

## MENTORING IN INDIAN YOUTH CHALLENGES

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Youth form cornerstone of any society as they are the future of the country. Therefore understanding what determines their success is imperative for any social system. Mentoring lays the foundation for countering challenges during adolescence. Mentoring relations among youth through several mechanisms including the provision of social support, role model opportunities to develop new skills and advocacy were discussed. Current researchers also shedding light on mentoring benefit for countering Indian youth problems.

### Indian Youth Challenges

The stresses and strains of fast changes have affected all especially the adolescents (Khan, 2013). Searching for unique identity is one of the problems that adolescent often faces. At this age, adolescent feel deprived of self-identity “*Who am I?*” Each individual has a sense of individuality as Erikson labeled the adolescent life role ego identity versus role confusion stage. Ego identity means knowing who you are and how you fit in the society. Role confusion defined as “the inability to conceive of oneself as a productive member of one’s own society” (Barabara, 2006). Adolescents are, of course, known for their idealism, and for their tendency to see things in black-and-white (*What is right and wrong?*). Adolescence is the period of struggle and striving for positive role identity. Interactions with parents (Adams, et al., 1987; Jackson, Dunham & Kidwell, 1990) affect adolescents’ sense of identity.

The development of adolescence involves connections among the biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors (Lerner, 1993). The stresses that adolescence face either a part of normal growing up e.g., growth and hormonal changes or changes in the relationships that young people experience with the interaction of parents and society. Other individual changes are pressure to advance in school, peer pressures, family moves, school changes, parenting fighting and divorce. This period is dramatic challenge for the adolescents. G. Stanley Hall called this period as “Storm and Stress” conflict at this developmental stage is normal not unusual. At this age adolescents often feel “*I am worthless*”, which kills their confidence and self-esteem.

Arnett (2000) points out demographic of the country plays important role in determining emerging adulthood (see also Seiter and Nelson, 2011), Demographic characteristics like gender, marital status, religion and socio-economic status of

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India. As India is a multi-cultural/ religious society, which consists of over 1.21 billion people (2011 census) and major religions are Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.8%, Buddhists 0.8%, Jains 0.4%, others 0.7%, unspecified 0.1% (2001 Census). The culture of India has extreme diverse within the country in terms of language, belief, custom, tradition, ceremonies and arts values (Malika , 2007). Gender ratios are 933 girl children per every 1000 boy children of the same age group. Those people social-economic situation not well, facing a significant barriers and obstacles to achieve the well-being in their life and increasing gaps in inequality (UNICEF, 2010, WHO, 2008). During this stage there is also greater probability of drug and alcohol use or mental health disorders such as depression. The unstable emotions or lack of emotional intelligence among youth may leads to crime. Searching unique identity is one of the problems that adolescents often face. Human identities are linked with class, race, sex, caste, religion, and occupation, which largely shape the behavior of individuals. Among multi-religious and multi-culturally diverse, developing countries, India is a classic case that represents the coexistence of some major ethnic groups with distinct racial, linguistic, religious, and cultural identities and perceptions (Abraham, 1999). Therefore, different cultures, religions, castes, and classes with diversity at every level, which making India the most complex nation in the world. This scenario brings many conflicts, problems as well as challenges in all aspects of life and activity.

Majority of India's youth face the problem of inequality of opportunity. Singh (2010) reported differences in family background, which alone can account for up to 17 per cent of inequality in career. Network of the parents and family background determine the quality in accessing education and also in role model for their children. The lack of networks of support significantly affects the ability of India's youth to achieve their potential and realize their ambitions. However, India's youth population needs development of skills and capabilities to be productive. Thus, India's youth should have access to quality of education which enables them to be productive and creative members of the workforce. Given these challenges, it would be useful to identify interventions that can enhance capacity and also address inequality of opportunity (Cited in Gupta & Gowda, 2002, p76 ).

#### Role of Mentoring

At this crucial stage, mentoring by parents, peers and teachers becomes important for resolving problems of youth. Mentoring affects youth through three interrelated processes: (1) by enhancing youth's social relationships and emotional well-being, (2) by improving their cognitive skills through instruction and conversation, and (3) by promoting positive identity development through serving as role models and advocates (Rhodes, 2005). As stated by Merriam (1987)

mentoring as “a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, in a relationship in which the older mentor is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger” (p. 162). The modern consensus has been that mentoring, influenced by humanist beliefs, basically about supporting “psychosocial” development (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Psychosocial development includes role modeling, acceptance, confirmation, counseling and friendship. The extent to which this psychosocial model is a good construct of “natural” mentoring can be raised. The main implication in practice is that, rather than relying on specialist professionals (teachers, counselors, specialist and guidance staff) to help with psychosocial development, it is possible for anyone and everyone to help; more specifically for people who had succeeded at something, whether person is a senior, to help others aspiring to succeed in the same context. It is apparently, pro-social helping behavior par excellence on the part of mentors. In terms of social aspect, mentoring program is helpful in building good relationships among them (Rhodes, Hollinshead & Neville, 2007, Lim, 2005). In fact, a good rapport can easily be built if both mentors and mentees have the same goals, preferences, personnel and gender as those indirectly will lead to satisfaction to each side. (Hoigaard & Mathisen, 2009).

Kram (1985) described some of the functions that the mentoring relationship provides: through sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, or challenging work the junior colleague learns the ropes of organizational life and prepares for advancement opportunities. Through role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, or friendship, he or she develops a sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness in the managerial role. By providing a range of career and psychosocial functions, the senior colleague gains recognition and respect from peers and superiors for developing young talent, receives support from the junior colleague who seeks counsel, and experiences satisfaction by helping a less experience adult navigate effectively in the world of work. Kram (1985) described career functions as those aspects of the relationship that mainly enhance career advancement. Included in these functions were sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Kram (1983) described psychosocial functions as those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity and effectiveness in the managerial role. She identified these functions as role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship.

Indian historical significance of mentoring since ancient times found to be excellent examples of mentoring like Brahmin Kautilya was a great mentor for Chandragupta Maurya, the excellent exposition of the guide’s spacecraft by Kautilya in his Arthashastra (Economics). Through the Arthashastra, Kautilya has been the guiding spirit behind the many successful ruler and statesman over the ages. Bairam Khan’s role in the growth and upbringing of the Mughal emperors. The mentoring

of young Akbar by Bairam Khan played a vital role in the way Akbar reestablished the Mughal Empire in all its glory. In modern India too there have been great examples of successful mentoring relationships like Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a great inspirational mentor to a significant number of later freedom fighters. Mohandas K. Gandhi in later years filled his place in guiding an entire generation of Indian leaders. In Western myth, legend and history there were numerous examples like Socrates and Plato and Aristotle; Haydn and Beethoven; Freud and Jung.

However, it is essential for creating a stimulating learning environment and need for mentoring become as important as plants need water (Khan 2013). Mentoring enhances many aspects of young people's social and emotional development including positive social attitudes, satisfying relationships and young people's perceptions of their worth. Mentor are those people who make significant differences to the lives of others, lifting them out of being ordinary and leading them to an almost magical transformation in terms of success. Briefly we can say mentor are people who work as a torch-bearers for mentee in the times of darkness. These people can bring positive changes in mentees lives and made them better to fight with life challenges.

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