.

Findings: Both career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring positively influenced employee development, which further improved promotability. However, career mentoring showed a stronger influence on employee development than psychosocial mentoring across all three job levels. Job level significantly moderated the relationship between career mentoring and employee development, but the relationship became stronger rather than weaker at higher job levels, contrary to the proposed hypothesis. No significant moderating effect of job level was found for psychosocial mentoring.

The index of moderated mediation was significant for the career mentoring pathway but not for the psychosocial mentoring pathway.

Originality/value: This study is among the first to examine the two functions of mentoring separately in Indian corporate sector instead of treating mentoring as a single construct. The findings show that career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring do not contribute equally to employee development and promotability. The study also highlights that the influence of career mentoring becomes stronger at higher job levels, offering new insights into mentoring research in emerging economies.

Keywords: mentoring; career mentoring; psychosocial mentoring; employee development; promotability; job level; self-determination theory; moderated mediation

* **Isha Mehta**, Research Scholar, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar- 125001, Email - ishameh1017@gmail.com

** **Shabnam Saxena**, Professor, email - shabnamsaxena@gmail.com, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar- 125001,(Haryana) India

1. Introduction

Organisations invest in mentoring because they believe it helps employees grow and perform better. Mentoring has been regarded as a key human resource practice that enhances employee learning, career development and organisational effectiveness for a long time. While mentoring is expected to have a positive impact on employee outcomes, it is not fully understood what aspects of mentoring are more effective and how these benefits are realized. Although the separation of career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring has been accepted by Kram (1985), many empirical studies have continued to focus on mentoring as a single construct rather than separating the two functions (Chao et al., 1992; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992).

This means that there is solid evidence that mentoring is beneficial in the existing literature, but not much understanding about which mentoring function is more important and why. A previous study found that career mentoring is more likely to be linked to objective career outcomes than psychosocial mentoring (Allen et al., 2004). The mechanism, by which these differences arise, however, has been less studied. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the differences in the impact of career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring on employee advancement (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Whitely et al., 1991).

The present study suggests that employee development is the linkage between mentoring and promotability. Employee development is an activity in which employees enhance their knowledge, skills, competencies, and readiness for new tasks. Employees that are more capable and confident in their ability to do higher level work are more likely to be considered promotable. The current study compares the developmental impact of career mentoring with psychosocial mentoring among employees of Indian corporate organisations.

The study also suggests that mentoring and employee development could be different at various levels of the job. The study is based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which states that the psychological needs of employees vary across

different career stages. The need for employees to develop their competencies tends to be higher for lower-level employees than for higher-level employees, while the need for higher-level employees to develop their competencies for managing organisational relationships, and leadership responsibilities is higher. Thus, the effectiveness of mentoring might not be consistent across an employee's career.

The present study has three important contributions. First, it examines career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring as two separate mentoring functions instead of combining them into a single construct. While there have been some studies that recognize the difference between these two functions, few studies have compared the relative contribution of these two functions. Second, the study explores employee development as a mechanism by which mentoring impacts promotability. This builds on the existing literature on India, which has mainly examined the link between mentoring and employee outcomes. Third, the study explores job level as a moderating variable to examine if mentoring has a different impact on employee development at different levels of the organisation. It is interesting to note that the results indicate a trend that is not in accordance with the theoretical prediction. While many large companies, have formal mentoring programmes in place, interpersonal relationship and senior sponsorship remain important factors in employee career development.

The study of mentoring in India has increased significantly in the last decade. These studies, however, have tended to focus on mentoring as an undifferentiated phenomenon. However, little research has been conducted to determine the extent to which career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring are equally effective in developing employees and promoting them to higher positions or whether they differ in effectiveness at different job levels. The current study aims at filling these gaps by studying each mentoring function separately and applying constructs that have already been validated in Indian corporate context (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015; Naim & Lenka, 2017).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Self-Determination Theory as Organising Lens

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), people are driven to learn, develop and improve their performance when they experience three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The theory offers a good basis for determining not only if mentoring is effective, but also how career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring can have different impacts on employee development (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Firzly et al., 2022).

Both mentoring functions are important for employee growth. But the primary focus of employee development is on the enhancement of job-relevant knowledge, skill, and abilities. It is expected that career mentoring is more closely related to employee development than psychosocial mentoring since the competencies are directly related to career mentoring.

