Original Research Article

The Symbiosis of Mentoring: Getting the Most Out of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Context: Mentoring is a critical aspect of the professional and/or personal development of the student, resident or faculty member, requiring the good intention on the part of the mentor and mentee to cultivate and establish a meaningful relationship. It is an evolving relationship that requires time and attention to develop, and includes successes and challenges. The dynamics between the two groups of participants were explored to identify emerging themes and implications for practice in education.
Aim: To evaluate the perceptions of mentoring relationships among students and staff, and establish an effective mentoring program based on the feedback received.
Settings and Design: 100 MBBS students and 75 teaching faculty were included in the study.
Materials and Methods: Verbal informed consent of the participants was taken after explaining to them the details of the study to be conducted. Questionnaires comprising of questions pertaining to knowledge, experiences, need for mentoring, developmental activities profile, desired benefits, individual/expected outcomes of mentoring and possible participations were distributed, collected, and the data was analysed.
Results: 64% staff and 56% students have a positive attitude towards mentoring. 34% staff and 21% students have been in a mentoring relationship before. Staff of a younger age and hostellers seem more interested in participating in a mentoring program. Majority of faculty think that they can be very helpful to the person they are mentoring, and that they have a lot to offer in mentoring.
Conclusions: Both mentors and mentees need to have a clear understanding of the objectives of the program and their roles and responsibilities in a mentoring relationship. This program serves to optimise the way practice and academics work together to integrate knowledge, scholarship, service and learning and to advance the profession.

Keywords: mentoring, mentor, mentor-mentee relationship, outcomes, perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a critical aspect of the professional and/or personal development of the student, resident or faculty member, requiring the good intention on the part of the mentor and mentee to cultivate and establish a meaningful relationship. It is an evolving relationship that requires time and attention to develop, and includes successes and challenges. It is a two-way street and over time, will prove to be a fruitful endeavour for both mentor and mentee. Mentoring is "A mutual relationship with an intentional agenda designed to convey specific content along with life wisdom from one individual to another. Mentoring does not happen by accident, nor do its benefits come quickly. It is relationally

based, but it is more than a good friendship mentoring is not two people who just spend time together sharing"-Thomas Addington and Stephen Graves. [1,2] In well-designed formal mentoring programs, there are program goals, schedules, training (for mentors and mentees), and evaluation. Mentors inspire their mentee to follow their dreams. [3-8] Effective mentorship is likely one of the most important determinants of success in academic medicine and research. [9] The main challenges facing mentors understand the needs of each individual and adapting and developing strategy in order to support them effectively. [10] Mentoring is crucial for advancing early-career teachers' practices, despite mentoring being reported for years as being haphazard. [11,12] Research on mentoring in Western countries reported that effective mentoring resulted in reduced burnout and increased physician retention. [13] Notably, mentoring during the early stages of a career was found to help mentees enjoy greater career satisfaction. [14]

Formally structured mentoring would benefit interns who do not have a mentor due to mentor inaccessibility, a lack of understanding about mentoring, or other reasons. Physicians should expand and support the mentoring programme during internship, as it is the foundational step in the career of medical graduates. [15] The dynamics between the two groups of participants were explored to identify emerging themes and implications for practice in education. This study was conducted to evaluate the perceptions of mentoring relationships among students and staff, with the aim to establish an effective mentoring program based on the feedback received.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

100 MBBS students and 75 teaching faculty of NRI Institute of Medical Sciences, Sangivalasa, and Visakhapatnam were included in the study. Verbal informed consent of the participants was taken after explaining to them the details of the study to be conducted. Questionnaires comprising of questions pertaining to knowledge, experiences, need for mentoring, developmental activities profile, desired benefits, individual/expected outcomes of mentoring and possible participations were distributed, collected, and the data was analysed using MS-Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 20.0.

RESULTS

The mean age of the study population is 41.24 ± 14.44 years of standard deviation (36 years). The highest number of participants in the study belong to 21-40 years of age (64%), of which 25 (34%) were male and 23 (31%) were female, followed by 41-60 years of age (19%), of which 9 were males and 5 were females.

Table 1: Distribution of study population (staff) according to age group (n=75)

Age group	Male	Female	Total
21-40	25(33.33)	23(30.67)	48(64.00)
41-60	09(12.00)	05(6.67)	14(18.67)
61-80	12(16.00)	01(1.33)	13(17.33)
Total	46(61.33)	29(38.67)	75(100.0)

The highest numbers of participants in the study were Hostellers (52%) among whom, were more females (39%).

