



The effectiveness of mentoring in helping women achieve leadership positions in Irish business

By Valeria Ortiz Tello

Master of Science in Management National College of Ireland,

August 2018

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Female leadership has different characteristics that can contribute a different vision to organizations, so it is essential to develop these skills within the business. However, women are still poorly represented in senior positions in organisations around the world (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017). Separately, mentoring is used as a tool to encourage and develop leadership in companies. The main objective of this study is to determine whether mentoring can be used as an effective tool to develop women leaders in business.

Design/methodology/approach: The research is qualitative, with the focus on the personal experiences, perceptions and knowledge of women managers. To understand in depth how mentoring helps female leadership, in-depth interviews were conducted with five senior women managers from different companies in Ireland who had participated in formal and informal mentoring relationships.

Limitations: The study has a small sample, and therefore it is not possible to generalize from the findings. The results apply only to the group studied.

Originality/value: There is a lack of research on how mentoring can help women achieve senior positions in organizations in Ireland, so this study tries to fill this knowledge gap.

Findings:

Valuable ideas that emerged from this study:

- Mentoring is a form of coaching that allows women mentees to focus their careers on leadership.
- Having a mentoring relationship helps improve performance within organizations
- A mentor can help improve the self-esteem of female mentees
- The outcomes can be positive with a male or female mentor. However, having female mentors who have achieved a balance between family and a senior position inspires female mentees more.
- For mentoring to be effective, there must be a great commitment on the part of the mentee.

- In terms of professional development, the mentor must be in a more senior position than the mentee. However, peer mentoring and network mentoring relationships can also help.
- Mentor and mentee must create an environment of trust, but not necessarily friendship.
- The effectiveness of mentoring is maintained regardless of whether the relationship is formal or informal or develops inside or outside the organization. These aspects contribute different aspects to the professional development of mentees.

Keywords: Women leadership, mentoring, confidence, female career development.

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Word Count: 18.795

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank:

- To my supervisor, Susan Duggan, for her guidance and wise feedback throughout this process.
- To all those women leaders who participated in the study. Thank you all for sharing your time, experiences, knowledge and for being an inspiration.
- I want to thank Deidre Veldon and Paul Cullen for the unconditional support throughout the entire masters.
- And to my mother, who has always motivated me, supported me, and always believed in me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The massive incorporation of women into the labour market has been described as the most important silent social revolution of the 20th century, one that began in the 1920s and continues until today (Goldin, 2006). Also, during all these years women began to penetrate third-level education and today they are obtaining professional degrees in record numbers in some areas surpassing men. Despite this, women are not progressing at the same pace as men in their careers. Notably, the greater the hierarchy of the company the lower the female representation (Carter & Silva, 2010).

The problem has different names: "sticky floors" (referring to very slow or no advances); "glass walls" (referring to segregation in work), and the "glass ceiling" (referring to vertical segregation) (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). According to Grant Thornton (2018), there is an absence of women in senior management positions around the world, with only 24% of top management positions held by women. Figures published by the 30% Club in 2017 showed that Ireland follows the trend, ie, the higher the position in a company, the lower the female representation. At the lowest manager level, the situation is more balanced, with men occupying 48% of positions and women 52%. The gap emerges in the second level in the hierarchy; female managers occupy just 42% at the middle level and 31% at executive director level. However. It is important to emphasize that the number of Irish women CEOs has increased in the last three years, to 19% in 2017 from 17% in 2016 and 14% in 2015. (30% Club, 2017).

In Ireland and the United Kingdom statistics show that women are well represented at junior managerial level, but "the glass ceiling is still a problem for women at higher levels of management in both countries" (Garavan, et al., 2007,

P 74). In recent years there has been a rapid increase in global activity in all the industrialized countries which has forced more women to enter in management positions at a senior level. It is expected that this trend will continue, even though the rates of women at high management levels are still low in all countries. Another reason for the low representation of women in senior management is that women live and work in a patriarchal society where men have easy access to power (Harris, H.: 2006, cited by Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Chisholm-Burns, et al., (2017) considers that women are marginalized by their male colleagues; since they do not receive challenging tasks, their contributions are not recognized, and this leads them to have less confidence. As a result, many women do not pursue leadership positions; moreover, they take fewer risks in their careers and participate less in meetings. Klaile (2013) says many women voluntarily abandon their careers to care of their children and therefore do not pursue senior work positions. Chisholm-Burns, et al. (2017) supports this idea, pointing out that women who have children take maternity leave and must face the impact that this can have on their careers. Some feel forced to choose between family and career, while others decide not to have children in order to pursue their professional aspirations.

Organisations are built by gender assumptions that impact on the participation of women in top management, so women need more psychosocial support than men (Linehan, 2000). Lockwood, (2006) concluded that the "stereotyped threat" can be overcome by the example of another successful person who serves as a guide. Women can obtain great benefits from female role models, since they tend to face greater obstacles in their careers. It can be beneficial to find another woman who has succeeded in a field dominated by men or who has overcome gender stereotypes. Some scholars (Blood, et al., 2012; Kosoko-Lasaki, et al., 2006; Linehan & Scullion, 2008) have identified mentoring as an essential element to overcome the gender gap in areas such as academia or business. Studies have shown that the low representation of women in senior positions stems from a lack of access to appropriate networks, role models, sponsors or mentors; all tools which are easily available to their male counterparts. (Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

Problem statement

This dissertation is timely, given the European Commission's affirmation that gender equality is essential for economic growth and progress (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). Promoting mentoring could provide an alternative path to motivating women to pursue leadership positions in organisations in Ireland (Hughes and Sheerin, 2016). Consequently, the main objective of this dissertation is to learn the effectiveness of mentoring in helping women achieve leadership positions in business in the Irish context.

Mentoring has been widely studied and is recognized as a powerful tool for personal and professional development for mentees. However, there is little research on how mentoring can help women position themselves in leadership positions, and how this process occurs in the Irish context. Helms, *et al.*, (2016) in their study of sponsorship and mentoring for the formation of women leaders, concluded that mentoring can help the formation of female leaders; however, sponsorship is a requirement for success. Contrarily, Washington (2010) determines that mentoring alone can help catapult women's careers, though she believes further research is necessary to understand more clearly the benefits of this process.

The findings of this research could be important to help understand the connection in the mentoring and training of women leaders within organisations. The objectives of this research are to:

- Determine how effective mentoring is in helping women to reach leadership positions in organisations.
- Understand why there are few women in senior positions in Irish companies.
- Investigate if the lack of role models and mentors could be the reason why many women do not advance to leadership positions.
- Explore the differences between mentors and gender.

- Discover the differences between formal and informal mentors and their knowledge of women's development.
- Categorize the most important characteristics of a mentoring program, and whether it is better to develop them inside or outside of organisations.

Purpose statement

The main purpose of this study is to determinate if mentoring female employees in Irish organisations can help them to pursue leadership positions.

Rationale of the study

In the second chapter, the relevant theories and concepts on mentoring will be analysed critically. It will also look at how this tool can be used to help women to reach leadership positions. From this analysis emerges the hypotheses and objectives of the research presented in chapter three. The fourth chapter presents the methodology used in this study and the most appropriate philosophical positions for this topic. Chapter five presents and critically analyses the results in the context of existing theories. In the conclusion, Chapter six, the most outstanding points of this investigation are presented.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring

The concept of a mentor appeared for the first time in literature in Homer's *Odyssey* where the mentor was a friend and teacher who was in the care of Prince Telemachus in the Trojan War. This mentor raised Telemachus for several years and the concept of mentoring was associated with emotional support, wise counselling and orientation in life (Ramani, et al., 2006). The classic definition of mentor as wise elder, counsellor and guide has evolved over the centuries. Nowadays there are different divisions to the concept according to the relationship: peer mentoring, networking mentoring, collaborative mentoring and grooming mentoring (Wasburn, 2007; Linehan & Scullion, 2008; Inzer & Crawford, 2005); informal mentoring or formal mentoring (Bynum, 2015; Blood, et al., 2012; Ragins & Cotton, 1999); or according to the outcomes, positive mentoring or negative mentoring (Kumar, et al., 2013; Matabooue, et al., 2016; Eby, et al., 2000).

Gibson, (2004), considers that the historical definition explained above is still found in current theories. However, many academics argue that mentoring is a broader process in which a trained person, not necessarily an elder mentor (Bynum, 2015) helps another with less experience in personal and professional growth. Matabooue, *et al*, (2016) widens the concept, since this relationship between an apprentice and a mentor must involve the development of skills, learning processes and experimentation. Inzer and Crawford, (2005) agree that mentoring should facilitate career transitions, personal development and encourage the right decisions. Kram (1983) proposed for the first time a conceptual model in which the mentoring relationship should lead to psychosocial and professional development. Years later Humberd and Rouse

(2016) added that this relationship should be developed in the work environment where apprentices receive psychosocial and professional support which leads them to progress in their career. The concept of mentoring differs from the relationships between the leader/follower and the supervisor/subordinate because these are hierarchical, and the mentor/mentee relationship should be at the same level (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Mentors are not managers or supervisors, but managers and supervisors must be mentors, any leader must be a mentor (Bell 2000 cited by Inzer and Crawford, 2005). Matabooue, et al., (2016) add that mentoring and coaching are also different because coaching has a short-term focus with a specific objective, while mentoring must have a long-term focus

The definitions may differ completely, since according to Kram (1985) mentoring can have different meanings depending on the people and the context where it is developed. For example, Linehan & Scullion, (2008) point out the importance of how technologies can modify this relationship, since they create non-traditional forms such as e-mentoring that can provide new opportunities for women to access mentoring (Wasburn, 2007). In industry and business, mentoring is a way to promote professional success - minorities can access information networks - and to improve organisational performance. In higher education, mentoring is a vehicle to improve the orientation, socialization, and career outcomes of the faculty, as well as to promote greater equity for women. (Eby, et al., 2000; Gibson, 2004; Noe, 1988)

This relationship may vary according to its members. Peer mentoring is defined as a relationship with colleagues in which members help each other; the level of experience is similar and develops due to the lack of traditional mentoring (Inzer and Crawford, 2005). According to Wasburn (2007) the peer mentoring category has evolved towards a new concept called peer networking mentoring where there is a non-hierarchical peer relationship to exchange benefits. The main goal of this community is that members must contribute to the success of others, therefore everybody can be a mentor or mentee According to Haring (1999) this type of mentoring is good for encouraging change within organisations and is very useful for minorities. Wasburn (2007) supports this idea, since it can be a good alternative for women to prosper more easily in their

careers. However, Linehan and Scullion (2008) consider that this relationship between peers is not mentoring, since a mentoring relationship must be hierarchical between two people. Bymun (2015) adds that one mentor is not enough, for that reason collaborative mentoring is needed where several professionals help the learning of a protégé and the responsibilities are shared. These relationships help overcome the problems of traditional programs and can be particularly beneficial for women seeking professional advancement. (Wasburn, 2007).

In contrast, in a relationship of grooming mentoring the mentor must be older and more experienced. Usually, they pass on their skills and knowledge to create a similar image of the mentor. This situation creates a hierarchy in which the mentors are in charge and the protégés must learn well the lessons taught to them. This relationship is generally used to guide those people who enter an organisation for the first time (Haring, 1999). Wasburn (2007) considers that this type of mentoring can damage the self-esteem of the protégé, especially if the mentee does not want to follow the example of the mentor.

Mentoring relationships can be positive or negative, and both parties should be considered in any research (Eby, et al., 2000). According to Kumar *et al*, (2013) there is a lack of studies related to negative mentoring since a bad experience can significantly affect behaviour, causing more stress and low self-esteem in the protégé. On the one hand, there are mentoring experiences that are not favourable to the relationship such as when the mentor is afraid of being overshadowed by the protégé or if the mentor is very critical, which can lead to the failure of the mentee's career. On the other hand, there are irregular behaviours such as verbal abuse or aggressiveness (Kumar, et al., 2013). Scandura (1998) defines a dysfunctional mentoring as a relationship that does not meet the needs of the mentor, protégé or both, while Feldman (1999) adds that it is a relationship in which one or both display a sabotaging behaviour that damages the professional success of the other. According to Eby *et al*, (2000), dysfunctional mentoring is classified in terms of whether the intentions are bad (when there is a negative intention to harm someone) or good (when both do not agree because they have different personalities).