2.2 Mentoring Functions and Employee Development

Kram (1985) described mentoring as having two separate roles, career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring. Career mentoring is about activities that directly aid in the advancement of the career, including coaching, sponsorship, exposure, protection, and challenging work assignments. Psychosocial mentoring, on the other hand, is about emotional and interpersonal support, counselling, friendship, acceptance, confirmation and role modelling. These two functions complement one another but are two distinct parts of the mentoring relationship.

Later Noe (1988) created a scale to empirically differentiate career mentoring from psychosocial mentoring. These have been found to be independent dimensions of mentoring by numerous studies since then (Chao et al., 1992; Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997). Many researchers, however, still analyze both functions together when they measure them separately. The relative importance of each mentoring function has therefore yet to be explored.

Career mentoring directly supports employee development by providing employees with learning opportunities that help them improve their professional skills. Challenging

assignments motivate employees to learn new skills, coaching can enhance their performance, sponsorship can provide access to valuable organisational networks and constructive feedback can help employees build their skills.

The psychosocial mentoring has a different impact on employee development. Emotional support, encouragement, counselling and acceptance build confidence and alleviate anxiety amongst employees, allowing them to take up new roles and learning opportunities. Social and psychological mentoring also has a positive impact on development, albeit less direct, as it sets the stage for learning by providing a supportive environment (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Kraimer et al., 2011).

Meta-analyses conducted in the past have revealed that career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring have positive effects on employee outcomes. Generally, stronger effects have been reported for career-related outcomes than for psychosocial support (Eby et al., 2008). This indicates that while both types of mentoring are positive, career mentoring could be more impactful on employee development.

It is important to note that this comparison does not mean that psychosocial mentoring is not important. Instead, the case is that mentoring both roles is beneficial for employee development, and the impact of each role can vary. While career mentoring is directly linked to developing skills that employees require for future positions, psychosocial mentoring is primarily about enhancing confidence and emotional health. So, it is expected that career mentoring will have a higher association with employee development.

H1. Career mentoring is positively related to employee development.

H2. Psychosocial mentoring is positively related to employee development.

H3. The relationship between career mentoring and employee development is stronger than that between psychosocial mentoring and employee development.

2.3 Employee Development and Promotability

Promotability means the extent to which employees are seen as ready and capable of assuming greater responsibilities within the organisation (De Pater et al., 2009). The promotion process is typically based on the knowledge, skills, competencies and capacity of the employees to undertake more complex roles. Employee development is thus an important factor affecting promotability.

Mentoring enables employees to build their skills, offer guidance, opportunities for development, feedback and ongoing learning. Employees who gain increased competencies and are better prepared for increased responsibilities are more likely to be considered for promotion (Dries et al., 2008). It can be assumed that employee development is a logical reason for the impact of mentoring on promotability.

The present study does not, however, make the assumption that employee development is the only factor that explains the relationship between mentoring and promotability. Rather, it investigates whether employee development is a mediator, but also considers that mentoring may affect promotability in other ways.

H4. Employee development is positively related to promotability.

H5a. Employee development mediates the relationship between career mentoring and promotability.

H5b. Employee development mediates the relationship between psychosocial mentoring and promotability.

2.4 Job Level as a Boundary Condition

The advantages of mentoring might not be constant throughout an employee's career. The gaps in knowledge and skills tend to be larger for employees at entry-level positions than for employees at higher positions in the organisation. Career mentoring, therefore, may be particularly beneficial in the early stages of one's career, as coaching, guidance, sponsorship, and developmental assignments may be of particular value.

In line with Self Determination Theory, it can be suggested that employees' competence needs are most acute at the beginning of their careers, as they are still acquiring the skills

needed to take on more challenging tasks. The developmental impact of career mentoring is predicted to be less pronounced over time as competence grows (Van Vianen et al., 2018). Based on this, the study suggests that career mentoring is a moderating variable in the relationship between job level and employee development.

The impact of psychosocial mentoring is not as well understood at other occupational levels. Support, encouragement and counselling services can be useful to an employee throughout their career, irrespective of their role within the organisation. Thus, the moderating effect of job level on psychosocial mentoring is explored without directionality being specified.

H6a. Job level moderates the relationship between career mentoring and employee development, such that the relationship is stronger at lower job levels.

H6b. Job level moderates the relationship between psychosocial mentoring and employee development.