Table 2: Distribution of study population (students) (n=100)

Students	Males	Females	Total
Day-Scholars	14 (14.00)	34 (34.00)	48 (48.00)
Hostellers	13 (13.00)	39 (39.00)	52 (52.00)
Total	27 (27.00)	73 (73.00)	100 (100.0)

Knowledge regarding mentoring was good among 37% staff and 22% students, moderate among 56% staff and 64% students, and poor among 5% staff and 12% students. 1% staff and 2% students have no knowledge regarding mentoring.

Table 3: What is your level of knowledge regarding mentoring? (n_1=75, n_2=100)

Category	Good	Moderate	Poor	None
Faculty	28(37.33)	42(56.00)	04(5.33)	01(1.33)
Students	18(26.87)	37(55.22)	10(14.92)	02(2.98)

Both the results were compared and x^2 value found to be 4.960 is not significant (p value > 0.05). Among faculty as well as students, source of information is the most from personal experience (61%) and least

through peers (3%). Other sources of knowledge of mentoring included observing others (29%), reading about it (22%), through a programme in an institute (30%), by television (16%), a community organization (15%), or the internet (22%).

Table 4: What was your source of information? (n_1=75, n_2=100)

Source of Information	Faculty	Students
Personal experience	51(68.00)	38(38.00)
Observing others	27 (36.00)	23 (23.00)
Read about it	23 (30.67)	15 (15.00)
Through peers	03 (4.00)	02 (2.00)
Programme in the institute	27 (36.00)	26 (26.00)
Television	10 (13.33)	18 (18.00)
Community organization	12 (16.00)	15 (15.00)
Internet	18 (24.00)	21 (21.00)

64% staff and 56% students have a positive attitude towards mentoring while 15% staff and 38% students were neutral towards it and 6% students have a negative attitude towards mentoring, reason unspecified. All the values were compared. x^2 value is 18.21 with 2 d.f. (p value < 0.01). It is highly significant.

Table 5: What is your general attitude towards mentoring? (n_1=75, n_2=100)

Category	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Faculty	64(85.33)	11(14.67)	00
Students	56(56.00)	38(38.00)	06(6.00)
Total	120	49	06

Majority of faculty (84%) and students (82%) believe that mentoring is an effective way of developing your potential, while 9% faculty and 5% students believe that mentoring is only for high potential students, and 33% faculty and 16% students believe that mentoring is for those with poor academic performance.

Table 6: What is your opinion on mentoring? (n_1=75, n_2=100)

Category	Faculty		Students	
Statement / Opinion	True	False	True	False
Only for high potential merit students	07 (9.33)	49 (65.33)	05 (5.00)	69 (69.00)
For those with poor academic performance	25 (33.33)	28(37.33)	16 (16.00)	56 (56.00)
Is an effective way of developing your potential	63(84.00)	02 (2.67)	82 (82.00)	10 (10.00)

34% staff and 21% students have been in a mentoring relationship before.

Table 7: What is your experience with mentoring? (n_1=75, n_2=100)

Experience	Faculty (n_1)	Students(n_2)
Have been in a mentoring program before	18 (24.00)	19 (19.00)
Have never been in a mentoring program before	34 (45.33)	55 (55.00)

Most desired benefit among students is to develop interpersonal and communication skills (76%), and among faculty, is the transfer of knowledge and values (64%). Other expected benefits included learning to balance work and life (58%), expanding knowledge of career path and options (59%), gaining knowledge of a different function (45%), improve social interaction and networking capabilities (52%), improve job satisfaction and morale (51%), foster inclusion (23%), enhanced awareness of diversity issues (38%), develop the next generation of leaders (45%), encourage institutional savvy (34%), provide an alternate source of feedback to mentees (41%), enhance coaching skills (52%) and utilising a wealth of professional expertise and experience (46%).

Most expected outcome among students is improved social and communication skills & increased participation in college activities (91%), and among faculty, is improved ability to cope with college life & improved motivation (91%). Other expected outcomes included wider friendship group (73%), improved relationships/behavior/attendance/Punctuality (80%), raised confidence/self-esteem (89%), awareness of sources of help (85%), improved academic performance/ attainment (87%), reduction in bullying (69%), and creating inspirational role models (83%).

Most expected outcome among students is improved social and communication skills & increased participation in college activities (91%), and among faculty, is improved ability to cope with college life & improved motivation (91%).

