

## **The Effects of Cultural Values on the Quality of Mentoring Relationship**

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**Abstract:** The literature highlights the effects of parties' gender on the satisfaction of mentoring relationship. However, little is known whether or not cultural values associated with sex roles would affect protégé's preference of mentors' gender, and their satisfaction from the mentoring process. To fill this gap, the researchers examined the amount of variance explained by cultural values related to sex roles on these aforementioned variables. The analysis of 155 student teachers of a large size metropolitan university in Turkey yielded that student teacher protégés with masculine value orientations had a tendency to prefer male rather than female teacher mentor. In addition, protégé's perceived level of satisfaction from the mentoring was significantly predicted by the protégé's level of masculine value orientation. Implications were made regarding current protégé-mentor pairing practice in teacher education programs in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, teacher education, protégé -mentor pairing, masculine value orientation.

## **Introduction and Background for the Study**

Mentoring practices show greater differences across countries (Wang, 2001). For student teachers, mentoring program in its real term dates back to 1999-2000 in Turkey. Before then, as part of their university teacher preparation program student teachers spent only two weeks in schools to do their practice teaching. During these two weeks, they were required to teach four lessons under the observation of cooperating teacher. With the intent of advancing teacher education quality, YOK (Higher Education Council) and the World Bank constructed a new mentoring program between 1994-1997. In 1999, following 4 years of study and consultation with Turkish and international educators in a World Bank Program, YOK and the Turkish Ministry of Education cooperatively undertook the reconstructed teacher education program into action. Under this new program, student teachers go to schools for two school semesters to gain an indept teaching experience. This practice is mandated to students in the second and seventh semesters of eight total semester teacher education program which are called as School Experience Course I and School Experience Course II respectively. In addition, during this practice student teachers are required to work with mentor teachers and supervised by university faculty in schools.

In this program however, there is no option for student teachers to choose either a mentor or a school. First, the list of student- teachers is offered to the local head of education by the faculty coordinator. Then, the student teachers are arbitrarily assigned to these schools, only based on considerations of geographical proximity and teaching specialization. Finally, the principals of assigned schools allocate the student teachers to mentors. There is no measure or standard for mentor selection either. Mentors are not being made a part of selection process. The practice of mentor assignment is usually made in terms of mentors' class load rather than their experience and personal agreement.

Obtaining a mentor is an important career development experience for individuals in general and for student teachers in particular. Research indicates that mentored individuals perform better on the job (Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979; Vertz, 1985). However, rather than just having a mentoring program, the quality of mentoring is no doubt an important factor to increase the quality of teacher education- the aim of the new program undertaken by the Turkish education officials in 1999.

Mentoring includes an intense interpersonal relationship between the parties (Kram, 1985; Gehrke, 1998). The research in the literature emphasizes the pairing of mentor and protégé as an important process as it affects quality of mentoring relationship (Frierson, Hargrove, & Lewis, 1994; Morton & Gordon, 1992). Protégés have been paired with mentors in a variety of ways according to subject background, similarity in interests, and geographic proximity (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993; Garcia, 1992). The need for the examination of the role that values may play in the quality of the mentoring relationship; the way values may affect mentor-protégé pairing have been highlighted in the literature (Scandura & Williams, 2001). To respond to this need, the researchers intended to

investigate whether mentors' and protégés' gender related cultural values can affect the quality of mentoring relationship, and therefore should be one of the considerations in pairing process of mentors and protégés.

### **Related Literature**

Mentoring programs have long been considered a valuable component of teacher education (Brimfield & Leonard, 1983; Conant, 1963; Silberman, 1970). During the last decade, mentoring has been seen as a crucial part of teacher education. Student teachers believe that collaboration with mentors improves their performance and desires. Yet, mentoring programs has not been reached to their true potential. They have some serious implementation problems to overcome.

Giebelhaus (1999) states that mentoring models should include an opportunity for selection and training of mentors. Mentors and student teachers should work cooperatively. Enz (1992) suggested that student teachers should be able to select mentors. Not only educational expectations but also personal characteristics may play important roles for student teachers in the process of selection. The process of effective mentoring needs time for both parties.

In Western cultures, sex differences are found important in mentoring relationships that these differences may affect the satisfaction of student teachers and quality of mentorship. Kram (1985) found that women considered the mentor's role in providing feedback about strengths and weaknesses to be more important than did men: Women pay more attention to feedback than men. Noe (1989) found that mentors believed that women more effectively utilized the mentorship than did men. In Noe's (1989) research, student teachers matched with opposite-sex mentors were also found to have less effective relationship than did students with same-sex mentors (Noe, 1989). Women might be more comfortable with female mentors (Burke & McKeen, 1995).