H7. The indirect effects of career and psychosocial mentoring on promotability via employee development are conditional on job level (moderated mediation).

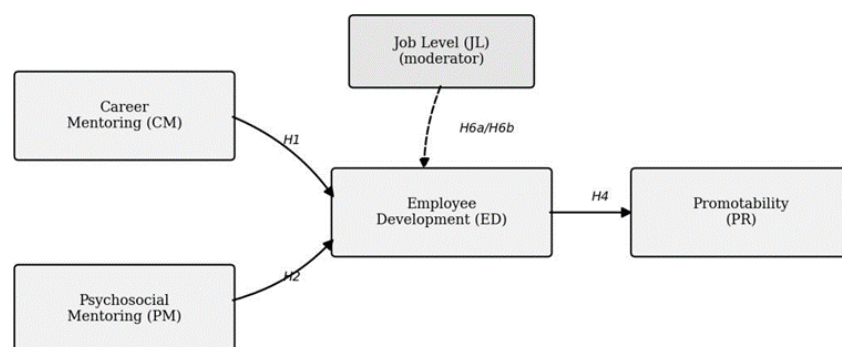


Figure 1: Proposed moderated mediation model

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample and Procedure

This study has been conducted with the workers employed in corporate organisations in India. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire, both offline and online. The

study was conducted with only those employees who had either been the recipient of a formal or informal mentoring relationship within the last two years.

412 questionnaires were sent out and 358 were received. Responses with too many missing values, straight-lining, and those that did not meet the mentoring eligibility criteria were removed, leaving 330 valid responses for final analysis. This led to an effective response rate of 80.1 per cent (Naim & Lenka, 2017). The final sample consisted of employees at various levels of the organization: 107 entry-level, 148 middle-level, and 75 senior-level. This distribution is designed to be hierarchical as is typical in corporate organisations but also to give adequate coverage to all job levels for moderation analysis.

Respondents represented the IT, financial services, and manufacturing sectors. Including organisations from different industries helped to improve the diversity of the sample and reduced the possibility of results being influenced by practices specific to a single industry. To reduce bias, respondents were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. They were also assured that the information collected would be used only for academic research and would not be shared with their employers.

3.2 Pilot Study

Before conducting the main survey, a pilot study was carried out with 40 respondents drawn from the target population but excluded from the final sample. The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the clarity of the questionnaire items and assess the reliability of the measurement scales.

Based on the feedback received, minor wording changes were made to two items in the psychosocial mentoring scale because respondents found it difficult to distinguish between counselling and general friendliness at work. The reliability values obtained during the pilot study were satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values above .80 for all constructs. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered suitable for full-scale data collection without any further modifications.

3.3 Measures

All multi-item constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale anchored at 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. No items were reverse-coded.

Mentoring Measured as two distinct subscales following Kram's (1985) functional typology, operationalised via Noe's (1988) Mentoring Functions Scale. Career mentoring comprised six items covering sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial mentoring comprised six items covering acceptance and confirmation, counselling, friendship, and role modelling. Items were retained in their original wording from Noe (1988), with response anchors adapted to the seven-point format used throughout this study (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Scandura, 1992).

Employee Development Nine items adapted from the scale used in the authors' prior published work on mentoring and employee development in Indian corporate sector, assessing perceived gains in skill, role competence, and readiness for expanded responsibility. Following exploratory factor analysis, one item (ED4) was removed owing to a cross-loading exceeding .40 on the psychosocial mentoring factor, leaving eight items retained for confirmatory analysis and hypothesis testing.

Promotability Five items from De Pater et al. (2009), assessing the extent to which the respondent is regarded by superiors as ready for and likely to receive promotion. A representative item is: "I am given tasks that could prepare me for a higher-level position."

Job Level (moderator) Coded categorically as 1 = entry level, 2 = middle level, 3 = senior level. Classification followed organisational designation cross-checked against reporting depth: entry level comprised individual contributors with no direct reports, middle level comprised first- and second-line supervisory or managerial roles, and senior level comprised roles at department-head level or above.

Controls Age and organisational tenure were included as covariates given their established association with both promotion timing and accumulated development opportunity in Indian corporate literature; gender and education were examined but retained only where they showed a significant zero-order association with the outcome variables.