Culture is an essential element for mentoring to be effective (Matabooue *et al*, 2016), given the intense interpersonal relationship involved (Kram & Lynn, 1985). According to Eby *et al* (2000), to be able to understand negative experiences, it is important to identify them in the circumstances in which they develop. The authors identify three situations that should be avoided for a mentor to be effective: protégées and mentors should have the same beliefs and values, the same backgrounds, and should not keep any direct reporting relationship. They add that for a mentoring relationship to be successful there should not be a big difference in the personalities, objectives should be clear, and both should have time to develop the relationship. Situations such as the abandonment of the relationship by the mentor and a lack of contact between the participants can generate disappointment and frustration in the mentee. (Eby *et al*, 2000)

Mentoring Relationship components

Both members of the relationship are essential for the development of mentoring because each member has a unique perspective on that relationship (Eby *et al*, 2000). The experience of mentoring is emotional and subjective; therefore, each person's behaviour determines the quality of the relationship (Humberd and Rouse, 2016). Matabooue *et al*, (2016) suggests the effectiveness of will depend on the interaction between mentor and mentee. There are authors who consider this relationship as unidirectional and hierarchical, between a mentor who provides and an apprentice who receives (Kram 1985); other, however theorists define mentoring as a bidirectional relationship, with the exchange involving development, learning and professional growth of both parties (Humberd and Rouse, 2016)

According to Humberd and Rouse, (2016) there is a connection between how the identification process is carried out and the quality of mentoring, since a balance between the two is needed to achieve the effectiveness of the relationship. Eby *et al* (2000) say effectiveness is related to the behaviour of both parties, but the damage can be greater when the mentor tends to have negative reactions such as distancing, lack of experience or manipulative behaviour. Kumar *et al*, (2013)

suggest any distancing of the mentor can lead to feelings of impotence and frustration in the protégé, and they add that communication between the parties is essential for the success of the relationship, although the mentor has greater responsibility. Matabooue *et al*, (2016) describe this relationship as complex because the responsibility to work in harmony and achieve the goals of the mentoring is shared. Also, apprentices must demonstrate a willingness to learn, because they must have a great commitment to the relationship.

The most important characteristics for the success of the relationship are open communication, honesty, respect, trust, and constructive feedback. It is relevant that mentors have the necessary knowledge and the ability to transmit it to their mentees (Matabooue *et al*, 2016). A study by McGill (2011) shows the environment where the relationship develops is important as well, and should allow apprentices to express their views freely, leading to a positive impact on mentoring. Open communication refers to mentors who listen to the opinions of apprentices, noting verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as knowing how to respond in each situation. Honesty and trust derive from the confidentiality that mentors must have with the information shared by the protégée (Matabooue *et al*, 2016; Bynum, 2015)

The mentor

Literature describes mentors as listeners, counsellors, confidants and good communicators. Their main roles are to promote learning, develop skills, train, advise and accept diversity. Mentors should be able to tell their life stories, their failures and their successes, because this information is valuable to establish a better relationship with the mentee. (Inzer and Crawford, 2005). Kram (1985) says mentors can have different forms; they can be senior level or peers, or they can be inside or outside the organisation. However, Noe (1988) emphasizes that the mentor must be eight to fifteen years older than the protégé and the mentee must be a young professional with great aspirations, Humbert and Rose (2016) agree that adults are better suited to act as mentors. Matabooue *et al*, (2016) concluded that the age of mentors is a personal decision; some mentees

considered that the mentor should be older and have more experience, because young people give limited advice. However, in the same study, other mentees indicated that age should not be a problem for mentoring relationships, and that only the mentor needs to be trained.

Mentors must provide psychosocial and instrumental support (Kram & Lynn, 1985). Eby *et al* (2000) define instrumental support as the mentor's help to achieve professional advancement of the protégé; the mentor must be protector, coach and sponsor. Noe (1988) says promotions are achieved only if the mentor provides challenging opportunities for the protégés to demonstrate their talents and competencies. The author adds the mentor must provide coaching, and strategies to help the mentee's career advance. Kram (1985) suggests that promotions are only achieved if the mentor: helps the mentee's visibility, sponsors promotions, protects the mentee, and provides challenging tasks. On the other hand, psychosocial support occurs when the mentor is a role model, a friend, and counsellor (Eby *et al*, 2000). In this area the mentor can give feedback on performance, improve the sense of competence, and discuss personal fears of the protégé (Noe, 1988). Psychosocial help is important for managers globally; mentors play an important role when they are away from their country of origin, family and friends, as they provide support and help so that distance does not become a problem (Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

Mentoring relationships are not only beneficial for the mentee, because mentors can also relive their youth, improve their self-esteem and be a positive influence for another person (Kumar *et al*, 2013). Mentors often identify with their mentee, seeing them as a younger version of themselves (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Humberd and Rouse, (2016) add that another advantage for mentors is pride in developing the next generation.

The Protégé

The protégés must be responsible in the relationship; they must know what type of mentorship they want, define their priority problems, and prepare each meeting beforehand. Taking an active part, they should be willing to

communicate, ask for feedback, but not expect the mentor to have all the answers to their concerns. (Gibson, 2004; Kram 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Humbert and Rouse, 2016). According to Kram (1985) it is good that the mentee recognize that mentoring relationships are not always successful. To avoid inconveniences, it is advisable to identify barriers that could arise such as lack of time, workload, or both; unclear expectations; lack of clear goals; or lack of confidence in the mentee. Gibson (2004) believes that despite the negative aspects that can be found in the mentoring, there will always be positive results in the process.

Formal or informal

Most scholars divide mentoring into two types: formal and informal. Informal mentoring is a long-term relationship developed naturally between the mentor and mentee. These mentoring situations arise from friendship, or from professional or personal respect and admiration, while formal mentoring relationships are assigned by a third party for a specified period. When formal programs are developed, the organisation involved must be an active participant, without entering the privacy of the relationship, and should create a permanent organisational culture of mentoring, developing training, providing necessary resources and evaluating the relationship. Informal relationships occur naturally in society between two people where one acquires wisdom, information, knowledge, friendship and support from the other. Either of the two people can begin the mentoring relationship where the mentor helps the protégé obtain wisdom. (Kram, 1985; Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1999)

The process of identification is given more easily in the informal than the formal relationships (Kram, 1985; Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1999), however according to Humbert and Rouse, (2016) identification can be developed in formal mentoring over time. Bynum (2015) considers that informal relationships may offer more benefits than formal mentoring programs, because informal mentoring can provide psychological and professional support (Linehan and Scullion, 2008). Some organisations are implementing mentoring programs to develop informal mentoring, or other have used formal programs to replace

informal mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Eby *et al* (2000) propose a mixed mentoring relationship, where opportunities are provided for potential protégés and mentors to interact informally before a formal relationship is developed. However, they concluded that organisations need to encourage these relationships and ensure their effectiveness. Mentoring should be formalized, using best practices to promote it as an organisational strategy, but this should not replace informal mentoring. Ragins & Cotton (1999) consider that informal organisational mentoring is better than formal mentoring programmes, because informal mentors provide professional development, psychosocial help, and friendship. An Informal relationship leaves the mentee more satisfied than formal mentoring due to the structure of identification of the relationship, because the protégé wishes to emulate the mentor and the mentor sees himself in the mentee (Inzer and Crawford, 2005).

In formal mentoring, evaluations are the key to success, since the opinions of those involved are essential to avoid failures; in these programs negative experiences are more likely than in formal mentoring (Eby *et al*, 2000; Kumar, et al., 2013; Inzer & Crawford, 2005). To be successful, these programs must have the support of top management, careful selection of mentors, guiding principles, and well-defined goals (Noe, 1988). Ramani *et al*, (2006) lists twelve tips for a successful mentoring program where the most relevant are: mentors should be aware of the gender issues since the matching of mentors and apprentices of different genders should be an option; mentors must support and challenge their mentees; mentors also have their problems and they must have a place to express it, therefore they also need mentors and permanent support; and mentoring relationships should be evaluated permanently according to their effectiveness and progress.

Formal relationships can be perceived as an obligation and not for personal interest, this can lead to a lack of trust and a detriment of psychosocial functions within the relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). In these relationships, the mentor may lack motivation, since the protected are assigned and not chosen voluntarily. Also, there may be problems around a lack of effective communication; the coordinators of the formal program may consider that the

mentors have communication skills but if this is not shared by the mentee, the relationship may be tense and ineffective. (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The key to the success of formal programs is that the development must be efficient, the implementation comprehensive, and the organisation must provide sufficient resources so that these relationships can give better results (Bynum, 2015). However, the research of Washington (2010) showed that there are no differences between formal and informal mentoring.

Relationship development

In the literature there is no agreement about when in a career a relationship of mentoring should begin or how long it should last (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The study carried out by De Vries *et al*, (2006) showed that mentoring programs had different outcomes between men and women. For example, they found that men have more frequent meetings with their mentors than women and that the duration of these relationships was approximately 9 months. There are authors who have determined that the time spent in mentoring is directly related to the quality of the relationship (Humberd and Rouse, 2016). Kram (1985) considers that mentoring relationships in general are of average quality where the mentor provides professional and psychosocial support to the apprentice, and the relationships are of high quality when the mentees receive something extra. However, the quality is dynamic and can change with time. Humberd and Rouse (2016) concluded that changes occur in identification which are related to the quality of the relationship developing over time.

Kram, (1985) concluded that informal relationships last between 3 and 6 years, while formal ones are usually for 6 months to 1 year. Informal mentoring, therefore, offers more time for the professional and psychosocial development of the protégé, since for professional development the results are not immediate, because the benefits can be long-term. Kram (1983) suggests that mentors should be in the intermediate stages of their careers and mentees at the beginning of their professional lives. However, many professionals in the early stages of their careers have difficulty finding appropriate mentors (Ramani, et al., 2006). Blood *et al*, (2012) and Gibson, (2004) consider that mentoring can be carried out at different stages of the professional career, but for Ragins & Cotton, (1999)

mentoring is especially useful when a professional is in a period of transition in his career.

Kram (1983, 1985) determined that each mentoring relationship develops in four phases: initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. Initiation is the period when the mentor and protégé begin to interact. The cultivation phase is when the relationship is at its peak, and the objectives set out in stage one are contrasted with reality. The third phase of separation is produced by a psychological or structural change of one of the parties. Some relationships may end at that point or they may be redefined, with a process of friendship beginning that can last indefinitely and cease to be hierarchical. According to Kosoko-Lasaki, *et al*, (2006) mentees may need different mentors depending on their needs at each stage of their career, therefore, a mentor-mentee relationship can last from a few months to many years or a full career. At the beginning of a formal relationship the objectives must be clear and must be evaluated with the program coordinator since these are short term and are based on the current position of the protégé. In contrast, in informal relationships objectives evolve over time and are adapted to the professional needs of the mentee, so mentors formulate objectives (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Blood, *et al*, (2012) says mentors should not set goals, and the protégé should formulate them in advance; the mentor helps define strategy and the path to follow.