The experiences of women having female and male mentors may be different in different cultures. In some cultures, women may be more strongly motivated than men to use male mentors because of cultural values and relations with men. Women may more easily perceive men as mentor in men dominant cultures (Hofstede, 1980) and in organizations in which men is usually in upper level administrative positions. Due to sex role expectations in culture, women may consider the male mentor's role more important than women mentor's role. Megargee (1969) found that if women believe that men make better leadership, they would prefer male mentors. Sex role expectations influence the assumption of mentorship.

### **Hofstede's National Masculinity Dimension**

Understanding people's background makes us powerful in interpreting and predicting their present and future behaviors and attitudes. One's background carries certain marks of his or her

culture. Therefore, in some way, understanding people's culture may mean understanding them as well (Hofstede, 1994). Culture is composed of four basic categorical elements: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Of those four, values represent the deepest level of a culture. Values are broad feelings, like what is good and what is bad, clean or dirty, beautiful or ugly, and so on. While occupational and organizational cultures differ more superficially -in their symbols, heroes and rituals, national cultures, differ mostly at the level of basic values (Hofstede, 1994).

Results from a number of research projects have led Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2000) to classify national cultures along four dimensions. He identified them by comparing the values of employees and managers in IBM Corporation in fifty-three different nations among which Turkey reside. The dimension of interest to the present study was labelled "masculinity" which the rest of the paper will dwell on.

In Hofstede's view, masculinity dimension reflects the degree to which, in a given country, male and female roles are clearly distinguished. Japan, Austria, and Venezuela are countries that come out highest on Hofstede's masculinity index; Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden are countries at the lowest end. Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and South Korea are near the middle of the distribution on this measure, which makes them medium masculinity countries.

Masculine cultures strive for maximal distinction between how men and women are expected to behave and to fulfill their lives. Masculine cultures expect men to be assertive, ambitious and competitive; to strive for material success. Masculine cultures expect women to serve and care for the non-material quality of life, for children and for the weak. Feminine cultures, on the otherhand, define relatively overlapping social roles for the sexes (Hofstede, 1986, 1998, 2000).

In high masculinity countries, the dominant societal norms and values can be summed as follows:

Differences in sex roles should imply differences in power between the sexes: men should dominate in all settings. Sex roles in society should be clearly differentiated: in the family, fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings, men should be assertive, ambitious and tough; women should nurture. As opposed to people and warm relationship, for men, money and material objects are important (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 1998).

In sum, for masculine societies Hofstede (1980, pp.296-297) cites these following broad consequences : belief in inequality of the sexes; some occupations are considered typically male occupations, whereas other occupations are considered typically female; men are breadwinners, women are cakemakers.

## **Inferences and Hypothesis**

Since masculine societies make clearer differentiations between the sexes by considering some occupations as female and some others as male, and believing that men should dominate in all settings including work and family, it was hypothesized that an individual grow up within such a society would expect to see man rather than women in a superior position. The literature defines mentoring as advise giving, coaching, and counseling of which imply power inequity between the protégé and mentor due to their positions. Research on organizational power also highlights the power differences between mentor and protégé (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Having access to resources that a protege desires, including access to organizational information, and career guidance also places mentor in a superior position (Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997b; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). The power imbalance between mentor and protégé may not be tolerable for an individual protégé indexed high in the masculinity dimension when a mentor is a woman. Therefore, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 1. The degree of protégé's masculine value orientation predicts his or her degree of preference of mentor's gender as male.

The quality of mentoring is usually evaluated either by examining actual outcomes such as amount of contact between mentor and protégé, or by assessing participant's perceptions related to the satisfaction of the mentoring relationship (Noe, 1988; Ensher&Murphy, 1997). Since the satisfaction of the mentoring is one of the two important indicators of the quality of the mentoring relationship, the second hypothesis is directly related to this variable. Based on the same rationale of hypothesis 1, following hypothesis is established:

Hypothesis II. The degree of protégé's masculine value orientation is expected to predict his or her degree of satisfaction from the mentor.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were 155 freshmen student teachers randomly selected among different branches of teacher education program from a large metropolitan university in Turkey. To fulfill a part of their "School Experience I" course requirements, the participating students, like all other student teachers in Turkey, were randomly assigned to their teacher mentors in primary schools at the beginning of the school semester. Protégés had only about one week experience with their teacher mentors prior to the administration of the questionnaires of this study.