3.4 Common Method Bias

Procedural remedies consisted of respondent anonymity, counterbalanced item order across constructs, and psychological separation of predictor and criterion from the questionnaire. Harman's single factor test resulted in a first factor with 31.4 per cent of the total variance, which is less than the 50 per cent criterion used as the benchmark for a common-method problem. A common latent factor comparison further revealed that the pattern of path estimates did not substantially change when a method factor was added, suggesting that common method variance is not likely to explain the observed pattern of relationships.

3.5 Analytical Strategy

The measurement model was determined by exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring, promax rotation) and then confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis. Composite reliability and average variance extracted were used to measure convergent validity, while the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio were used to measure discriminant validity.

Hayes' PROCESS macro, model 7 (first-stage moderated mediation) was used to test hypotheses, with 10,000 bootstrap resamples and 95 per cent percentile confidence intervals. Percentile intervals were preferred over bias-corrected intervals that have been demonstrated to increase Type I error rates in moderated mediation models (Hayes, 2018). For each of the mentoring functions, an index of moderated mediation was developed.

4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the retained samples are given in Table 1. The sample was moderately male with a high number of participants being between the ages of 21 and 40, reflecting the age distribution of the participating organisations.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 330)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	184	55.8
	Female	146	44.2
Age	21–30	112	33.9
	31–40	103	31.2
	41–50	71	21.5
	Above 50	44	13.3
Education	Graduate	139	42.1
	Postgraduate	151	45.8
	Doctorate	40	12.1
	Professional		
Job Level	Entry	107	32.4
	Middle	148	44.8
	Senior	75	22.7
Tenure	Less than 5 years	98	29.7
	5–10 years	121	36.7
	11–15 years	67	20.3
	More than 15 years	44	13.3

Source: Primary Data

Exploratory factor analysis on the pooled item set produced a clean four-factor solution consistent with the hypothesised structure, with the sampling adequacy and total variance explained reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Communality
Career Mentoring	CM1 ... CM6	.721–.864	.584–.773
Psychosocial Mentoring	PM1 ... PM6	.694–.851	.536–.746
Employee Development	ED1 ... ED9 (8 retained; ED4 deleted)	.681–.842	.521–.718
Promotability	PR1 ... PR5	.738–.887	.603–.801

Source: Primary Data

Note: KMO = .912; Bartlett's $\chi^2 = 4,286.743$, $df = 325$, $p < .001$; total variance explained = 68.47%.

Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the four-factor measurement model, with fit indices within conventionally acceptable ranges (Table 3). All constructs demonstrated composite reliability above .90 and average variance extracted above .50, satisfying convergent validity requirements.

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Std. Loadings	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Career Mentoring	6	.724–.861	.901	.904	.612
Psychosocial Mentoring	6	.701–.847	.887	.890	.576
Employee Development	8	.683–.839	.914	.916	.578
Promotability	5	.741–.884	.906	.909	.667

Source: Primary Data

Note: Model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.184$; CFI = .953; TLI = .947; RMSEA = .060; SRMR = .046.

Discriminant validity was supported on both criteria examined: the square root of each construct's average variance extracted exceeded its correlations with other constructs, and all heterotrait–monotrait ratios fell below the conservative .85 threshold (Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Discriminant Validity

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Career Mentoring	3.68	.71	.782	.684	.623	.571
2. Psychosocial Mentoring	3.54	.76	.592	.759	.597	.538
3. Employee Development	3.73	.68	.548	.503	.760	.671
4. Promotability	3.61	.74	.476	.438	.598	.817

Source: Primary Data

Note: Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE. Values above the diagonal are HTMT ratios; values below the diagonal are zero-order correlations.

The correlation pattern in Table 4 offers a first, purely descriptive glimpse of the asymmetry formally tested, career mentoring correlates with employee development at $r = .548$, appreciably higher than $r = .503$, correlation between psychosocial mentoring and employee development. Employee development in turn correlates with promotability at $r = .598$, the strongest bivariate relationship in the correlation matrix, consistent with its hypothesised role as the principal mechanism linking mentoring to advancement. The moderate-to-strong correlation between the two mentoring functions themselves ($r = .592$) is expected, given that a single mentor typically supplies both functions to some degree, and underscores the value of the confirmatory factor analysis in establishing that the two are nonetheless empirically distinguishable rather than a single construct measured twice.