Mentoring Women to achieve leadership

Women in their careers lack support systems, professional networks and guidance, therefore mentoring is an essential tool to help push them towards leadership (Bynum, 2015). However, many authors argue that women have difficulty accessing informal mentoring, for many reasons both within the organisation and at a personal level. (Noe, 1988; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; De Vries *et al*, 2006; Blood, *et al*, 2012). According to Noe (1988), the number of mentoring relationships available to women is not increasing at the speed really needed, as without an efficient mentor it is difficult for women to understand the male-dominated business culture. Deprived of mentors, women find themselves

in professional isolation and struggle to achieve promotion easily (Wasburn, 2007, Noe, 1988). Professional development is the main goal of mentoring relationships, therefore the identification process between the apprentice and the mentor is essential. (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton; 1999, Humberd and Rouse, 2016). Mentors become friends, sources of information, professional guides and intellectual supports for professional development (Inzer and Crawford, 2005)

One explanation why women do not find mentors easily is that men do not select women as mentees, because men feel more comfortable developing mentoring relationships with other men (Linehan and Scullion, 2008; Noe, 1988). Kram (1985) and Ragins & Cotton (1999) say this is because if a woman initiates a mentoring relationship with a man, it can be misinterpreted as a sexual approach. However, the findings of Linehan and Scullion, (2008) showed that the effectiveness of mentoring does not depend on the gender of the mentor, but in the same way it is essential that women at senior levels act as mentors to other women, although It is likely that many are oriented by men. Other negative aspects of mentoring between genders may be overprotection and paternalism on the part of the mentor and sexual tension between the mentor and the protégé (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Eby *et al*, 2000). Men should provide instrumental help and psychosocial support to women, but this does not happen (Blood, et al., 2012). According to Noe, (1988) women are excluded from promotions because male managers are unwilling to mentor women. De Vries, *et al*, (2006) in their research found that there is no difference in psychosocial support between male and female mentors.

Mentors and female models are beneficial in demonstrating to other women the empirical proof that reaching senior levels in the organisation is achievable. Ragins and Cotton (1999) say mentors are a critical resource for female workers within an organisation, and a relationship with one can lead to clear objectives, the development of skills, the acquisition of a separate identity, high salaries, reduced work stress and professional satisfaction for the mentee. Women who have been through mentoring relationships are more successful in their careers, as mentors encourage personal motivation, help develop skills, allow the formulation of new ideas and generate greater self-esteem. Women who do not

have a mentor are not visible within the organisation, thereby reducing the chance of promotion. Given a prejudice that women are not interested in advancing their careers, mentors can help women to be recognized as candidates for management positions (Noe, 1988). Gibson's study (2004) showed that this positive impact occurs because women find someone who cares about their well-being and no longer feel alone. In 2006, Gibson discovered that relationships involve a high level of learning for women, and that is why mentors are of great help.

In recent years, formal female mentoring programs have struggled to cope with the difficulties faced by women in a male-dominated environment (De Vries, et al., 2006; Noe, 1988). According to Wasburn (2007) these programs have had different degrees of success. Some authors indicate that formal mentoring must respond to specific gender needs to be effective (Blood, et al., 2012). Formal mentoring should prepare women for different forms of discrimination and provide the tools to achieve leadership, and to challenge traditional practices (De Vries, et al., 2006). According to Ragins & Cotton (1999), organisations that have formal programs may not be helping women because formal mentoring is less effective than informal relationships. The selection of an appropriate model for mentoring women is essential for success and promotion. Hughes and Sheerin, (2016) conclude that the "right mentor" is part of an informal relationship since it is useful for career progression. De Vries *et al* (2006) consider that the mentoring program is an essential part of leadership development for women, as it provides an effective instrument for achieving individual success and knowledge transfer. Mentoring relationships impart knowledge about organisational cultures.

Organizations should encourage managers to become mentors through formal programs because mentoring is transformed in this way into a human resource management system (Kram, 1985; Eby *et al*, 2000). Organizations also benefit through higher productivity and the creation of a stronger workforce (Washington, 2010). It has also been found that mentoring has a positive effect on socialization within the organization (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Bynum, 2015). The lack of mentors for women workers can have consequences for both the

organization and female employees because it reduces the effectiveness of their work. The resulting inefficient performance limits opportunities; on the one hand women are not promoted, and on the other hand there is a reduction in self-esteem leading to a lack of motivation to move forward in the organization (Noe, 1988). Negative emotions in the workplace have a significant psychological impact on the satisfaction and working behaviour of an employee. (Kumar *et al*, 2013). De Vries *et al*, (2006) consider that mentoring programmes for women should be long-term and must go further. Because this tool can be part of a process of organizational intervention in which the objective is to change the culture, the practices and the dominant values since the organizations are not of neutral gender. Gibson, (2006) agrees that-mentoring culture has a potential role in the transformation of culture in organizations.

Conclusion of the literature review

From Greek literature to today, the concept of mentoring has been associated with a wise old mentor who gives advice (Ramani *et al*, 2006). However, in the last decades a rethinking of the concept has begun, since today there are different categories of mentoring. The idea of an older person with more experience advising a younger one is associated with grooming mentoring, a hierarchical relationship where the mentee must learn what the mentor teaches (Haring, 1999). Wasburn (2007) says this mentoring can damage self-esteem because the protégé is forced to follow the example of the mentor. Arising from such criticism, other types of mentoring have appeared, such as peer mentoring, collaborative mentoring, and networking mentoring. Peer mentoring occurs when colleagues share experiences and there is no hierarchy because they are all on the same level (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Wasburn (2007) considers it beneficial to create networking mentoring where peers can be mentors or mentees. However, other scholars assert that these alternatives are not mentoring, since there is no hierarchical position, and they propose collaborative mentoring, where a mentee has several mentors and responsibilities are shared (Bynum, 2015; Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

It is important where this relationship is developed, since in college mentoring can be used as a form of orientation and socialization, while in business it is used for professional success (Eby *et al*, 2000; Gibson, 2006; Noe, 1988). Nowadays, professional career development has become the great goal of mentoring, and some authors consider that the main task of the mentor is to help the mentee progress in their career (Kram & Lynn, 1985; Kram, 1985). This process of professional progression must also be linked to psychological support, therefore, and how the interaction between the two is developed is fundamental (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Matabooc *et al*, 2016). Some scholars recognize that the identification process is fundamental and occurs when the mentor acts as a role model for the student. This process can be bidirectional, as mentors identify with mentees, in which they see a younger version of themselves (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Kram, 1985). For this reason, both parties are responsible for the relationship. On the one hand, the mentor must listen, giving advice, being a good role model and giving constructive feedback. On the other hand, the mentee must be an active part of mentoring, keeping clear goals, preparing meetings, and listening (Inzer & Crawford, 2005).

Most researchers agree that informal relationships, those that arise spontaneously, are better than formal programs, those developed by an organization. This is because the identification process occurs naturally and in formal relationships it must be developed (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Kram, 1985). Some authors consider it important that formal programs be evaluated and implemented correctly, since these relationships are more prone to negative situations (Eby *et al*, 2000). Negative mentoring can occur in irregular situations, when there are many criticisms on the part of the mentor, or irregular behaviours such as aggression or verbal abuse (Feldman, 1999; Scandura, 1998). According to some scholars it is important that mentor and mentee have the same culture, beliefs and values, so the relationship proves successful (Kram & Lynn, 1985) (Matabooc *et al*, 2016), because the quality of the relationship is directly related to the time input (Kram, 1985; Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Informal relationships can last between 3 to 6 years, although some authors suggest that the mentee can change the relationship according to the needs that arise in his career (Kram,

1983; Kosoko-Lasaki *et al*, 2006). A formal relationship can last between 6 months and one year, so it is important to have clear objectives (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Kram (1985) proposes that formal relationships are better for professional development, since you can have long-term goals.

Due to the above-mentioned, mentoring has become an essential tool for female professional development, since women have less access to networks or support systems in their careers (Bynum, 2015; De Vries *et al*, 2006; Blood *et al*, 2012). However, according to the literature, it is not easy for women to develop informal mentoring relationships, which leads to them feeling isolated and reduces their effectiveness at work, as a result they do not reach leadership positions in organizations (Noe, 1988; Wasburn, 2007). Therefore, organizations must motivate women to develop relational relationships, since these allow them to define professional goals, develop skills, and create an identity. All this results in women being able to access higher wages, reduce stress and achieve greater professional satisfaction (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Gibson, 2004; Gibson, 2006). De Vries *et al*, (2006) confirm that mentoring relationships are essential for the development of female leadership. In the next chapter, the hypotheses that have been obtained from the review of the literature, the main objective of the research, and the questions that the study attempts to answer will be presented.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the previous chapter, the concept of mentoring and its importance in the professional development of women was critically discussed and examined. However, there is little literature on how mentoring relationships could help women achieve leadership positions in organisations, and this dissertation tries to address this knowledge gap. The main objective of this study is to understand the experience of women who participate in formal mentoring programs in the role of mentee; according to the literature review, women it is more difficult for women to find informal mentors, suggesting either:

- women lack informal mentors (hypothesis 1); or
- women can access only formal mentors (hypothesis 2)

The main objective of this study is: **to determine the effectiveness of mentoring in helping women achieve leadership positions in Irish business.** To achieve this purpose, the following research questions have been determined:

1. Why are there few women in senior positions in companies in Ireland?
2. Could the lack of models and mentors be the reason why there are so few women in senior management positions?
3. What are the differences between mentees mentored by men, those mentored by women, and those mentored by both?
4. Can mentoring be used as a tool for increasing female representation in senior positions in organisations in Ireland?
5. What are the differences between formal and informal mentoring relationships?
6. What are the most important characteristics for the development of mentoring programs?

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having mentoring programs inside and outside the organisation? if they are within the organisation should they be developed by the human resources department?

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In view of the research questions indicated above, and the scarce research on how mentoring could increase the number of women leaders in organisations in Ireland, it is determined that the optimum research method is a phenomenological qualitative one. The qualitative approach is used in relatively new subjects or a sample that has never been investigated before (Creswell, 2014). Owusu-Bempah (2014) has suggested that the qualitative method is a valuable tool for studying the phenomenon of leadership, since subjectivities can be rigorously collected and analysed. Such an analysis makes it possible to scientifically structure the agreements and disagreements of the study group. Another reason the qualitative method or mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) has featured in the area of mentoring research is because qualitative research has the advantage of describing in detail a phenomenon in the real world. (Allen *et al*, 2008). For this reason, the focus of this research is qualitative phenomenological, in which the researcher analyses the life experiences of a group of individuals in relation to a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

The selected type of phenomenology will be transcendental since the research focuses on the experiences of the participants rather than the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). The researcher must set aside any prejudices through bracketing; this process is also called "epoché" - a term that comes from the Greek and means to refrain from judging. This procedure must be incorporated into the data analysis, and in this way the researcher can see the phenomenon from a broader point of view (Simon & Goes, 2011)

This study is based on gaining greater knowledge of effective mentoring, and its connection with female leadership, therefore the data analysis is inductive. Patterns, categories, themes, and sub-themes are constructed (inductive codes). The codes were the starting points for identifying problems and subtopics in the

data which were later analysed with similarities in the literature. Other forms of analysis were used from tables, and visuals, to simultaneously transport the data and reconfigure them in new ways (Creswell, 2007).

Research group

The participants of this study were five senior women managers in different companies in Ireland, who have participated as mentees in formal and/or informal mentoring relationships throughout their professional careers. The objective was to collect and analyse the perceptions of these individuals in relation to the mentoring they engaged in and its impact on their careers. It is crucially important for this research that the contributors have extensive knowledge, experience and understanding of both leadership and mentoring, and the connection between them.

The selected sample is non-probabilistic and purposive. There are two types of samples: the probabilistic method is where each person in the population has the same probability of being chosen for the study. Instead, the non-probabilistic technique uses non-random systems to obtain the sample. One of the main shortcomings of this method is that it is not possible to generalize from the results, since they apply only to the group studied. However, this tool allows us to study phenomena and to generate valuable ideas. A non-probabilistic method is purposive sampling where the researcher selects a group of people according to the purpose of the study. The purposeful sampling process requires objectivity since the selection of this type eliminates deliberate choices (Creswell, 2007; Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

Ten women were contacted but only five were finally interviewed for this research, and "data saturation" was reached when the interviews started throwing up similar responses and no new topics emerged. The aim of this study is to explore and share the experience of the participants and to add to the knowledge base about mentoring and women's leadership. The size of the samples in qualitative studies is small and for that reason this research is based on a reduced number of people. The results of qualitative research are rich in detail, and the important thing is to have good selection criteria as all aspects of the study should

be included in the selection and diversity of the participants (Ritchie, et al., 2003).

