

Experiences of Bachelor of Science Nursing Students Participating in Peer Mentorship in Kenyan Universities

Anne A. Okanga¹, John M. Okoth², Damaris A. Ochanda³

¹PhD Nursing Student, Department of Nursing Research, Education & Management; Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, ²Professor, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedical Science; Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, ³Senior Lecturer and Chair of Department of Nursing Education, Research and Management; School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedical Science; Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

How to cite this article: Okanga AA, Okoth JM, Ochanda DA. Experiences of Bachelor of Science Nursing Students Participating in Peer Mentorship in Kenyan Universities 2023;15(4):8-13.

ABSTRACT

Peer mentoring provides opportunity of a higher skilled or experienced individual to support the lesser in the same category with benefits being experienced by both. Peer mentors eventually perceive the process as transformational born out of desire to help. Due to the nature of the course intensiveness of nursing, the nursing student mentoring experiences demonstrate a mutually beneficial relationship. The study aimed at exploring Experiences of Bachelor of Science Nursing Students Participating in Peer Mentorship in Kenyan Universities. The study was qualitative conducted in three universities that had participated in a peer mentorship program between January to August 2020 involving 50 peer mentors. Data collection involved individual interviews and focused group discussions. Data was analyzed thematically. Findings revealed 3 themes that emerged describing change that occurred in the peer mentor and these were: Development of social interaction abilities, Development of stress management skills and Development of resiliency. Peer mentors felt that the experiences helped produce a lot of change in them in as much as the intension was to support peer mentees. The study concludes that peer mentorship is beneficial in promoting both individual mentor as well as institutional educational and social goals. The study recommends utilization of peer mentorship in institutions of higher learning since it benefits both the mentor and mentee.

Key words: Peer Mentor, Nursing Students, Experiences, Universities, Mentoring

INTRODUCTION

Academic success has a great influence on a student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in higher education hence the need for mentoring.¹⁻² Defining mentorship puts both the mentor and the mentee at the core³ with the partnership described as of mutual growth with one having advanced knowledge, skills and experience than the other and in the process both achieve their goals.⁴⁻⁵

Peer mentoring is a model of mentorship where participants fall in one category of classification with one being slightly higher in terms of knowledge, skill or experience and therefore mentors apply newly acquired skill and knowledge in supporting the younger peers.⁶ It has high impact practices necessary for achieving essential higher education learning outcomes.⁷⁻⁸ Yomtov *et al*, and Gunn *et al*,⁹⁻¹⁰ explained the benefits of peer mentorship as the mentor and mentee

Corresponding author: Anne Asiko Okanga; (PhD Student), P.O Box 190-50100;Kakamega- Kenya

E-mail: asikokanga@yahoo.com, Tel; +254721582788, Orchid ID-0000-0002-0395-2774

operate together defining possible solutions to problems and testing ideas that confront their daily lives. These makes them voice feelings of having been helped to achieve academic excellence thus a rewarding exercise and win-win engagement.¹¹Peer mentors perceived their role as key in developing sense of belongingness,¹² and were enthusiastic as it enhanced their self-regulatory abilities easing university transition⁽¹³⁾ thus a transformative process born out of desire to help.

In as much as literature reveals benefits of peer mentorship and positive experiences, there is limited evidence on experiences of peer mentors in Kenyan universities and more so schools of nursing. The study sought to examine experiences of peer mentors following a peer mentoring program in Kenyan universities

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Site

A qualitative study was conducted in Universities where peer mentorship had taken place in Kenya during January to August 2020. This included Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), University of East Africa, Baraton (UEAB) and Great Lakes University of Kisumu.

Participants

Included third year nursing students who had been trained and participated in the peer mentoring program for the period January to August 2020 totaling to 50 participants.

Sampling

Purposive sampling of all trained peer mentors.