Taken together, Tables 2, 3 and 4 establish a measurement model that supports proceeding to hypothesis testing with reasonable confidence: item-level loadings were uniformly strong, no cross-loadings above the removed employee development item were flagged, and the constructs, while correlated in the directions theory would predict, remained empirically distinct. The structural results can therefore be interpreted as reflecting genuine relationships among four separable constructs rather than artefacts of an underlying measurement confound. Table 5a reports the first-stage regression predicting employee development from the two mentoring functions, job level, and their interaction terms. Both career mentoring ($\beta = .380$, $p < .001$) and psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .270$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors, supporting H1 and H2. Consistent with H3, the standardised coefficient for career mentoring exceeded that for psychosocial mentoring, and a formal test of coefficient equality confirmed the difference was statistically significant. The interaction between career mentoring and job level was significant ($\beta = .090$, $p = .018$), indicating that job level does moderate the first-stage career mentoring path. However, the direction of this interaction ran counter to H6a: rather than weakening at higher job levels, the career mentoring–development relationship strengthened as job level rose.

The interaction between psychosocial mentoring and job level was non-significant ($\beta = .040$, $p = .281$), so H6b was not supported.

Table 5a: Regression Results — Outcome: Employee Development

Predictor		β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLC	ULCI
		I					
Career Mentoring (CM)		.380	.052	7.31	<.001	.278	.482
Psychosocial Mentoring (PM)		.270	.049	5.51	<.001	.174	.366
Job Level (JL)		.110	.041	2.68	.008	.030	.190
CM $\times$ JL		.090	.038	2.37	.018	.016	.164

PM × JL	.040	.037	1.08	.281	−.033	.113
---------	------	------	------	------	-------	------

Source: Primary Data

Note: $R^2 = .428$, $F = 48.46$, $p < .001$

Table 5b reports the second-stage regression predicting promotability. Employee development was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .540$, $p < .001$), supporting H4. Career mentoring ($\beta = .160$, $p = .002$) and psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .100$, $p = .038$) retained significant direct effects on promotability even after accounting for employee development, indicating partial rather than full mediation for both mentoring functions.

Table 5b: Regression Results — Outcome: Promotability

Predictor	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Employee Development	.540	.054	10.00	<.001	.434	.646
Career Mentoring	.160	.051	3.14	.002	.060	.260
Psychosocial Mentoring	.100	.048	2.08	.038	.006	.194

Source: Primary Data

Note: $R^2 = .401$, $F = 72.75$, $p < .001$

Table 6a reports the conditional indirect effects of each mentoring function on promotability, via employee development, at each level of the moderator. All six conditional indirect effects were significant, as none of the associated bootstrap confidence intervals contained zero. For the career mentoring pathway, the indirect effect increased monotonically across job levels, from .157 at entry level to .254 at senior level. The psychosocial mentoring pathway showed the same directional pattern at a consistently smaller magnitude, rising from .124 at entry level to .167 at senior level.

Table 6a: Conditional Indirect Effects of Mentoring on Promotability via Employee Development

Mentoring Function	Job Level	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Career	Entry	.157	.036	.092	.232
	Middle	.205	.039	.134	.287
	Senior	.254	.047	.167	.352
Psychosocial	Entry	.124	.034	.063	.196
	Middle	.146	.035	.082	.219
	Senior	.167	.043	.088	.257

Source: Primary Data

Note. 10,000 bootstrap resamples; 95% percentile confidence intervals

The index of moderated mediation, reported in Table 6b, was significant for the career mentoring pathway (index = .049, 95% CI [.011, .094]), confirming that the strength of the indirect effect genuinely varies with job level rather than the pattern in Table 6b arising from sampling variability. The corresponding index for the psychosocial mentoring pathway was not significant (index = .022, 95% CI [−.015, .064]), indicating that although the point estimates in Table 6b rise across job levels, this trend cannot be distinguished from a constant indirect effect. H7 is accordingly supported for the career mentoring route and not supported for the psychosocial route, yielding partial support overall.