The first basic criterion for the interviewees is to be women and to have been mentees. The term "leader" has several definitions, so this concept was associated with a senior level in a company. The women interviewed were managers at the top level in organisations in Ireland, who have or had formal and informal mentoring relationships, with mentors and women at the senior level, internal or external to the mentee's organisation. The participants gave their consent by email to respond voluntarily to the interview. The table 1 below shows the sample of the study in detail.

	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
<i>Senior Manager 1 (SM1)</i>	BNY Mellon	1	2
<i>Senior Manager 2 (SM2)</i>	OneView Healthcare	1	4
<i>Senior Manager 3 (SM3)</i>	PWC	1	5
<i>Senior Manager 4 (SM4)</i>	Key Capital	1	3
<i>Senior Manager 5 (SM5)</i>	Irish Life Group	2	1

TABLE 1

Data collection

The interview had two parts. The first comprised 15 semi-structured questions in depth, divided into three sections: general concepts of mentoring, how mentoring helped them in the advancement of their career, and how these relationships could help close the gender gap. The second part surveys were used as an instrumental measure to qualify the different aspects that should be present in a formal mentoring relationship. This survey had 47 questions divided into 5 parts: the most important characteristics for a mentor for women, the most important activities a mentor for women should perform, the context where the mentoring should be developed, the most important characteristics of a female

mentee, ideal duration of the relationship (see appendix). According to Ritchie *et al*, 2003, surveys are used in a qualitative research to expand knowledge about a problem, and they are used when the sample is small, although "they are not designed to be statistically representative" (p-90).

In the first part of the interview, despite there being a guide for the interview, the topics also progressed according to the response of the participants. According to Padilla (2015), the most suitable strategy for a phenomenological investigation is the in-depth interview, where the questions must be open or semi-structured. This type of interview allows a space for participants to freely expand on their experiences in detail. The interviews were conducted in 30-40 minutes with the objective of maintaining objectivity and the questions were not asked in the same order, since changes were made according to the responses of the women. Each interview was transcribed to then carry out the construction of relevant categories and topics, and to obtain an interpretation of the phenomenon.

Ritchie *et al*, (2003) consider that a key feature for the collection, interpretation and presentation of qualitative data should be objectivity. In this investigation, the opinions of the researcher or information about the literature were avoided during the interviews, in which open techniques were used. The questions sought to construct a vision of the phenomenon instead of confirming the hypothesis. The interview in phenomenology is an exhaustive description of the experiences of the participants, and when it is face to face, a greater depth can be achieved. (Englander, 2012)

Data analysis

Interviews

All the interviews were transcribed, and the data obtained were coded to facilitate the analysis. From this process the interviews were reduced to categories because the answers were not grouped by question but by topics directly connected with the research questions. The next step was the cross-case analysis,

where responses from different participants to common questions were grouped and the different perspectives on a topic were analysed, with the questionnaire providing the framework for the analysis. Ritchie *et al*, (2003) state that a thematic questionnaire is a tool that helps in the collection of data, since "it guarantees that the relevant topics are covered systematically and uniformly, while allowing the flexibility to pursue the details that are important for each individual participant "(page 115). This does not mean just asking the same questions to each interviewee but a mechanism to direct the discussion.

The audios were transcribed and read to find statements highlighting key phenomena. From this process the common points were identified, divided in categories, and subdivided into themes; however, the transcripts were kept intact to allow me to return to them whenever necessary. Textual citations are interpreted from emerging categories; therefore, transcripts or audio should be reviewed more than once. From this process information is summarized in relevant topics, and the themes that are the main basis for obtaining a faithful interpretation of the phenomenon are studied. "The data coding process seeks correspondence between the topics, sub-themes and the categories that arise from the data analysis". (Padilla-Díaz, 2015: p7).

Two main categories were identified. First, why women are not reaching leadership positions in organisations in Ireland. It was necessary to understand why there are so few women senior level in companies, to know how the mentoring process occurs and how it helps women to develop their professional career. This category was divided into four themes: lack of opportunities, no desire to be in senior positions, no clarity on career path, and confidence. This last topic (confidence) recurred in all interviews and this was related to two sub-themes: the lack of role models, and work and family balance.

The second category, mentoring, is subdivided into two themes: characteristics that are needed for the success and development of a person's professional career. Within the characteristics there are five subtopics: environment, mentor, mentee, formal versus informal, and type. The theme of career development is divided into six subtopics; family and work balance, better performance, networking, coaching, confidence, and sponsorship.

Surveys

The surveys were face to face and were used only to evaluate what are the essential characteristics in each formal mentoring program. The five sections had different aspects that should be evaluated from 1 to 10, with 1 as less relevant and 10 as essential for the development of the relationship. From scale 1 to 10 a result was calculated in each of the items, giving 50 as the highest score and 0 as the lowest. An ontological critique suggests there is no single reality, and therefore multiple sources of information in research are more useful (Ritchie, et al., 2003). For this reason, many authors value the triangulation tool to test credibility from different research methods, giving different types of readings, and a more complete understanding of the phenomenon (Allen, et al., 2008). This system is different from a triangulation generated through the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This research used a triangulation through multiple analyses, which means that the researcher used interviews and surveys for data collection and in the data analysis patterns in common were compared (Ritchie, et al., 2003).

Ethical consideration

The women managers who participated in this research agreed to give the interviews, but not to have their personal data published in the final draft of the dissertation. For this reason, the names of the participants will remain anonymous and will be replaced by acronyms. Before beginning the data collection, the researcher sent an e-mail to each of the participants where the reasons for the study were briefly explained. Before beginning the recordings, the author again explained what the research was about, the reason for the interviews, and how the data will be used. According to Ritchie *et al*, (2003) it is important to consider any aspect that may be detrimental to the interviewees, such as talking about painful experiences. During the interviews the researcher tried to detect any situation where the participants might feel uncomfortable, for this reason the author did not deepen in those experiences or questions that

seemed difficult to answer for them. The questions of the participants were answered at the end of the interviews, to not alter the results of this research. The author did not make judgments in relation to the interviewers' responses, since a researcher should not comment unfavourably or favourably on the respondents' comments (Allen, et al., 2008).

Conclusion

To determine the effectiveness of mentoring in developing female leaders, it was determined that the best methodology is qualitative phenomenological, since it is perfect for samples that have not been studied before, and it is also widely used to study topics such as mentoring and leadership. The type of phenomenology is transcendental, since it tries to focus on the participant's experience instead of the researcher's opinions. These personal impressions were collected through interviews and surveys of five women managers who had experience with mentors. Therefore, the sample was non-probabilistic, which means that the group was selected with the objective of responding to the hypothesis and the research questions. Being a small sample, this study cannot be used to generalize, but valuable ideas were obtained from the answers. The data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews and surveys, and the information collected was analysed with an inductive system, since a series of codes was created to know the patterns that were repeated in the answers. Once the surveys were analysed, they were compared with the findings of the interviews with the triangulation process. From this methodology was obtained different results that will be presented in the next chapter. In addition, these findings will be compared with literature and studies on mentoring and female leadership. This chapter ends with suggestions for new research and limitations that appeared during the data analysis process.

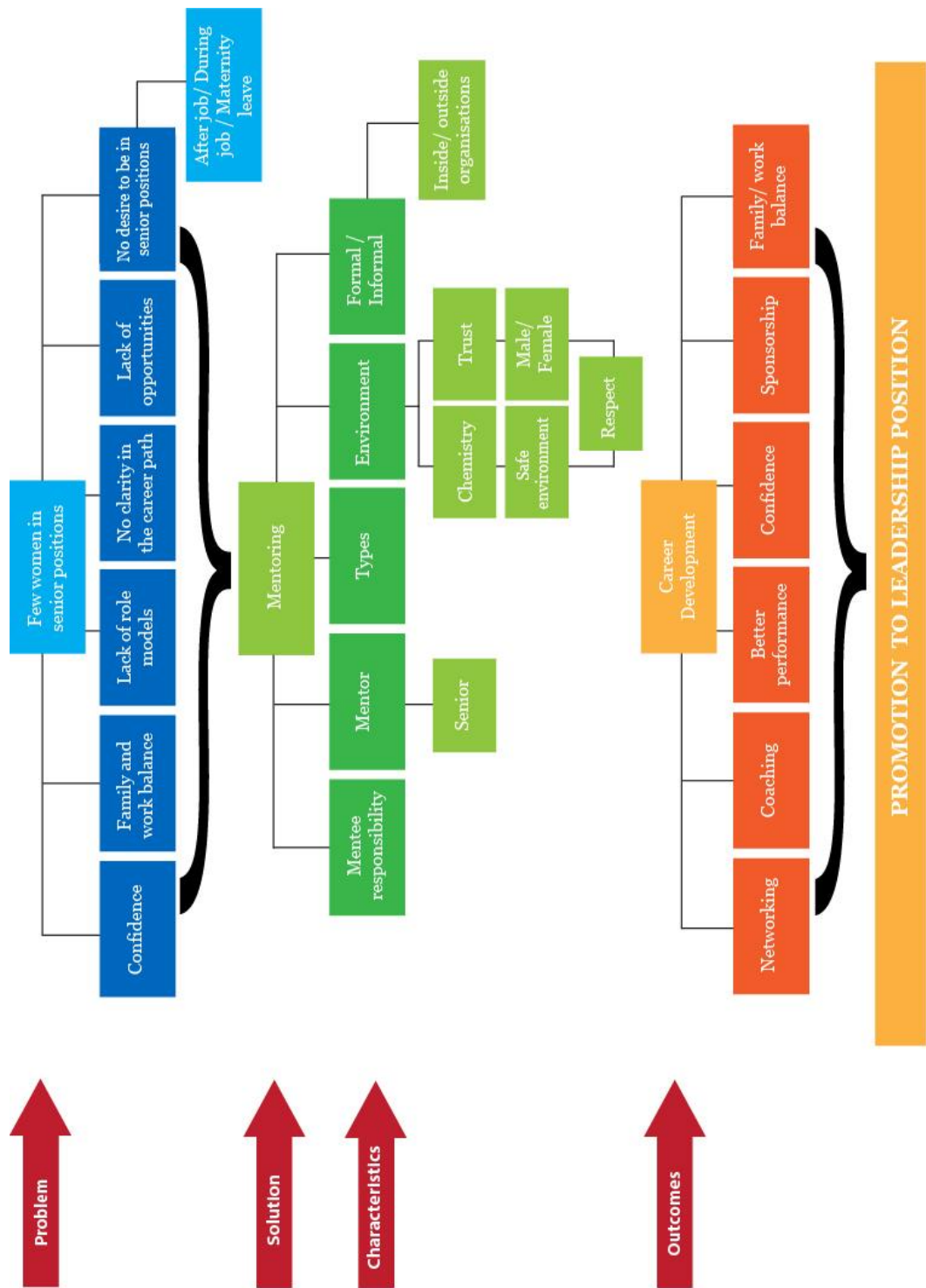


FIGURE 1

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Figure 1 shows the different themes and the connection between them. The first category "few women in senior positions" is associated with six main problems: lack of confidence, family and work balance, lack of models to follow, no desire to be in senior positions, lack of opportunities, and no clarity in the career path.

The second category "mentoring" is one solution to these issues. However, certain special characteristics must be in place if results are to be achieved. Such features as determined in this study include: the responsibility of the mentee for the relationship; the requirement for the mentor to be in a senior position; recognition that different types of mentoring can bring different benefits; the environment of the relationship is essential; and differences between formal and informal relationships. The development of a person's career takes place in different ways: through networking, coaching, better performance, increased confidence, sponsorship, and improved family and work balance. All these sub-topics can solve the different problems mentioned above.