Data collection

Data was collected between August to September 2020 on 50 participants. In-depth interviews that lasted between 45 to 90 minutes were conducted each

individual respondents. For focused group discussions (FGD), the interview lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. A total of 6 participants, 2 from each university participated in individual interviews while the remaining joined the FGD with six FGDs being conducted, 2 from each university comprising between 10 to 15 participants. Data was audio recorded, transcribed and summarized into themes on how mentors perceived their experience of mentoring. Interview guide developed by researcher was used and participants reflected on their period before mentoring and after do define their experiences.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed using themes⁽¹⁷⁾ as audio recorded data was listened to severally and transcribed with repeated patterns being identified thus guiding its organization.⁽¹⁸⁾ Fragmentation and classification of data was done followed by networking to allow in-depth understanding of the experiences. Triangulation was done to ensure validity and reliability where by 3 individuals were given the audio recorded information to independently analyze and findings validated to form one document. Respondents also validated the information where by three of them were given the report to go through and confirmed the results to be a true perspective representation of their discussion.¹⁹

FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the 50 participants, 31(62%) were female while 19 (38%) were male. 9(18%) belonged to age 18-20, 36(72%) to 20-23 years while 5(10%) belonged to 24 and above years. The mean age was 22.48 years with a standard deviation of 1.7524 age range was 18-26 years. Majority of the participants 39 (78%) had never mentored any one before while 7(14%) had been mentored while in high school.

Description of Themes

Three major themes emerged from the experiences of peer mentors and these were, development of social interaction abilities, development of stress management skills and finally development of resiliency.

Development of Social Interactions

To generate these theme, participants' discussions revolved around their experiences in terms being able to connect and interact with others with ease as well as discussing plans and projects with others. This included their ability to work on tasks with mentees while participating in making contributions to tasks while assuming different roles. Their ability to expand the network of friends also provided insight into the social relations development. Some of the responses were as follows...

"The experience was one of its kind...I was encouraged by my friends to take it up... I found myself shy before my mentees... I skipped my first session due to fear...I then picked up slowly by slowly." (PM5e)

Pauses the continues....

"After I was helped to overcome fear, I met my mentees... I can assure you that we actually enjoyed quality relationship. We met severally and discussed wide range of issues, classroom, clinical and social... you can imagine them looking at me as a role model" (PM5e)

The statement above affirms that the role of faculty supervision for success of peer mentorship. The study was able to identify the point at which peer mentors now started developing their social interaction skills as revealed in the sentiments when they said...

"During the process... my communication abilities tremendously improved as I planned both individual and group meetings... I knew when to lead and when to allow others to take the lead. We all developed understanding and respect...I was a golden opportunity." (PM5b)

"I have become friends with my mentees... I equate being a mentor to being a mother..."

you love unconditionally...I can tolerate different personalities... socializing has been an aspect of growth for me, making me build trust and confidence." (PM2f)

Development of interaction skills was one of the key successes as experienced by mentors as they said...

"My first encounter with peer mentees motivated me..... They embraced the program with gratitude inspiring me to open up and support them the more." (PM8c)

"The program has helped me improve interaction with friends, patients and even polish my study skills." (PM 3a)

"I am changed...I share strengths and weaknesses with mentees and other mentors... my communication is now supper." (PM 4d)

Respondents developed positive social interaction through stages. Most felt that the change was progressive that they did not even realize the moment they became responsible. There was common agreement that they had increased their network of positive relations that enabled smooth transition in university. Discussing issues, assignments and plans while making significant contributions was a feature exhibited in all discussions. Some respondents said...

"Mentoring experience was a growth process for me... changing me from a dependent person to a dependable person." (PM7 c)

"I was that quiet person in groups... now imagine it was me... leading others... and not just one...but many." (PM5a)

"Personally I was not that good at making friend... now I have to help others make friends ...and good friends." (PM9a)

Development of Stress Management Skills

To generate these theme, mentors talked of changes experienced in handling stress among self and mentees, relaxation approaches, decision making as well as handling dilemmas.

Thoughts about consequences of behavior were also explored and these can be seen from statements from participants as follows...

"I was so closed up and could not share my issues with anyone...until I stated mentoring and discovered some of my mentees were open with situations they were going through and sincere in their search for help...this made me soul search myself." (PM3b)

She continues

"I asked myself, how come I was listening to other and offering help yet confined to myself... I made a decision to open up.... I credit lessons learned though peer mentoring. I approach issues with open mind." (PM3b)

"I am now free... I do activities with less stress... This has generated positive attitude towards nursing...my self-esteem has been boosted, confidence high and things good." (PM9b)

Most respondents felt that as much as they were expected to help, a lot of change was happening to them. Helping others handle stressors provided avenue for maturation in stress management and so they said...