Table 6b: Index of Moderated Mediation

Path	Index	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
CM → ED → PR	.049	.021	.011	.094
PM → ED → PR	.022	.020	−.015	.064

Source: Primary Data

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Result
H1	CM → ED	Supported
H2	PM → ED	Supported
H3	$\beta(\text{CM} \rightarrow \text{ED}) > \beta(\text{PM} \rightarrow \text{ED})$	Supported
H4	ED → PR	Supported
H5a	CM → ED → PR	Supported
H5b	PM → ED → PR	Supported
H6a	CM × JL → ED	Not supported as directed (significant, opposite direction)
H6b	PM × JL → ED	Not supported
H7	Moderated mediation (index)	Partially supported (career route only)

Source: Primary Data

5. Discussion

Nine hypotheses were advanced at the outset of this study; seven received support in the anticipated direction, one (H6a) received support but in a direction opposite to that hypothesised, and one (H6b) was not supported. This pattern of results is more informative than a study in which every hypothesis is confirmed as specified, because the one genuine surprise, the direction of the career-mentoring-by-job-level interaction, is precisely the finding capable of correcting an assumption the wider literature has largely taken for granted. The findings validate the notion that career and psychosocial mentoring are not mutually interchangeable paths to advancement: both are important, but they are not equal and the link between them and promotability is through employee development, not around it. The other surprising result is for occupation status. The theory presented here predicted that the effect of career mentoring would be strongest at entry-level, and would decrease as workers rise in status. Instead, the data reveal that as job level increases the career mentoring–development relationship

becomes more positive: the more that happens, the more marked the index of moderated mediation. This is worth taking seriously as a substantive finding rather than an inconvenience to be explained away.

5.1 Practical Implications

The results have several implications for organisations developing and implementing mentoring programmes. Organisations need to acknowledge that career mentoring is more effective for development than psychosocial mentoring. Emotional support and encouragement is still relevant, but if the goal is to enhance the promotability of employees, mentoring programmes should focus more on coaching, sponsorship, challenging assignments, exposure to senior management and developmental feedback.

Second, organisations should not only focus on formal mentoring programmes for new employees. The present results indicate that career mentoring is also highly beneficial for employees at higher organisational levels. Senior managers are still encountering new leadership challenges, strategic issues and organisational complexities that need to be dealt with continuously and mentored. In this regard, it is important to expand structured mentoring programmes beyond the early career stage to multiple levels of the organisation.

Third, organisations need to assess mentoring programmes with a more holistic set of performance measures. While employee development is a key aspect of mentoring, it is not the only factor that accounts for promotability. To measure the effectiveness of mentoring, organisations should look beyond competence enhancement to promotion rates, leadership readiness, career advancement and organisational visibility.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study. The study was cross sectional, restricting the ability to establish causal relationships. The results do support the hypothesized relationships, but it is also plausible that employees who are perceived as high performers or highly promotable are given more career mentoring from senior

managers. Longitudinal studies would yield more evidence of a causal link between mentoring, employee development and promotability. Second, self-reported measures were used for all variables. While several procedural and statistical techniques were employed to reduce common method bias, future research might enhance the conclusions by obtaining promotability ratings from supervisors or organizational records rather than from the employees' perceptions.

Thirdly, the study was done on the employees of the corporate organisations in India. There are variations in organizational culture, hierarchy and mentoring in different countries. Hence, the results should be interpreted with caution. Further research in other cultural and organisational contexts would clarify if similar relationships are found in other contexts. Lastly, job level was determined by three general categories: entry level, middle level, and senior level. More sophisticated measures of career stage or hierarchical position could be used in future studies to better understand the impact of mentoring on employee development at different stages of employees' careers.

Other mechanisms by which mentoring affects promotability that could be explored in future studies include organizational commitment, leadership ability, career adaptability, or professional networking. A more complete picture of the impact of mentoring on long-term career success could be obtained by examining these variables.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring on promotability through employee development while considering the moderating role of job level in Indian corporate sector. The findings show that both mentoring functions positively contribute to employee development and promotability. However, career mentoring has a stronger influence than psychosocial mentoring, highlighting the importance of separating these two mentoring functions in future research. Employee development emerged as an important mechanism linking mentoring with promotability, demonstrating that employees who receive effective mentoring are more likely to develop the competencies required for higher organisational responsibilities. At the same time, mentoring also influenced

promotability directly, suggesting that additional mechanisms beyond employee development also contribute to career advancement. An important contribution of the study is the finding that career mentoring becomes more influential at higher organisational levels rather than lower levels, contrary to the original theoretical expectation. This result highlights the importance of examining mentoring within different organisational and cultural contexts instead of assuming that findings from previous studies apply equally across all settings. Overall, the study contributes to mentoring research by providing evidence that career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring influence employee outcomes differently and that employee development plays an important role in explaining these relationships. The findings also provide useful guidance for organisations seeking to design mentoring programmes that support employee development and long-term career progression.