INTERVIEWS FINDINGS

Reasons for lack of women senior positions

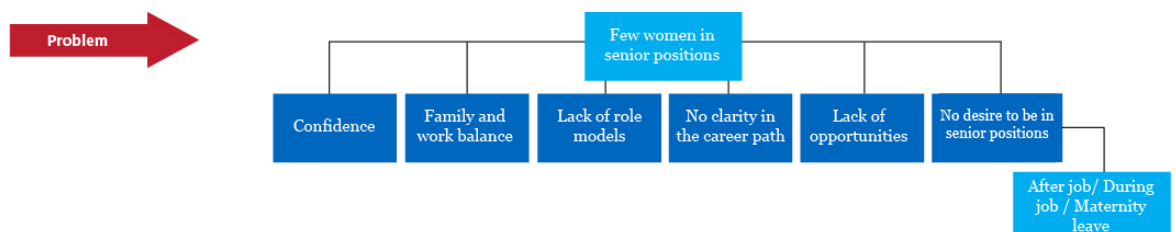


FIGURE 2

According to the experience of the participants, there are six main reasons, so few women are in senior positions in Irish organisations: lack of confidence, family and work balance, lack of clarity about career paths, lack of opportunities, lack of role models, and a lack of interest in senior positions (Figure 2).

Each of the managers has a different point of view on why there are few women representatives in senior positions. SM1 says that in the past, there were fewer opportunities than there are nowadays, and while different leadership programs have helped to create more opportunities for women, this is not directly related to the lack of mentor. Conversely, SM2 suggests the low female representation is due to the lack of models to follow, since they are not always accessible for geographical reasons, and there are many women with whom one does not feel identified. SM5 agrees *“It is not useful to show me a senior woman who has no kids and works 20 hours a day, because that does not help me. I need to see a woman who is leading a life that I want”*.

From another different perspective, SM4 says there are many women who do not want to be in leadership positions because they have families and *“running a house is a company itself”*. *“We have other demands and many women cannot deal with this, they do not live to work, they work to live. Their views are different, not everyone wants to get to the top of the corporate ladder and that's fine. Women have to know what they want because maybe I don't want a big responsible job... [because] many women don't think about themselves and about their career.”*

All the interviewees agreed that one of the main factors behind low female representation is a great lack of self-confidence that women have in relation to men. *“ I have seen that women do not apply. If there is a job offer with 10 requirements and if a woman has 7, she will not apply, [whereas] a man sees the same job offer, and if he has 3 of the requirements, he thinks I'm perfect for that job, some women tend to be less risky,”* says SM2. *“The glass ceiling is not what stops you if you don't even put yourself forward. You don't even get knocked back by the world, or men around you; it is a confidence gap. Women*

do more than men, with the idea that if I work hard someone will notice or award me. Men trump their achievements far more and they are quicker to say 'I did this', to put the hand up for jobs. Women, even in senior roles, women do support roles and men do prestige projects. Women need someone senior who says [to them] take the prestige project and stop doing support work and you don't know you are doing that until someone tells you," says SM5.

"It does not make sense to be at the table if you're not willing to speak, because we often feel that someone else will say the point or [my ideas are] silly. We lack confidence and we think 'I do not want to say that', if they ask me more questions, I may not know the answer and I do not want to look silly. Over the centuries society has fed this internal feminine dialogue that says, 'maybe I'm not good enough', but men think I'm great regardless if they are or not", remarks SM3. "In my networking events, many women do not go alone, they don't feel comfortable with this and it's a confidence problem. Confidence is the key," says SM4.

Women's lack of self-esteem can also relate to three reasons that we pointed out previously: a lack of role models, family issues, and a lack of desire to be in senior roles. "[Each time] I met someone impressive and said I'm going to go part time, give me a little knock because for me it's like someone says you cannot have it all," SM5. "[On maternity leave], women think that 'if I leave the workforce for a number of years, I'm out of the game, I haven't been around and [I'm going to] miss things and maybe [I won't be good] enough and it's easier just check out'. If a man has to check out they always feel they are rock stars...having a family shouldn't be a disadvantage," says SM3.

Mentoring

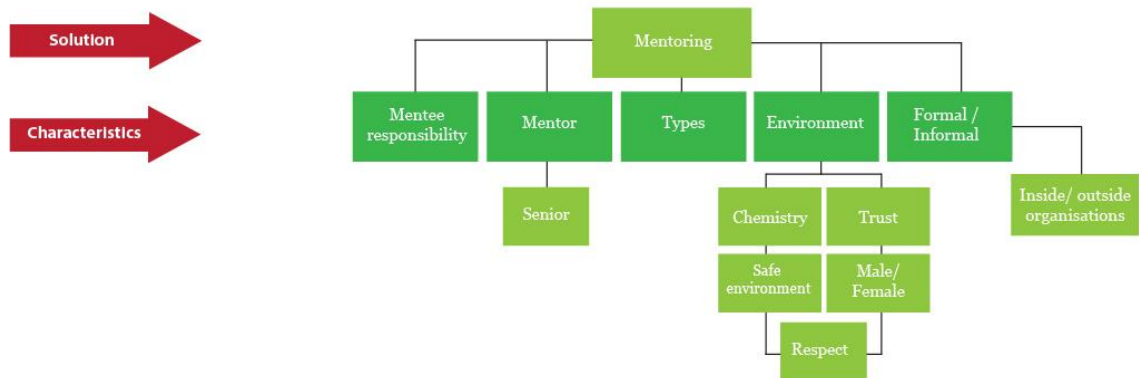


FIGURE 3

Figure 3 shows mentoring as a possible solution to the problems raised. However, three important aspects must be addressed: the environment in which the relationship develops, a level of seniority of the mentor, and the active responsibility on the apprentice. There are also other types of relationships such as peer and networking mentoring that can bring other benefits to the careers of mentees. In the same way, informal relationships are not necessarily better than formal relationships; both have advantages and disadvantages.

All the interviewees agreed that for the success of the relationship the mentee should have an active role, especially in preparing the meetings beforehand, because the mentors are in a more senior position. *"It's your career, so you should have initiative, be proactive, schedule regular meetings, know what I want to share with my mentor, or things that I need tips on, or suggestions or something I need help with,"* states SM1. *"You have to prepare, because you need to have an objective to get, you do not want to waste their time, and talk for an hour and get nothing. I want to hear about their experience if I am in a situation that I haven't been in before, and what they would do in that situation,"* says SM3. *"As mentee, you need to prepare for that one-hour meeting. Because it is a business meeting, but it is a safe environment where you can talk about your concerns or ask the questions you do not want to ask your*

colleagues”: SM4. *“I met with my mentors thinking that I have certain questions and the advice they gave me was completely different than I expected. What I learned from that is it’s ok if you let it flow. They gave me a really good pearl of wisdom in stuff I hadn’t asked before,”* says SM5.

In most cases mentors had a senior position, but the atmosphere of trust, confidence and respect allowed them to develop in a safe environment where they forgot the hierarchies. *“Two foundations are essential in the mentoring relationship: you must respect and trust the person, and you should feel respected and trusting as well,”* says SM2. *“My mentor was helpful, nice and open. Most of them are in a high position, but they share their own experiences, the barrier that they are in a higher position does not really feel like one and it is a nice environment to share experiences and get advice,”* according to SM1. *“The safe environment is the key, relationships and chemistry have to be good... I am still in touch with my mentors, but circumstances have changed because a mentor is not always a mentor, because I also mentor them”:* SM4

SM4 says mentoring relationships should not necessarily involve someone older, because there are other forms of mentoring such as peer mentoring, or networking mentoring: *“People think mentors have to be old or more experienced, but you can learn from your peers and they can learn from you”.* About peer networking SM5 adds: *“Looking for advice in difficult situations I pick someone closer, maybe through peer or networking mentoring, because I’m not going to ask my mentor about my personal life. I don’t position myself badly in from someone more senior than me. With my peers I can show weakness”.*

All the women interviewed had experiences of female and male mentors. They agreed there is no great difference between them and that results are positive regardless of the gender of the mentor. *“I didn’t feel any difference between both, the only difference was women tend to be chattier,”* says SM1. *“My [informal] mentors were males because technology is male dominated. I tend to trust a little bit more in men because they are more honest, and I have the preconception than women can be too polite,”* says SM2. *“I try not to look at the gender. I try to look at the attributes and the best of people”:* SM3.

Career development



FIGURE 4

If the above-mentioned characteristics are fulfilled, the mentoring relationships can have six different results, which are represented in Figure 3. First, mentors help with networking and perform better in these situations. *“Mentors help you with the networking that allows you to meet more people and you become more visible,”* says SM1. *“Mentors help me with networking. I’m much better now and I got professional opportunities with networking too,”* says SM2.

Second, mentors also have a coaching role because they are important in the configuration of the mentee's professional path. Most of the women interviewed were sure they wanted to reach leadership positions, but they were not clear on how to reach this goal. *“I understood what I wanted but I did not understand the path to reach those objectives and she guided me on that. Mentoring forces you to think about yourself and about your career, because women don’t know what they want”,* according to SM4. *“Mentoring is a good tool because mentoring helps people to challenge their thought, where they want to go, and what is important to them. A mentor gives you a break to think and achieve your goals,”* says SM3. *“[With a mentor] I’m looking for a steer on my future career direction, people to get career advice from, where to go next, and how to position myself for future opportunities,”* says SM5. *“Those who are mentored progress in their career more because they challenge themselves all the time and they have uncomfortable conversations. I think mentoring for women to achieve leadership positions is important,”* according to SM2.

Three out of five of the women interviewed achieved promotions during or after the mentoring relationships. *"Mentors helped me to achieve promotion, [because] of the self-awareness piece, and I went for roles that possibly I wouldn't have gone for otherwise,"* says SM2. *"I got my first mentor five years ago, quite late as I was senior already, but since I had that relation I have been promoted twice, big promotions, and I give the credit to my mentor":* SM5. *"I was promoted to senior manager during the mentoring and I think it was connected. I think it enhanced my brand, gave me confidence, and I was able to have conversations at a higher level with senior people. It didn't help me to get there but helped me when I was there,"* says SM3.

Third, mentoring delivers tools to perform better in senior positions. *"In my role I have to communicate with senior executives and this relationship helped me to communicate better with them":* SM1. *"It is not just about what job you want next, it is about what skills you need. When you grow in an organisation, it is more important how you interact with others; the ability to influence, to listen, the ability to make people feel heard, the ability to deliver bad news or have difficult conversations, and to grow people beneath you. Those are the skills you need, and mentoring helps you in that,"* according to SM2.

Fourth, as explained earlier, women lack self-esteem more than men, and one of the virtues of mentoring relationships is greater self-confidence. *"My performance was better than last year because I received support, and my mentor gave me an extra boost of confidence and that showed in the performance rating,"* says SM1. *"[Mentoring helped me with] my job, how I'm perceived and how I perceive myself. How I position myself and create a personal brand, how I can maximize that to help me, [and] more confidence,"* says SM2. *"Mentoring is good because it challenges you to think what actually really want to do. You really want to be senior manager? What are my selling points? It gives you the confidence to say, 'I can bring this to the table, I should be at the table because I can add conversation and [contribute to] the decision'. You have the confidence to have a voice,"* says SM3. *"To have a mentor give you confidence, you don't feel alone. Getting women into leadership positions is one [thing], but also getting women confident in the position they are in and feeling*

that they can do it with confidence," says SM4. "[When I got a job offer for a senior position] my mentor's words came to my mind about getting in high. I saw the clarity she has given me. That is a solid path for me and gave me confidence," remarks SM5.

