World Journal of
**Biology Pharmacy
and Health
Sciences**

World Journal Series
INDIA

(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

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Examining the faculty factors influencing Bachelor of Science Nursing (BScN) students' mentorship in universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Student support is dynamic and requires all-round preparation of faculty as well as their ability to support the learners in navigating the learning environment. This ability can only be understood through understanding the preparation and perception of faculty that can pause a facilitator or inhibiter of the desired end. The aim of the study was to examine faculty factors influencing Bachelor of Science Nursing (BScN) students' mentorship in universities in Kenya by examining perception of faculty on availability and training on mentorship, assessing the implications of faculty workload and training on student mentorship and evaluating the perception of faculty on BScN student peer mentorship. The study was cross sectional with qualitative approach of data being applied. Study was conducted on faculty in nursing schools at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Great Lakes University of Kisumu (GLUK), Uzima University and University of East Africa Baraton (UEAB). Results indicated that majority of the participants in the schools did not have requisite training to conduct mentorship and therefore felt inadequately prepared to engage in mentorship. However, majority felt that if peer mentorship structures were put in place and implemented, it would be worth, efficient and effective in supporting learners to socially adjust hence succeed in their academics. In conclusion, training of faculty, faculty workload and faculty perception of peer mentorship influenced student mentorship in universities in Kenya.

Keywords: Faculty; Mentorship; Nursing; Students; Universities

1. Introduction

Nursing education institutions globally have called for peer mentorship to help combat faculty shortage, poor student performance and other issues affecting schools (1). Mentorship requires teachers to understand the roles and responsibilities that one is engaging in since the understanding of core things that faculty discuss with learners is attributed to how the learners succeed as a result of mentoring relationship (2). Faculty who do not understand mentoring roles usually abandon them thus negatively impacting on the unsupported learners (3). On the other hand, competent faculty do understand which actions are beneficial to learners and implement them leading to increased productivity and professionalism (4).

On top of having teaching as the key mandate of faculty, other roles include ensuring an all-round learner who are able to wade through life challenges (5). It is evident that faculty can go to great heights through their interaction with students, enhancing student safety when the workload is made easy and enabling (6). Indeed, high workload had been identified as a key challenge in implementing the faculty student mentorship, together with time and competing priorities as reported by Lorenzetti et al (1) who implied that they put high academic pressure on faculty limiting their dedication to mentorship. Similarly, majority of the respondents would not wish to engage in mentorship citing high workload experienced by the faculty.

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Estepp et al (7)reported that a dedicated position for faculty mentorship was needed since majority of faculty felt that having somebody conduct mentorship besides their teaching workload highly increased the load diverting their focus on core mandate. In most institutions, despite these challenges, faculty believed that peer mentorship had higher probability of enhancing mentees sense of belonging and eventual social adjustment (8). In as much as institutions would desire to have formal faculty student mentorship, the possibility of achieving this is elusive thus the need for peer mentorship as a supplement (9). This study therefore sought to examine the faculty factors influencing BScN students' mentorship in universities in Kenya.

The specific objectives were;

- To examine perception of faculty on availability and training on mentorship
- To assess the implications of faculty workload and training on BScN student mentorship
- To evaluate the perception of faculty on BScN student peer mentorship

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

The study design employed a cross sectional approach with data collection being conducted qualitatively.

2.2. Study Population

The study was conducted in four sampled universities offering Bachelor of Science Nursing (BScN) program in western part of Kenya the target population comprised of faculty teaching in the nursing schools.

2.3. Sampling

Simple random sampling was used to identify one region of Kenya after geographical land marks had been used to divide the country into five regions. This sampled region consisted of former western, Nyanza, and Northern Rift Valley provinces. Seven universities that had completed a full curriculum cycle were identified from this region and from these; proportionate allocation was used to arrive at four universities which were included in the sample. These universities were Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Great Lakes University of Kisumu (GLUK), Uzima University and University of East Africa Baraton (UEAB). A total of 30 participants were included in the study.

2.4. Inclusion Exclusion Criteria

The study included all nursing faculty who consented to participate in the study from the universities offering BScN for the past five years. Other faculty, not having a nursing background were not included and those who did not consent to the study.

2.5. Data Collection

Interview guides were used to collect data from the focused group discussions and individuals and a total of four focused group discussions comprising of six participants were conducted using the online platform while individual interviews were conducted on six participants. Those who participated on online were independent from the FGD participants.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The study sought ethical and research approvals from institutional ethics Research committee (IERC) number MMUST/IERC/107/20 of MMUST and a permit from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) License no. NACOSTI/P/20/3430.

The permission to conduct the study was sought from institutions where data was collected as well as individual participants.