"We had to read, google and sometimes rehearsed how to handle stressors ... Imagine telling someone to relax when you can't do it yourself... We had to evolve." (PM 4c)

"Nowadays you don't just jump to decisions, you weigh every option...I can tell you ... This is a skill I have developed." (PM6d)

"Helping others has made me a very keen person... I think about consequences ... even when everybody is for a particular position. I still must weigh options." (PM8f)

Development of Resilience

In understanding this theme, responses on how mentors worked on their goals with required energy without giving up and their abilities to bounce back after hard times were examined. Helping mentees ward through hard times developed similar abilities in mentors who expressed how perceived

difficult circumstances became easy to navigate by saying...

"It has been a learning experience working with mentees...Things became easier as we kept interacting... We understood and embraced each other's differences. I learned to mature up to the occasion." (PM3a)

"Initially, things were tough and frightening... (laughs). Not any more... I thought working with mentees will affect my schedules, demand time Contrary to these... The experience has been favorable and Interesting.... When things are tough...I wade through Because my mentees are watching. I can't disappoint." (PM9b)

"As a mentor...I have to tread very carefully... Mentees look up to me both in school and clinical area...I work hard to better my grades and competencies...I didn't want an instance when mentee asks me questions and I am dumbfounded...I have learned patience since I interact with different personalities." (PM2c)

"Peer mentorship is not easy and can be overwhelming sometimes. There should be a mechanism of supporting mentors... otherwise it was such a learning." (PM7c)

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that in as much as mentors may be enthusiastic on carrying out their roles, the initial support is quite important. Narayan and Sharma⁽⁴⁾ reported personal satisfaction with experiences following the enriching relationship, a finding similar with this study where participants found it easy working with others who were both mentees⁽¹²⁾ and fellow peer mentors. The study also revealed mentors taking up leadership roles in groups, valuing their individual and group contributions and not shying away from fronting their views concerning subjects under discussion. By the end of the process, majority reported having expanded their network of friend and collabora-

tors among classmates, college mates and even having it ease to interact with faculty in the university and clinical areas.

Peer mentors reported how they handled stressful issues among peer mentees and in the process developing abilities to manage their own issues⁽¹⁰⁾. There was development of open-mindedness emanating from observing the sincerity that was portrayed by some of the peer mentees in search of help when confronted with challenges⁽¹²⁾. Maturity was exhibited as participants told tales of how they handled conflicting issues, made decisions when confronted with dilemmas since the awareness of their responses to issues and consequences of subsequent behavior was clear. As roles models, making right decisions was paramount as expressed by respondents who reported to have increased their self-esteem and confidence following mentoring.

Peer mentors reported how their focus on goals was enhanced⁽⁶⁾ as they were able to dedicate their energies to achieving them⁽¹²⁾ concurring with Bagakaet *al's* findings on the concept of socialization that made mentoring program more effective.⁽²⁰⁾ They would easily take up hard tasks since they now believed in their abilities as they developed through helping others thus appreciating the benefits of mentorship.⁽¹⁰⁾

CONCLUSION

Peer mentorship is a beneficial activity in universities since besides benefits to the mentees and institution, it provides mentors with increased positive social relations, development of stress management skills as well as abilities to exhibits resilience while transitioning through educational institution.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest to be disclosed.

SOURCE OF FUNDING

There was no financial support for this research.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This was sought from MMUST Institutional Ethics Research Committee(IERC) number MMUST/IERC/107/20 and Permit from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) license number NACOSTI/P/20/3230. Institutions where data was collected gave permission and respondents orally consented.