Finally, mentoring relationships help achieve a better balance between family and work. A female mentor who is a senior manager and also has a family, provides a valuable example for apprentices. This is because the mentors become role models for the mentee, helping them know their experience and see how they have dealt with both aspects: family and work. *"Know how they balance progressing in their careers and have a family. Without mentoring I wouldn't have had that conversation with someone who was able to have a family and still be in the executive round. She was a really good model in that perspective," according to SM3. "If it is about my personal life or my home life I don't ask about that, but I do appreciate having the opportunity to have that. The mentor who meant the most to me it a woman who has children and still rose up the ranks," says SM5.*

Formal and informal

In the review of the literature, there was much emphasis on the fact that for women it was more difficult to find informal mentors. However, according to this research, this is also arising from lack of confidence. *"Especially in Ireland, there are people willing to help you, but you have to raise your hand and ... approach someone to be your mentor," SM4 points out. "That is recent. I had the courage to do it... seeking out informal mentoring, someone more senior than me and to ask for help," says SM5.* All the interviewees were very proactive in their careers to get to their current positions. They chose to develop informal mentoring relationships when they felt they needed support to learn new skills or to know an area in which they were interested. *"When I'm trying to achieve something or I'm not familiar with the area, I look for who is familiar with the area and then I invite them for a coffee. Then you nurture that relationship if you want, if you click, because if it is transactional I don't want to waste that person's time," says*

SM4. *"That person has to work in a different part of the organisation so that removes any danger of bias because I don't have to work with them on a day-to-day basis. When I wanted to achieve something, or I wanted to grow a part of myself, and that person had the skillset that I wanted. I had very specific mentor relations to try to progress in my career": SM2.*

In a formal mentoring program, apprentices are matched with mentors who are more senior and who possess similar characteristics. These programs have two forms - they can be developed inside or outside the organisation - and both provide different tools for women. *"Formal is a more structured relation. We met once a month and there was an agenda, but it wasn't a formal meeting,"* according to SM2. *"In the formal situation, you have to get to know a stranger, then we built a very good relationship. I had an excellent mentor, she gave me time and advice without condescending. After that, we stayed in touch and she mentored me but also, I mentored her, and I gave advice about other things. It is more focused than the informal situation because you are there to have conversations about career, listen to their experience and deal with challenges you might be facing at a point in your career,"* says SM3.

Each of the programs, external or internal, has different advantages. Some of the interviewees prefer to be outside the organisations in which they work because they can express themselves with more freedom and obtain a more impartial vision. *"With internal mentoring you are talking with someone who understands the culture and politics of that organisation, and I wanted to understand that. It was useful to match with somebody who had been in that organisation forever, because that person had a better context. The problem is you might have to be careful in what you say, because the person sits in the managerial team with your boss, and that person can take a sponsorship role because they sit in level where they might have promoted you. With external mentoring, you have a degree of independence, and the person doesn't have to be your sponsor; they are just giving you advice,"* says SM5. *"If you want the mentor to have a different angle you go with an external. Mentoring programs can be developed by corporations but also having an external to the organisation would be the key thing,"* says SM4

"I think mentoring programs should be developed inside organisations, but it is not better or worse than having them outside. Sometimes just having someone inside the organisations senior to you with whom you can talk, to have someone who you can bounce ideas off," says SM1. "It is the role of organisations and managers to be supportive of women and look for a gender balance. It is the responsibility of women to encourage themselves, but if women don't go for a role, [nobody's going to select them for work]. Human resources tools should be a framework for mentoring, but it should be motivation in the mentee. But sometimes they don't think there is an option and it is up to managers or the people who work with them to suggest, explain and provide the help that make it happen," says SM2. In contrast, SM3 considers that "[programs] shouldn't be driven by human resources. It needs to be driven by leadership. It has to be the senior managers across the board. Maybe coordination can be in any part of the organisation to make sure that happens". SM4 says mentoring programs "are already [available] in HR, but they don't tell people about it". SM5 adds: "In your company it is the obvious place to have it. Your company should support you. From the evidence I haven't seen a mentoring program fail. People have a positive reaction; they are graceful and should have one specifically for women".

SURVEY FINDINGS

The most important characteristics of a mentor for women

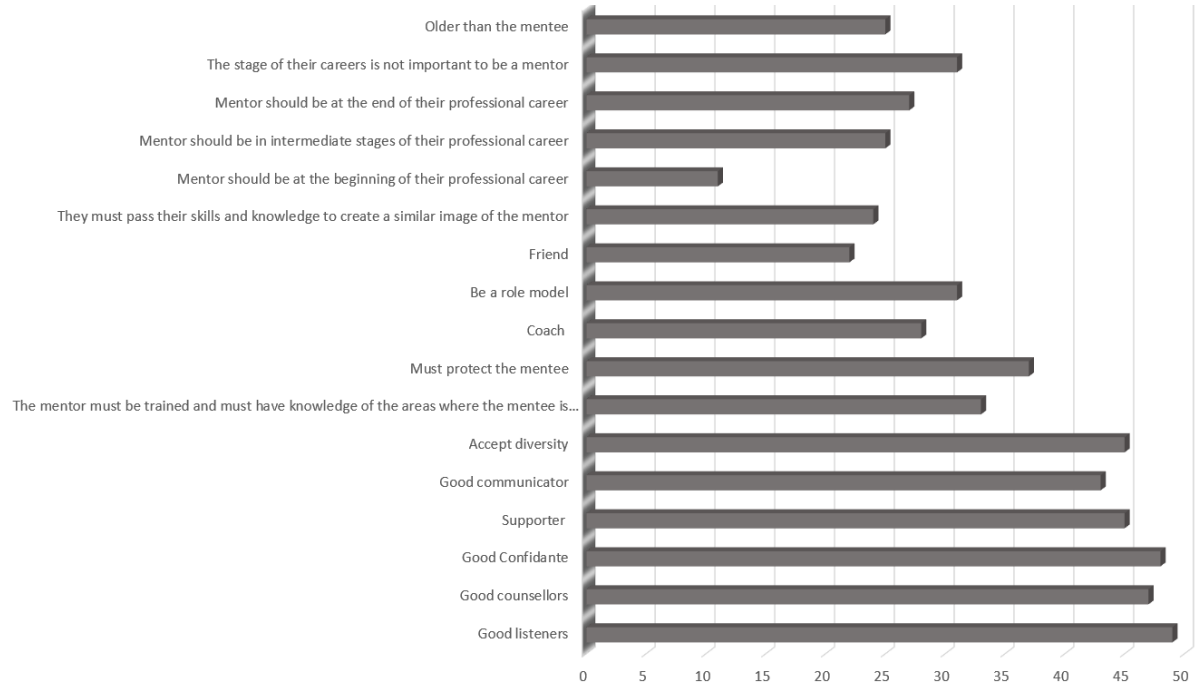


Figure 5

Figure 4 shows the characteristics that the interviewees considered the most important for a mentor in a formal mentoring program. We can highlight: good listeners, good counsellors, good confidantes, supporters, good communicators, and accept diversity. An interesting finding was that the mentee and the mentor do not necessarily need to be friends, this corresponds to the interviews, since some had developed a friendship, but others only maintained the mentor/mentee relationship.

The most important activities mentor for women should perform

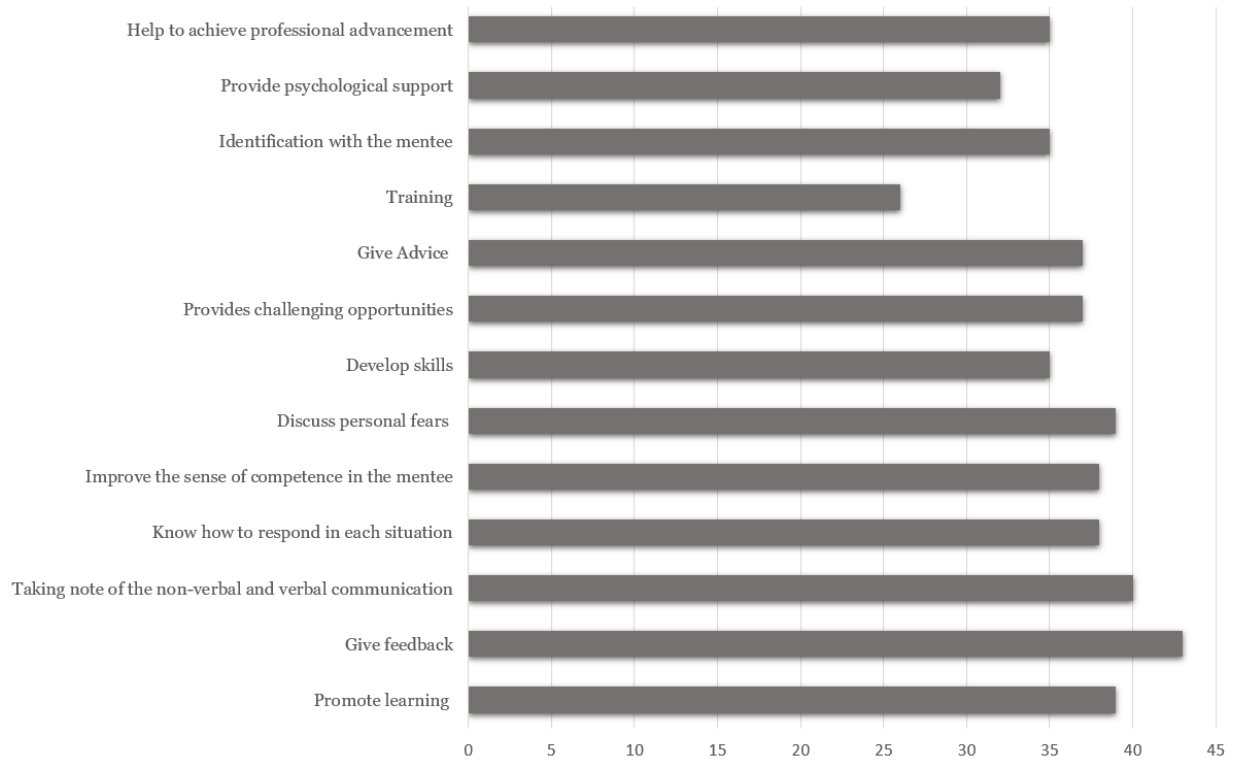


Figure 6

In figure 5 you can see the main activities the mentor should develop. Most of the items raised were considered essential by the participants. However, there are some categories more important than others, such as: a mentor should give feedback, taking note of the non-verbal and verbal communication, promote learning, discuss personal fears, know how to respond in each situation, and improve the sense of competence in the mentee. The one exception on this list was that mentors should not train mentees.