Students or protégés ranged in age from 17 to 22. Of 155 participating protégés 65 were male and 90 were female students. In the study, there were 68 female, 36 male, and 51 cross gender mentor-protégé pairs.

### **Procedure**

The questionnaires were administered to student protégés by the researchers one week after the beginning of the School Experience I course during students' theory based classroom session with their faculty at the university. The participants were assured of confidentiality of their responses and asked not to write their name on the questionnaires. In addition, students were guaranteed that their answers to these questions would not affect their course grades. Students were told that the purpose of the questionnaires was to gather general information about the newly constructed school experience program and generate recommendations for future practices. The student protégés were cautioned not to leave any question un-answered and raise their hands if the questions were not clear. Consequently, the response rate of protégés who had completed all the questions was 100%.

## **Measures**

### **Masculinity-Femininity Dimension**

Individualized measures of culture is recommended as a measure when researchers treat culture as an independent variable predicting any individually measured dependent variable (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994). Recently, number of studies have used individualized measures of culture (e.g., Bontempo, Lobel, & Triandis, 1990; Earley, 1994; Hui & Villareal, 1989; Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Wagner, 1995). Since because in this research the construct culture was being treated as a psychological dimension influencing individual students' choice of their mentor's gender, and their satisfaction from mentoring process, individualized measure of culture related to Masculinity dimension was used.

The cultural dimension of Masculinity was measured using Dorfman and Howell's (1988) related part of cultural scale (see Appendix). Dorfman and Howell (1988) adapted their scale from Hofstede's (1980) national constructs of culture to capture the essence of his four cultural dimensions at the individual level. This technique of adapting national level cultural measures to individual level has been used by other cross-cultural researchers (e.g., Bontempo, & Triandis, 1990; Hui & Villareal, 1989). The internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for this measure for the Turkish protégé sample was .86. A confirmatory factor analysis provided support for inferring that this measure reflected the cultural construct as expected in Turkish sample. Five items of cultural dimension of masculinity were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

To measure protégés' preferences of mentor's sex the following question was asked to protégés: "If I were asked, I would prefer to have a same-sex mentor". This question was scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

To measure satisfaction with mentors the following two items, which were also used by Ensher and Murphy (1997) for the same purpose, were asked to the protégés: "My mentor met my expectations," and "I felt satisfied with my mentor." These two items were also scaled from strongly

disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Composite score of these two items yielded alpha as .89 for the current sample.

## Results

### Overview of Analyses

Researchers mainly applied regression statistics to analyze the two hypotheses discussed in the previous section. Below, first the means and standard deviations related to masculinity dimension for both gender of student protégés were given, then general demographic characteristics of the sample was presented, and finally each hypothesis and the related results were explained in sequence.

### Ratings of Male and Female Protégés in Masculinity Dimension

Differences in culture within nations do exist (Hofstede, 1980). To examine whether there is a difference between female and male protégé groups in their distribution on the masculinity index, female and male student protégés' responses were compared (N=90 and 65 respectively). The results showed that male protégés' masculinity index mean score (4,7) was significantly higher compared to female protégés' score

4,0 ( $t = 3,00, p < .01$ ). That, male student protégés in general are slightly more masculine oriented than female student protégés.

Before presenting the regression analysis results, it is necessary to describe some of the demographic characteristics of the sample of the study. Protégés similar in age (ranges 17 to 22), grade (all freshmen), marital status (all are bachelors), and birth place (all were from the Marmara region) were chosen in order to be able to control for the effects of differential demographic characteristics on the masculinity and satisfaction scores. In addition, to control for the effects of mentor's differential individual characteristics on student protégés' perceptions related to the quality of mentoring, protégés were administered the questionnaires one week after they had started the "school experience course I" with their randomly assigned mentors.

### Test of the Hypotheses

**Hypothesis I** states that protégé's masculine value orientation level is expected to predict his or her degree of preference of male mentor. This hypothesis was examined by simple regression analysis. When student gender was set to male, and the composite score of "masculinity" and the single item "students' preference of mentor's gender as same- sex" defined as predictor and criterion variables respectively, the regression analysis output produced  $t > 2,00, p < .05$  and  $R^2 = .24$ . This means that 24% of variance on male students' choice of their mentors' gender as male was explained

by students' cultural values related to masculinity. That is, the male protégés who believed that there was a sharp differences between men and women in a society and who did not want to see a woman as a superior in the workplace also didn't want woman as their mentor. The same analysis was repeated with the female student protégé group. The result was parallel to the male protégé sample: female protégés who were high in masculinity index did not prefer to have a female mentor ( $t > 2,00$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $R^2 = .20$ ). That is, masculinity orientation of protege explains 20% of variance in their preference of male mentor. From the results of the hypothesis I, it can be concluded that cultural inclination of the individual student protégés, above and beyond the effect of their gender, predicts their preferences of mentor's gender.