References

- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., & Lentz, E. (2006). Mentorship behaviors and mentorship quality associated with formal mentoring programs: Closing the gap between research and practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(3), 567–578. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.3.567>
- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., Poteet, M. L., Lentz, E., & Lima, L. (2004). Career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(1), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.1.127>
- Baranik, L. E., Roling, E. A., & Eby, L. T. (2010). Why does mentoring work? The role of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(3), 366–373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.07.004>
- Chao, G. T., Walz, P. M., & Gardner, P. D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45(3), 619–636. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1992.tb00863.x>

De Pater, I. E., Van Vianen, A. E. M., Bechtoldt, M. N., & Klehe, U.-C. (2009). Employees' challenging job experiences and supervisors' evaluations of promotability. *Personnel Psychology*, 62(2), 297–325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2009.01139.x>

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Deng, H., Wu, W., Zhang, Y., Yu, Z., Xu, H., & Wu, W. (2022). Exploring the differential effects of career and psychosocial mentoring on newcomer socialization. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 975064. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.975064>

DiRenzo, M. S., Linnehan, F., Shao, P., & Rosenberg, W. L. (2010). A moderated mediation model of e-mentoring. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(2), 292–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.10.003>

Dries, N., Pepermans, R., & Carlier, O. (2008). Career success: Constructing a multidimensional model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73(2), 254–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.05.005>

Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Evans, S. C., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. L. (2008). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(2), 254–267. [10.1016/j.jvb.2007.04.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.04.005)

Eby, L. T., Butts, M., & Lockwood, A. (2003). Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24(6), 689–708. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.214>

Fagenson, E. A. (1989). The mentor advantage: Perceived career/job experiences of protégés versus non-protégés. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 10(4), 309–320. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030100403>

Fagenson-Eland, E. A., Marks, M. A., & Amendola, K. L. (1997). Perceptions of mentoring relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51(1), 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1997.1592>

Firzly, N., Chamandy, M., Pelletier, L. G., & Lagacé, M. (2022). An examination of mentors' interpersonal behaviors and mentees' motivation, turnover intentions, engagement, and well-being. *Journal of Career Development*, 49(6), 1317–1336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453211039286>

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>

Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 331–362. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322>

Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>

Jyoti, J., & Sharma, P. (2015). Impact of mentoring functions on career development: Moderating role of mentoring culture and mentoring structure. *Global Business Review*, 16(4), 700–718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150915581110>

Kraimer, M. L., Seibert, S. E., Wayne, S. J., Liden, R. C., & Bravo, J. (2011). Antecedents and outcomes of organizational support for development: The critical role of career opportunities. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 485–500. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021452>

Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Scott, Foresman.

Lankau, M. J., & Scandura, T. A. (2002). An investigation of personal learning in mentoring relationships: Content, antecedents, and consequences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(4), 779–790. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3069311>

Naim, M. F., & Lenka, U. (2017). How does mentoring contribute to Gen Y employees' intention to stay? An Indian perspective. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 13(2), 314–332. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v13i2.1304>

Noe, R. A. (1988). An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships. *Personnel Psychology*, 41(3), 457–479.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.

Ragins, B. R., & Cotton, J. L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4), 529–550. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.84.4.529>

Ragins, B. R., Cotton, J. L., & Miller, J. S. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career

attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6), 1177–1194.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1556344>

Scandura, T. A. (1992). Mentorship and career mobility: An empirical investigation.

Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13(2), 169–174.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030130206>

Turban, D. B., & Dougherty, T. W. (1994). Role of protégé personality in receipt of mentoring and career success. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(3), 688–702.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/256706>

Van Vianen, A. E. M., Rosenauer, D., Homan, A. C., Horstmeier, C. A. L., & Voelpel, S. C. (2018). Career mentoring in context: A multilevel study on differentiated career mentoring and career mentoring climate. *Human Resource Management*, 57(2), 583–599. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21879>

Wallace, J. E. (2001). The benefits of mentoring for female lawyers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58(3), 366–391. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2000.1766>

Whitely, W., Dougherty, T. W., & Dreher, G. F. (1991). Relationship of career mentoring and socioeconomic origin to managers' and professionals' early career progress. *Academy of Manage*