REFERENCES

1. Valli P., Perkkila, P., & Valli R. Adult Preservice Teachers Applying 21st Century Skills in the Practice. *Athens J Educ.* 2014;1(2):115-30.
2. DuBois, D, L., Portillo N., Rhodes, J, E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine JC. How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence. *Psychol Sci Public Interes.* 2011;12(2):57-91.
3. Brown, R. D., Geesa R, L., & McConnel K R. Creating, Implementing and Redefining a Conceptual Framework for Mentoring Pathways for Education Doctoral Students. *J High Learn Res Commun.* 2020;10(2):20-37.
4. Narayan, J., & Sharma S. Peer Mentoring Programme as a Student Support Tool to A Conceptual Approach, International. *J Instr Technol Distance Learn.* 2016;13(1):2-16.
5. Bung BP. Collaborative Mentoring Models in Higher Educational Institutions: A Win- Win-Win Strategy for Mentor, Mentee, and the Institution. *J Adv Bus Manag.* 2015;1(13):197-203.
6. Tenenbaum, L.S., Anderson M, K., Jett M., & Yourick D L. An Innovative Near-Peer Mentoring Model for Undergraduate and Secondary Students: STEM Focus [Internet]. 568 Doughten Drive, Fort Detrick, MD, 21702-5010; 2014. Available from: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA622882.pdf>
7. Abdolalizadeh, P., Pourhassan, S., Gandomkar, R., Heidari, F., & Sohrabpour A. Dual peer mentoring program for undergraduate medical students: exploring the perceptions of mentors and Mentees. *Med J Islam Repub Iran.* 2017;31(2).
8. Esplin, P., Seabold, J., & Pinnegar F. The Architecture of a High-Impact and Sustainable Peer Leader Program: A blueprint for success. *New Dir High Educ [Internet].* 2012;157:85-100. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264724125>
9. Yomtov, D., Scott, W., Plunkett, R. E., & Adriana, G M. Can Peer Mentors Improve First-Year Experiences of University Students? *J Coll Student Retention, Res Theory Pract.* 2017;19(1):25-44.

-
10. Gunn, S. H. L., & Steed M. Student Perceptions of Benefits & Challenges of Peer Mentoring Programs: Divergent Perspectives from Mentors and Mentees. *Mark Educ Rev.* 2017;27(1):15-26.
 11. Suleman, A., Chigeza, P., & Mensinga J. A Scoping Review and Thematic Analysis of Mentoring Models that Include Leadership and School Connectedness Theories. *RISM* [Internet]. 2022;4(1). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.24377/prism.ljmu.0401215> ISSN: 2514-5347
 12. Abrahamson, E D., Puzaza, C., Ferro, M.S., & Baley S. Peer Mentoring Experiences and Perceptions of Mentoring Undergraduates in Health and Sports Science Programme. *J Pedago Res* [Internet]. 2019;3(2):21-37. Available from: <https://dx.doi.org/10.33902/JPR.2019.54158>
 13. Du Preez, R., Steenkamp, P. L., & Roelof, S B. An Investigation into A Peer Module Mentoring Programme in Economic and Management Sciences. *Int Bus Econ Res J.* 2013;12(10):1225-38.
 14. Droll, M., LeMon, R. E., Jonhson, N.,& Reidy L. Program Requirement for Associate and Bachelors' Degree: A National Survey [Internet]. AMERICA; 2012. Available from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/serverfiles/files>
 15. Wynn, S., Holden, c., Romero, s.,& Julian P. The Importance of Mentoring in Nursing Academia. *Open J Nurs* [Internet]. 2021;11(4):241-8. Available from: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=108652>
 16. Jacobsen, T., Sandsleth, M.G., & Gondalez MT. Student Nurses' Experiences Participating in a Peer Mentoring Program in Clinical Placement Studies: Ametasyntesis. *Nurse Educ Pract.* 2022;
 17. Polit, D.F., & Beck C. *Generating and Aserting Evidence for Nursing Practice.* 10th ed. Philadelphia: Walters Kluwer; 2017. 576 p.
 18. Akinyode, B, F., & Khan, T H. Step by Step Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis. *Int J Build Environ Sustain* [Internet]. 2018;5(3):163-74. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.11113ijbes.v5.n3.267>
 19. Abdul, H., Raj, G., & Chakraborty S. Assuring Reliability In Qualitative Studies: A Health Informatics Perspective. In: *Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS).* 2016. p. 394.
 20. Bagaka's J, G., Badilo N., Bransteter, L., & Rispindo S. Exploring Student Success in A Doctoral Programme: The Power of Mentorship and Research Engagement. *Int J Dr Stud.* 2015;10:323-42.