Table 8: What benefits do you expect from mentoring? (n₁=75, n₂=100)

Desired Benefits	Faculty (n_1)	Students (n_2)	Total
Learn to balance work and life	43 (57.33)	58(58.00)	101(57.71)
Expand knowledge of career path and options	35 (46.67)	69(69.00)	104(59.42)
Develop interpersonal and communication skills	40 (53.33)	76 (76.00)	116(66.29)
Gain knowledge of a different function	27 (36.00)	52 (52.00)	79 (45.14)
Improve social interaction and networking capabilities	36 (48.00)	55 (55.00)	91 (52.00)
Improve job satisfaction and morale	37 (49.33)	53 (53.00)	90 (51.43)
Foster inclusion	16 (21.33)	24 (24.00)	40 (22.86)
Enhance awareness about diversity issues	28 (37.33)	38 (38.00)	66 (37.71)
Develop next generation of leaders	34 (45.33)	44 (44.00)	78(44.57)
Encourage institutional savvy	28 (37.33)	32 (32.00)	60 (34.29)
Transfer knowledge and values	48 (64.00)	50 (50.00)	98 (56.00)
Provide an alternative source of feedback to mentees	34 (45.33)	37 (37.00)	71 (40.57)
Enhance coaching skills	44 (58.67)	47 (47.00)	91 (52.00)
Utilize wealth of professional expertise and experience	41 (54.67)	40 (40.00)	81 (46.29)

Table 9: What do you think would be the outcome of mentoring? (n₁=75, n₂=100)

Outcomes	Faculty (n_1)	Students (n_2)	Total
Improved ability to cope with college life	68 (90.67)	90 (90.00)	158 (90.29)
Wider friendship group	54 (72.00)	74 (74.00)	128 (73.14)
Improved motivation	68 (90.67)	90 (90.00)	158 (90.29)
Improved relationships	65 (86.67)	80 (80.00)	145 (82.86)
Improved behaviour	64 (85.33)	87 (87.00)	151 (86.29)
Improved social and communication skills	66 (88.00)	91 (91.00)	157 (89.71)
Raised confidence/self esteem	66 (88.00)	89 (89.00)	155 (88.57)
Awareness of sources of help	62 (82.67)	87 (87.00)	149 (85.14)
Increased participation in college activities	60 (80.00)	91 (91.00)	151 (86.2)
Improved academic performance/attainment	63 (84.00)	90 (90.00)	153 (87.43)
Improved attendance/punctuality	56 (74.67)	73 (73.00)	129 (73.71)
Reduction in bullying	53 (70.67)	67 (67.00)	120 (68.57)
Creating inspirational role models	63 (84.00)	83 (83.00)	146 (83.43)

Table 10: What do you think would be the impact of mentoring? (n₁=75, n₂=100)

Impact	Faculty (n_1)	Students (n_2)	Total
I think I have a lot to gain by being mentored	33 (44.00)	76 (76.00)	109 (62.29)
I think the mentoring scheme will be very helpful to the pupils being mentored	58 (77.33)	80 (80.00)	138 (78.86)
I think I can be very helpful to the person I am mentoring	54 (72.00)	54 (54.00)	108 (61.71)
I think I have a lot to offer in mentoring	54 (72.00)	48 (48.00)	102 (58.29)

Table 11: Participating in a mentoring program (n₁=75, n₂=100)

Table 11a - Desire to participate in a mentoring program				
Category	Very High	High	Neutral	Low	Very Low
Faculty	06 (8.00)	23 (30.67)	37 (49.33)	07 (9.33)	04 (5.33)
Students	07 (7.00)	27 (27.00)	49 (49.00)	04 (4.00)	05 (5.00)
Total	13 (7.42)	50 (28.57)	86 (49.14)	11 (6.29)	09 (5.14)

Table 11b - Probability of applying to a mentoring program				
Category	Very High	High	Neutral	Low	Very Low
Faculty	06 (8.00)	22 (29.33)	34 (45.33)	10 (13.33)	06 (8.00)
Students	04 (4.00)	26 (26.00)	55 (55.00)	03 (3.00)	06 (6.00)
Total	10 (5.71)	48 (27.43)	89 (50.86)	13 (7.42)	12 (6.86)