The most important activities of a female mentee

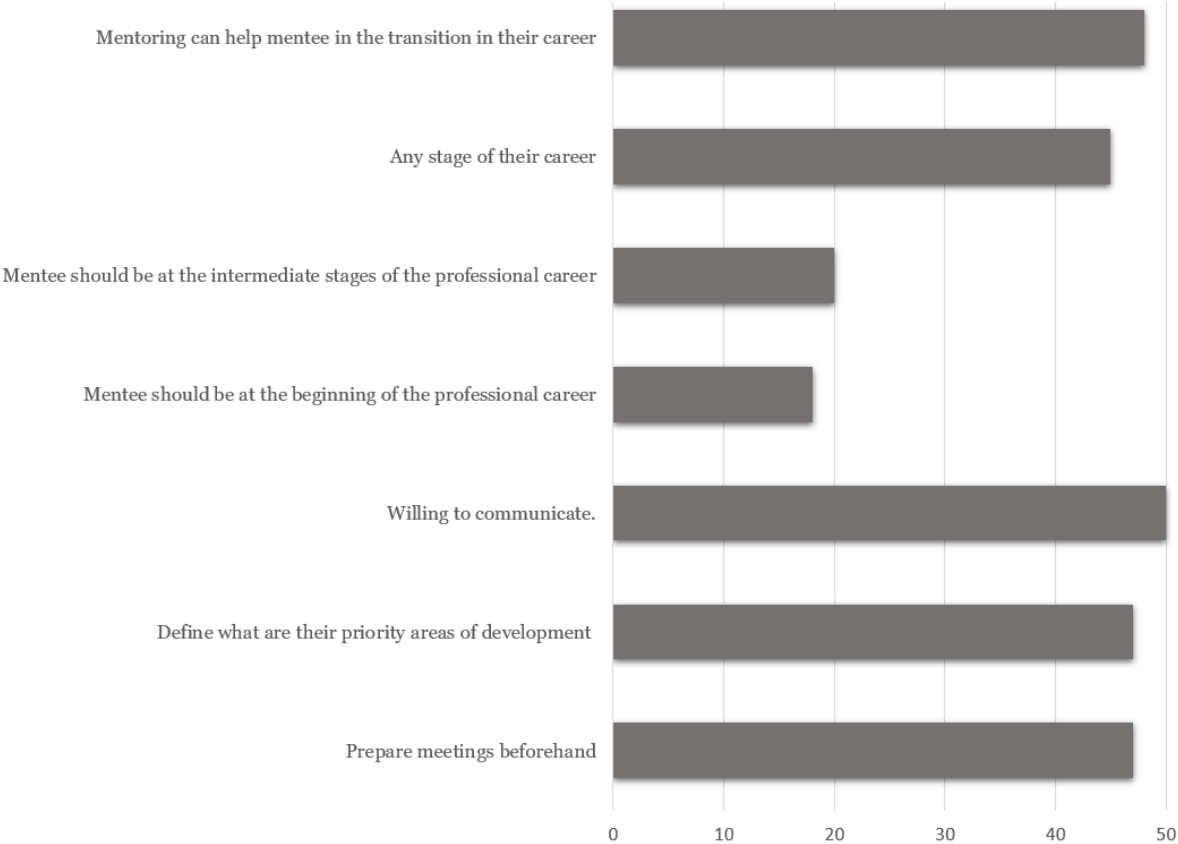


Figure 7

Context where the mentoring should be developed

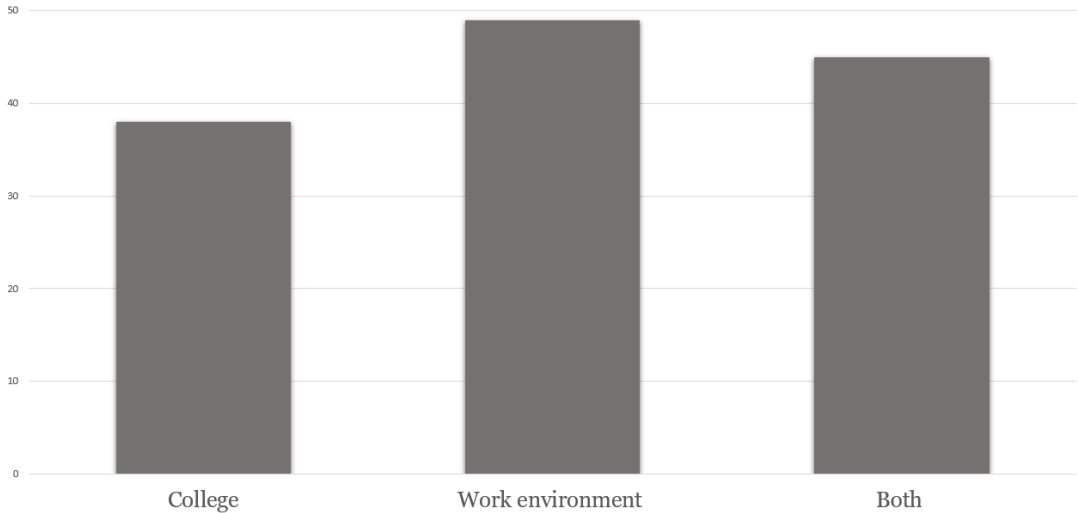


Figure 8

The results shown in Figure 6 confirm the importance of the apprentice's active role in a mentoring relationship. An interesting finding was that the mentee must be in an advanced position in their careers to start developing mentoring relationships, and it must happen mainly when they are in the workforce, rather than when they are studying in college (figure 7). This conclusion is directly related to the last question, since the majority answered that it is important that mentoring relationships be present throughout the professional career. In relation to the characteristics of the environment, the survey confirms the importance of maintaining an atmosphere of trust and honesty. The survey did not clarify the number of years a mentoring relationship will last, since the answers varied from one year to the entire professional career. Some of them added that what was important was the goal they wanted to achieve more than the duration of the relationship.

DISCUSSION

Confidence: the main issue

One of the most important findings of this research is that women have a lack of confidence and that this leads them to stagnate or not to pursue leadership positions in organisations in Ireland. This situation occurs in three stages: before applying for a job offer, when they are working and when they face maternity leave. These findings are consistent with the study conducted in the US by Chisholm-Burns, et al., (2017) in which it is concluded that many women discard the pursuit of leadership positions, because they believe they do not have the personality to lead, women take fewer risks in their careers, or participate less. However, these authors consider that the reason for this lack of self-esteem is due to women being marginalized by their male colleagues, since they do not receive challenging tasks, do not participate in meetings, and their contributions are not recognized, and this situation leads them to have less confidence in themselves. This finding differs with the results of the current study, since the participants have suggested that the glass ceiling is a mental obstacle that is based on

insecurities. Also, according to the manager interviewed, women are not put down, they decide sometimes they focus on the supporting role rather than the prestigious role.

Another study conducted in Finland by Klaile (2013) concluded that having children has a different influence on the careers of men and women, because women voluntarily leave their careers to take care of children. These conclusions are similar to the findings of this dissertation, since the interviewees confirmed that they were alone in senior management positions, because many women choose the family instead of their careers. Chisholm-Burns, et al. (2017) suggests women must take time off from work and face the impact that this can have on their careers. Some women feel forced to choose between career or family or others decide not to have children to follow their professional aspirations. One of the findings from the interviews was that for some women it is very difficult to seek leadership positions if they have family, as it is like having two jobs. However, one of the results was that women who are mothers and leave the labour force for a period begin to feel insecure, because they have not been working and many decide to retire because of lack of self-esteem, rather than because of family pressure. In addition, seeing few women in senior positions with families discourages many women along the way.

Another reason women do not occupy senior management positions is because they do not have clarity about their career, and many of them have a goal, but they do not know how to achieve it. The Lube study (2016) concluded that the key factor of female success is that women should take control of their own careers. They must have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and make intentional decisions for their professional progression, since this determination leads them to progress more quickly to senior management positions in organisations. Accordingly, the findings of this dissertation show that the responsibility of women in their careers is a key element, because the role of the mentee must be permanent and proactive.

Mentoring: characteristics for success

Mentoring is effective only when it has certain basic characteristics. As indicated above, the mentee should have an active role in the relationship, seeking informal mentors, requesting organisations to create formal programs, coordinating meetings with the mentor, and prepare the questions in advance. This finding is consistent with previous research exposed in the literature review. Gibson, (2004), Kram, (1985), Ragins & Cotton, (1999), Humberd and Rouse, (2016), agree that the mentee should be active in the relationship by defining priority problems, prepare each meeting in advance, and request feedback. Kram (1985), adds that the apprentice must have confidence in himself to make the relationship more satisfactory. However, the current research has shown that women might have a greater lack of self-esteem than men, but it is not a factor that has an impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

Another relevant point that is repeated both in the literature and in this study is that the mentee must see in their mentor a role model of what they want to be in the future, since the identification process is essential (Gibson, 2004). Kram, (1985), and Ragins & Cotton, (1999) point out that the identification process probably plays a more important role in informal mentoring relationships, because there is an attraction at the beginning of the relationship. However, this dissertation has shown that the identification process is important in both formal and informal relationships, since mentors must be an image of something they want to achieve in the future, regardless of the type of relationship. According to this research, the identification arises from the need of the apprentice to reach or learn something, that aspiration makes them look for someone in whom they can reflect in the future. Although the quality and duration of the relationship are not given by the identification, but by the objective they want to achieve, therefore, if a friendship relationship is not developed, but the initial objectives have already been achieved, the relationship ends. This statement differs from the conclusions of Humberd & Rouse (2016) where the identification and the quality of the relationship are directly connected.

There is no literature related at which point of the mentee's career a mentor for professional development can be more effective, although according to this study it is preferable that mentoring relationships develop in the work

environment rather than in college, and that mentees must be at an advanced point in their careers. This outcome is related to the studies of Humberd and Rouse (2016) who concluded that the mentoring relationship should be developed in the work environment where apprentices receive psychosocial and professional support.

According to the literature, depending on the place where the relationship develops, it provides different benefits. However, the main theme of this research is whether mentoring can be used as a tool for female professional development. In relation to this issue, scholars indicate that within business and industry, mentoring is a way to support professional success, and for women it is essential to obtain information networks and improve performance (Blood *et al*, 2012; Noe, 1988; Gibson, 2004). Humberd and Rouse (2016) consider that the identification process with a mentor should occur at the beginning of the career while Gibson (2004) proposes that mentoring can be used throughout the career. These interviews showed that mentors for career development should occupy a more senior position than the mentee, but do not necessarily have to be older, as to discuss personal topics may be more useful as a form of peer or networking mentoring. This conclusion can be related to the study by Mataboee *et al*, (2016) where mentors had to be in senior positions and have more experience than mentees, although if the mentor is trained, age does not matter. Nevertheless, other authors point out that mentors must be an older person (Inzer & Crawford, 2005; Noe, 1988; Gibson, 2004). On peer mentoring, the literature is divided, since there are authors who consider that this type of mutual mentoring relationship helps to share knowledge, wisdom and support (Inzer & Crawford, 2005; Bynum, 2015). On the other hand, Wasburn (2007) proposes that this is a tool for women to prosper in their careers and achieve success.

The environment where the relationship develops must be respectful, trustworthy, and safe for the sharing of ideas. Also, there must be chemistry between the participants, though a friendship relationship is not necessarily required. This statement concurs with the findings of Mataboee *et al*, (2016) who suggest that the relationship is complex since both parties work in harmony to achieve the objectives. In this dissertation participants indicated that open

communication, respect, honesty, mutual trust, and constructive feedback are necessary to achieve successful mentoring relationships. From the Greek definition of mentoring and for some current authors the mentor is considered a friend (Inzer & Crawford, 2005; Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Eby *et al*, 2000). Nonetheless, the current study revealed that friendship is not a key factor for the development of a good mentoring relationship, and that this does not affect the development of the mentee's career. Another important factor is that the gender of mentors does not influence the success of the relationship; however, a woman provides a role model that male mentors cannot provide. Despite this, a male mentor can be equally effective for the development of the mentee's career. The findings of Linehan and Scullion (2008) showed that the effectiveness of mentoring does not depend on the gender of the mentor, but it is essential that women at senior level act as mentors to other women.

According to Ragins & Cotton, (1999) the mutual attraction or chemistry that is just developed in the informal relationship after identification does not play a role in formal relations. The interviews highlighted that the informal mentee looks for the mentor while in the formal situation the mentor is assigned. In the latter mentoring program, therefore, the mentee has to meet a stranger; however, that does not make the relationship less effective. A good mentoring program should match mentee correctly with mentor, and thus achieve the identification process. In fact, some of the interviews in this study showed how a program focuses more on the evolution of the apprentice's career, with meetings once a month for a year. Blood *et al*, (2012) describes this as formal sessions of continuous evaluation for mentors and apprentices that take place at specific times and places. According to the participants, informal relationships are more focused on achieving something specific, learning a skill, or on a certain area. Informal mentoring is defined as a natural relationship between two people in which one gets information, knowledge, wisdom, friendship and support from the other. (Cotton and Ragins, 1999; Inzer and Crawford, 2005).

Several studies indicate that women have difficulty establishing informal mentoring relationships for a variety of personal and organisational reasons (Noe, 1988; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; De Vries *et al*, 2006). However, in this

study sample it can be seen that the women interviewed had more informal than formal relationships, as many of them were very active in the search for informal mentors.