**The hypothesis II** was related to protégés' satisfaction of the mentor. The statistical procedure applied in the analysis of the hypothesis I was utilized in the analysis of hypothesis II as well. The results yielded significantly negative relationship between masculinity values and satisfaction from the female mentor for both female and male student protégés ( $t > -2,00$  and  $p < .05$  and  $R^2 = .12$  and  $.10$  for male and female protégés respectively.). That is, in this study 12 and/or 10 % of variance of protégés' satisfaction from the mentor can be explained by the degree of cultural masculinity. This may seem not a very considerable amount, however, when one considers that only one variable-degree of masculinity-explains this amount of difference on students' satisfaction from the mentor, the result deserves attention.

## **Discussion**

This research highlights the importance of values in the choice of mentor and their effect on the protégé's satisfaction from the mentor. That is, masculine value orientation affected students' choice of mentor's gender; protégés with masculine value orientation tend to have rather a masculine image of a mentor in their expectation and therefore they would prefer a man rather than a woman as a mentor. It seems that values of this kind also affected students' satisfaction from their mentors regardless of their actual ability in mentoring. Students possessed with masculine values perceived their female mentors as failing to meet their expectations after almost their first meeting with them. That is, female as well as male students believed women did not make good mentors. Masculine value orientations of student protégés affected female mentors' performance rating negatively but male's positively.

The results of this study have implications for mentor-protégé pairing practice of universities in Turkey and in other countries rated as highly or moderately masculine in Hofstede's (1980) national culture classification. With the depth of this study, it is not possible to declare whether culturally imposed values would have a long term effect on protégé's preference of and satisfaction from the mentor. However, it is possible to state that cultural values do effect student's initial feelings related to



their mentor and mentoring in favor of male mentors. The importance of initial stage of mentoring on the progress of whole mentoring relationship is well-documented (Chao, 1997; Kram, 1985). That is, at this stage, setting positive expectations and establishing good dyadic relations between the mentor and the protégé gain importance for the process not to terminate prematurely (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). Therefore, faculty coordinators that are responsible of pairing student protégés and mentors need to take into considerations of protégés' related values and do matching accordingly. Besides, student protégés need to be informed about their possible gender- based cultural bias related to mentor's image and be called upon inner examination of their values by their course instructors at the faculty.

The results of this study also make us to think that whether masculine value orientations of student teachers may influence their view of leadership in schools other than mentorship. That, prospective teachers with these values have a potential to believe that women should not be in any administrative positions in schools and women has to leave the position of leadership to men whenever men are present. To provide a fair competition in leadership positions for women, it is important to implement "positive discrimination" in the field of education. This is the implication of this study for the policy makers in Turkey and in other moderate and/or high masculine countries like Pakistan, Iran, South Korea, Japan and Austria.

### **Directions for Future Research**

As a follow up of this study, future research might investigate how mentor's individual differences might interact with the protégé's to overcome the effect of values related to masculinity. With pre and post test research design it might be possible to observe, whether socialization with the mentor, that the duration of mentoring relationship, would eliminate the effects of protégés' masculinity values on their re-choice of mentor's gender and post-satisfaction of mentoring.

Other important avenues for research might include investigating the role that other cultural dimensions would play in the nature of the mentoring relationship. Especially, Hofstede's (1980) "power distance" dimension would be a worth of examination from both the mentor and the protégé's perspective. Power distance indicates the extent to which an individual accepts the unequal distribution of power in institutions and organizations. The mismatch of the mentor and the protégé in terms of this value would also affect the quality of mentoring relationship negatively.

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## **Appendix**

### **Masculinity/Femininity Cultural Dimension Items\***

In the following items, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the corresponding number 1 through 7.

1. Meetings are usually run more effectively when they are chaired by a man.
2. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women to have a professional career.
3. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.
4. Solving organizational problems usually requires an active forcible approach which is typical of men.
5. It is preferable to have a man in a high level position rather than a woman.

\* From Dorfman & Howell, 1988.