Table 11c - What would you apply as?		
Category	Mentor	Mentee	Both
Faculty	36 (48.00)	06 (8.00)	21 (28.00)
Students	11 (11.00)	40 (40.00)	42 (42.00)
Total	47 (26.86)	46 (26.29)	63 (36.00)

Table 12: Possible Participations in different programs (n₁=75, n₂=100)

Possible Participation In	Faculty (n_1)	Students (n_2)	Total
Information sessions are open student forums. Each will last for about 60 min; several will be scheduled at different times during the week. Would you attend one session?	48 (64.00)	74 (74.00)	122(69.71)
Training sessions are required for all selected participants. Introductory session is for 3 hours and advanced session is for 2 hours. Would you attend one/both sessions?	51 (68.00)	71 (71.00)	122(69.71)
Discussion between mentor and mentee are recommended for 2 hours every month for the 12 month period of the program. Would you set aside this much time?	57 (76.00)	76 (76.00)	133(76.00)
Would you be willing to commit any of your personal time in your mentoring partnership?	46 (61.33)	100 (100.0)	146(83.43)

Desire to participate in a mentoring program is high among 31% faculty and 27% students. The probability of applying to the program is high among 29% faculty and 26% students. Majority of faculty would apply as a Mentor (48%) whereas majority of students would apply as both a mentor and mentee (42%).

When presented with a few possible programs, majority of participants were willing to commit their personal time to the mentoring relationship (83%).

DISCUSSION

Many authors have mentioned the importance of the relationship between a protégé and a superviso, [16-19] particularly where the two work closely over a number of years. However, sometimes a problem of compatibility occurs between them and therefore, Hockey (1997) and Wilkin (1992) suggest that they both need to know their roles in order to ensure a good relationship. [20,21] Our study showed that the need for mentoring is higher among hostellers than day-scholars and that staff of a younger age are more interested to be a mentor. Literature suggests that the majority of mentors feel unprepared for the role and lack confidence in their ability to support students (Duffy, 2004). [22] However in our study, mentors are confident in their roles and feel that they have a lot to offer. Although the qualities and skills that a mentor possesses are vital to the effectiveness of the relationship, the qualities of a mentee are also influenced by the skills and characteristics of the linked mentor. [23] Carter and Lewis (1994) take the view that a mentor needs to be able to support a learner having regard to his particular strengths and weaknesses in the process of development. [24] Recent studies found that the informal mentor-mentee relationship contributes high efficiency and more effective compared to formal mentoring. [25] Each mentoring relationship will be different due to the mentee's needs, his or her personal interests, and the unique nature of the mentoring relationship that develops with the mentor. Lee (2003) states that mentor can provide glimpses into the occupations protégés are drawn to and a clearer vision of the day-to-day reality of working. [26] A mentor can also provide a wide variety of assistance to protégés, and it is critical that the mentee communicates to their mentor about the areas in which he or she needs the most guidance. Mentoring allowed mentors to help others, improve themselves, receive respect, develop collegiality from the mentees' fresh ideas and energy because the benefits of mentoring are both career-related and psychosocial. [4]

Mentoring is related to self-development, professional growth and career development of the mentees. [26] The mentor's role is to help learners to achieve their goals by acting as counsellor, facilitator, role model and advisor. This view is supported by many authors who have mentioned that the mentor is someone who has greater experience and helps less skilled or less experienced practitioners to achieve professional abilities. [27,28] Various studies have reported on the importance of interpersonal relationships between graduate students and their supervisors as a determinant of student success. [29-35]

CONCLUSION

While majority of staff and students have a positive attitude towards mentoring, fewer have been in a mentoring relationship before. Staff of a younger age and student hostellers seem more interested in participating in a mentoring program. Majority of faculty think that they can be very helpful to the person they are mentoring, and that they have a lot to offer in mentoring. Both mentors and mentees need to have a more clear understanding of the objectives of the program and of their roles and responsibilities in a mentoring relationship. A successful outcome can be expected with an effective as well as tailored program based upon easy accessibility and scheduled quality time between mentor-mentees. This program

serves to optimise the way practice and academic work together to integrate knowledge, scholarship, service and learning and to advance the profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A successful mentor-mentee relationship can be established by the inclusion of needs of both students and teachers, taking into considerations each individual's specific requirements and limitations. For this, it is recommended that educational institutes try to use feedback forms or any form of questionnaire or otherwise, to find out and create a stable mentoring relationship between a student and teacher. Mentoring is an integral part in developing and pushing a student towards achieving his/her goal.

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