Mentoring an effective tool for professional development

Kram (1985) presented the theory that mentors provide five specific functions for professional development: sponsorship of promotions; coaching training; protection; provide challenging tasks; and increasing the visibility and exposure of the apprentice. In this dissertation, mentoring relationships develop mentees' careers in six ways:

1. **Networking and sponsorship:** The mentee become more visible because they have contact with someone at the top level, but also mentoring helps to improve how they perform at networking events. Also, the mentor within the organisation can occupy a role of sponsor in cases where a vacancy in a senior position within the organisation arises. According to Hughes and Sheerin, (2016) mentors provide an important role in establishing networks within a company and increasing organisational visibility. According to Noe, (1988) the mentor can help advance the career of the mentee in several ways: nominating them for promotion (sponsorship), providing opportunities for the mentee to demonstrate talent and competence (visibility and exposure), or suggesting strategies to achieve goals in their career (coaching).
2. **Coaching:** All the interviewees agreed that their mentors had exercised a coaching role in their careers in different degrees, either proposing job offers they had not thought about, or advising how to get the job they wanted and how to achieve family/work balance. According to scholars, coaching is short-term with the focus on immediate problems, while the mentor has a long-term focus. Although in a mentoring relationship the training technique can be used (Matabooe *et al*, 2016), the role of a mentor is to promote intentional learning, which includes the development of

people's skills through instruction and coaching (Inzer and Crawford, 2005).

3. **Confidence**: In this study, women who participated in mentoring relationships had greater confidence in themselves and made greater use of their skills. Some women do not trust their ability to perform successfully, and mentors help increase females' self-confidence, because they are given psychological support, task-specific feedback, and reinforcement for women-oriented behaviour achievements (Noe, 1988) (Wasburn, 2007).
4. **Performance**: Women who had one or more mentors have greater job satisfaction and success. A lack of mentoring leads to inefficiency in work and performance, and women may have negative beliefs about the success of their work, which can cause them to avoid challenging tasks and reduce their motivation to advance in the organisation (Noe, 1988). Participants in this research noted that they improved their performance after mentoring relationships, because the mentor helped them develop the skills to be in senior positions.
5. **Family work balance**: For many women family lives are incompatible with positions of leadership. However, mentoring can make a great contribution in this area, since mentors can provide advice and experiences on how to balance work and family. Only in this category is there a difference between the mentor being a man or a woman, since only a woman in a senior position can help the mentee with her experience and example. Mentors perform interpersonal functions as personal concerns are also discussed and to facilitate exchanges on work and non-work experiences. (Noe, 1988). Based on the research of Forret & de Janasz, (2005), mentors can provide specific examples of how to deal with work-family conflicts, and they also serve as role models for the mentee.

Recommendations for future research

From this study, six future fields of research are suggested, three directly related to the area of mentoring and female leadership, and two solely connected with mentoring. First, it would be interesting to carry out a comparative study between two groups of women in senior positions with or without mentoring, in order to identify common characteristics among these women. Second, there is not much literature on whether mentoring programs are more beneficial inside or outside organisations for women. According to this study, where the mentorship is developed can bring different benefits for the female mentee. Inside, it provides information about the organisational culture, while mentors can play sponsorship role where vacancies in higher positions occur and can help the mentee to be more visible. However, there is no impartial vision and no freedom to speak since the senior person is part of the board of directors. In contrast, outside the organisation a mentor can give an impartial vision, and the mentee feels freer to speak on all kinds of subjects. However, the external person cannot help the mentee with sponsorship within the organisation, though mentors can orient mentees to the necessary steps for reaching senior positions.

Second, further research is suggested on how to conclude mentoring relationships. In some cases, it can be transformed into a relationship of friendship, although that situation does not always occur since some mentoring relationships can be just a mere transaction of information and there comes a moment where it must end. Kram (1983) speaks of four stages in mentoring: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. The separation stage is when the mentee has reached their learning objectives, they have more confidence, and the relationship is no longer necessary. However, there are no recent studies on the process of separation and redefinition.

Third, there is no agreement in the literature on which stage of a mentee's career is most effective for the development of leadership. It is considered relevant to know more in depth on this aspect.

Fourth, one of the most interesting findings was the existence of inverted mentoring, which occurs when young people advise older people in relation to technology. This is a concept that has not been studied.

Finally, more studies are needed about how negative effects of mentoring can bring positive outcomes. Most of the interviewees had a positive relationship with their mentors, though one of them pointed out that she had a bad experience that helped her in the development of her career instead of negatively affecting her. This run, contrary to what is stated in the literature.

Limitation

Due to the difficulty of finding the research sample, it was decided to keep the study small, but to try to deepen it as much as possible. As pointed out in the methodology, broad generalisation cannot be made from a phenomenological study, since the results apply only to the group studied. Second, all interviewees had experiences of mentoring in the work environment and not in a college environment, which could generate changes in the findings. The last limitation of this study is that women participated in the same mentoring programs, which can generate bias in the results.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study shows mentoring is an effective tool to help women achieve leadership positions in business in the Irish context. The indications are:

- Mentors fulfil the role of coaching, as they not only allow mentees see long-term objectives in detail, but also advise on the steps needed to achieve them. Mentees face complicated questions about what they want in their careers and the relationship allows them to think, clarify and analyse how to achieve those goals.
- Having a mentoring relationship helps improve performance within organisations, because it helps mentees know themselves, know what their skills are, how to improve them and how to position themselves in front of people higher in the company hierarchy.
- A mentor can help improve the self-esteem of female mentees; women need more support than men throughout their careers due to lack of confidence. This is because women feel more supported and less alone in the relationship, which helps them to reaffirm who they are, to discover what their strengths are and how to reinforce them. Mentors provide wisdom advice, because they have gone through the same problems and can pass their experience and knowledge to the mentee.
- Mentees appreciated having female mentors that prove that the balance between family and a senior position is possible, since many women if do not find a female representative in leadership positions abandon their careers or work part-time. Having appropriate mentorship relations in which the mentee feels identified allows them to follow the example and learn from experience of the senior person.

However, it must be considered that all the women interviewed had common characteristics - they were very proactive in their careers, had an ongoing

commitment to learning and were very ambitious. These women reached leadership positions not only because of their mentoring relationships but also because they possessed those qualities that are essential when it comes to pursuing positions of leadership. Mentoring relationships helped them, but it is not the only reason why they reached a senior level; other factors that contributed included not being afraid of change, being curious, improving permanently, and being diligent and conscientious.

In addition, the conditions in which mentoring relationships must be developed are important for them to be effective. From the research conducted, the responsibility of the mentee turned out to be a key element, since tasks such as scheduling and preparing meetings in advance, searching for informal mentors, and having initiative, should be part of their active role. Mentees should be willing to listen to the advice of their mentors, and to keep an open mind, since in many situations another perspective may appear on a topic that was not considered before. For professional development, mentors must be in a more senior position than mentees, although for more personal issues peer mentoring or networking mentoring can be used. Mentor and mentee must create a safe environment with respect, and trust, and where mentees can share concerns, insecurities or fears.

According to the first hypothesis under examination in this study, women lack informal mentors. However, the study has shown that there is no difference between male and female mentors. Therefore, H1 is refuted, because there are people in senior positions who are willing to be informal mentors; however, many women do not have the confidence to ask for help. In fact, the women interviewed had more informal than formal relationships, because when they felt they needed support, or to learn something new, they looked for someone to guide, teach or advise on a specific topic. The second hypothesis - that women can access only formal mentors - is partially corroborated. Not all companies have developed mentoring programs, or not all employees are aware that these programs exist. External programs have a cost, and small businesses do not have the financial resources to send all female workers to them. It is concluded that it is easier to access informal mentoring than to mentoring programs.

Formal programs involve establishing a relationship with a stranger, and first meetings can be somewhat uncomfortable where very personal topics arise. In informal relationships, mentees already know the person and it is easier to establish a relationship. Mentoring programs are more focused on the development of the professional career, how to improve your personal brand or how to position yourself in a senior position. Informal relationships are established with a specific objective, such as learning about an area, a new skill, or getting an example from the mentoring person.

Formal mentoring programs inside and outside the organisation can provide different tools for female professional development. Internal programs can provide knowledge of the organisational culture and sponsor the apprentice for new jobs; however, this relationship has some restrictions since the mentee needs to be careful with what they say since the mentor is in permanent contact with the top hierarchies of the company. There was no agreement among the interviewees about which part of an organisation should develop mentoring programs. Some of the interviewees believe the human resources department should develop them, although this is the situation in many companies and employees remain unaware of their existence. Other interviewees suggested the initiative should come from those in leadership positions within the company but managed from human resources. Some of the apprentices interviewed preferred external programs because they offer a different perspective, and participants are free to discuss their problems more freely since the mentors do not belong to the same organisation.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

Development of the relationship

Name:

- 1) Let's start by having you describe what is the role in your company.
- 2) What do you think are the factors that helped you achieve this position?
- 3) I know you've participated in a mentoring program. Have you ever been involved in another mentoring relationship informal or formal? (PROGRAMS OR OTHERS)
 - a. Answer **yes**, how these relationships were developed?
 - b. Answer **no**, could you tell me according to your experience how this program works?
- 4) Can you describe your mentor or mentors?
- 5) How were the objectives and goals of this relationship determined?
- 6) Could you meet the objectives established at the beginning of the relationship?
- 7) Are you still seeing your mentor, or the relationship ended?

Career advance

- 8) Do you consider that this or these relationships were supportive of **your personal growth, in your professional career or both**?
 - a. Yes. How this relationship helps you in that area?
- 9) In the development of your career, did you achieve any progress in your career because of this mentoring relationship?
 - a. Yes, what **degree** of impact does the mentoring relationships have on their evolution as a leader?

Closing the gender gap

- 10) Do you consider that mentoring relationships could be effective tool in getting more women to access senior management positions?
 - a. Yes, how do you think mentoring can contribute to women leader development?
 - b. No, why not? what other tools we can use to close gender gap in leadership positions?
- 11) Do you consider it important that women have mentors to develop their careers?
 - a. Yes, why do you think it is important?
- 12) In your opinion. What other tools we can use to develop female careers?
- 13) Do you think that one of the reasons why there are few women senior managers is because of the lack of mentors or role models for them?

- a. Yes, why do you think this lack can affect women?
 - b. No. what do you think could be the reason?
- 14) Do you think that mentoring programs should be developed within organizations as a human resources tool?
- 15) Is there anything that you would like to add?

Survey

Designing a perfect program for women.

Select from 0 to 10 the most important characteristics of a mentor for women

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Good listeners											
2	Good counsellors											
3	Good Confidante											
4	Supporter											
5	Good communicator											
6	Accept diversity											
7	the mentor must be trained and must have knowledge of the areas where the mentee is developing											
8	must protect the mentee											
9	Coach											
10	Be a role model											
11	Friend											
12	they must pass their skills and knowledge to create a similar image of the mentor											
13	Mentor should be at the beginning of their professional career											
14	Mentor should be in intermediate stages of their professional career											
15	Mentor should be at the end of their professional career											
16	the stage of their careers is not important to be a mentor											
17	Older than the mentee											

Select from 0 to 10 the most important activities mentor for women should perform

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
18	Promote learning											
19	Give feedback											
20	Taking note of the non-verbal and verbal communication											
21	Know how to respond in each situation											
22	Improve the sense of competence in the mentee											

23	Discuss personal fears											
24	Develop skills											
25	Provides challenging opportunities											
26	Give Advice											
27	Training											
28	Identification with the mentee											
29	provide psychological support											
30	help to achieve professional advancement											

Select from 0 to 10 the context where the mentoring should be developed

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
31	College											
32	Work environment											
33	Both											

Select from 0 to 10 the most important characteristics of a female mentee

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
34	Prepare meetings beforehand											
35	Define what are their priority areas of development											
36	Willing to communicate.											
37	Mentee should be at the beginning of the professional career											
38	Mentee should be at the intermediate stages of the professional career											
39	Any stage of their career											
40	Mentoring can help mentee in the transition in their career											

How strongly do you agree with the following statements, mark 0 to 10.

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
41	In the mentoring relationship there must be trust.											
42	Mentoring relationships must be honest											
43	How long should the relationship last (use the numbers as years)											
44	Should mentoring relationships be present throughout the professional career?											