2.7. Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed thematically while quantitative data on demographic data was analysed quantitatively

3. Results

3.1. Socio –Demographic Characteristics of Participants

From the above results respondents were almost equally distributed across the age groups with ages 41 to 50 having the highest number of respondents at 33.3% followed by 40 years and bellow, and 51 to 60 year having 23.3% with 61 and above years trailing at 20.0%. Concerning gender, female participants were more at 17 (56.7%) compared to their male counterparts who were 13 (43.3%). In regards to highest qualifications, majority of the participants were holders of a Master's degree 20(66.7%) and 20% having PhD and only 13.3% having a Bachelor's degree. However, it was worth noting that from these, 24 participants, accounting for 80% were pursuing higher levels of education as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1 Illustrating the demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, highest qualification and years of experience

Variable	Category	No	%
Age	40 and below	7	23.3
	41-50	10	33.3
	51-60	7	23.3
	61 and above	6	20.0
Gender	Male	13	43.3
	Female	17	56.7
Highest qualification	Degree	4	13.3
	Masters	20	66.7
	PhD	6	20.0
Number of years of teaching experience	1-5	7	23.3
	6-10	6	20.0
	11-15	7	23.3
	15-20	6	20.0
	Above 20	4	13.3

3.2. Perception of Faculty on Availability and Training on Mentorship

The study found out that there were mixed feelings from faculty on whether there were mentorship activities happening in the institutions. However, none of the respondents reported to have a formal mentorship program and neither was there a peer mentorship model being used. The study also found out that there was no documentary evidence of any form of student support with majority having varied conceptions of what mentorship entailed. This was a clear indication that access to mentorship was not available. One participant said.

 "We just support learners, you are given a group and when they have problems they come to you.....if they want. In fact most of them never even come, you only notice when someone tells you…he!.... that your class!....... and mention a student's name with myriad of problems or even disciplinary issues". (P1,3)

Participants also reported that since most of them had no training on mentorship, they could not define the right direction to the mentorship support needed to be given. Each individual had their own way they felt students were to be supported and majority relied on directional instructions from the sectional heads who similarly did not have the requisite training for the same.

One participant said…

"I wish there was training so that there is an organized way in which student support can be conducted. This thing of doing what you think is not right. This means that you support a student from your own volition and in your own perspective whether right or wrong." (P4, 2)

Another participant said

"I just do what I can, whether right or wrong I don't know. In fact, nobody is bothered. However, I believe my support would yield more fruits if I had the requisite twining as this would provide focus from my end."(P3,1)

Another participant said…

"All the struggle you see students go through… as if they are orphans… is because the people who are supposed to help do not know what to do. …even if it is you… what can you do to be felt helping yet you don't know? Let nursing institutions for once be serious and invest in training faculty to mentor students all-round." (P4,6)

None of the respondents reported to have had a schedule of training nor witnessed one in the school, leave alone their departments. All respondents felt that there was need for them to be supported in terms of training in order for them to adequately be able to address the student needs in terms of mentorship. The researcher could therefore not verify any documentary evidence in support of training on mentorship from all the institutions. It therefore goes without saying that since peer mentorship was not factored in any of the agendas in the schools, performance appraisals for the faculty was not based on it.

A few of the respondents felt that lack of incentives and lack of training were the main reasons that made mentorship not to be active in the schools of nursing. One respondent said…

"Let truth be told… no incentives, no training …..don't expect much from this people. It is difficult for us to conceptualize the roles" (P3,3)

When asked to give recommendations on how mentorship can be improved I the institutions, one respondent said……..

"The school should train mentors and pay them separately for the mentorship activities. Even if it means using students' as peer mentors, they need support and this should be from a trained person…. This will motivate them to go an extra mile putting in mind the kind of workload that we have". (P1,6)

3.3. The Implications of Faculty Workload, Training and Perception on BScN Student Mentorship

3.3.1. Implications of Faculty Workload on Student Mentorship

All the respondents reported that lack of time, high workload and lack of motivation were the key challenges in conducting of student mentorship in the schools of nursing. Majority were already having course loads more than the recommended due to faculty shortages and none of the time was allocated to peer mentorship. One respondent said….

"The kind of work we do here… I don't think if that mentorship can fit in… unless we readjust downwards in terms of work load" (P2,5).

Another respondent said…..

"For me…. The workload is too much… we don't even have a structured leave of like other faculty in the university… mentorship is another burden that I cannot agree to." (P3,4)

Another respondent said……

"With the current workload… let the mentors be trained and their workload be reduced to fewer courses. In fact… let mentorship be treated as a separate course paid to the faculty involved" (PI,5).

Some respondent said…

"Teacher student mentorship alone…is too much expectation from faculty… and therefore other models of mentorship need to be explored and adopted… may be   even this one you are talking of…., the peer mentorship" (P4,1).

Another participant said……

"We are supposed to meet the students but the work is so much that sometimes you forget. ….and the students themselves will never look for you …. You only hear them when they have issues." (P2,3)

From the responses, it was clear to the researcher that student mentorship would not be given priority and therefore suffer not being conducted since the faculty were overwhelmed with teaching workload. Similarly, lack of being given mentorship as an assignment by the managers made its implementation not possible. More so, there were no targets on student mentorship as well as measurement methods on how to ensure that mentorship was implemented and effectively. Students were therefore left to maneuver their own way out in the institution without regard to their personal and anticipated professional growth.

3.3.2. Implications of Faculty Training on Student Mentorship

Participants felt that their not being actively involved in student mentorship was mostly attributed to their lack of training on the same. One participant said…

"How do you expect us to fumble around lying to ourselves …. When you know… you know…and when you don't know…you don't know. If the management feels mentorship is a good thing… and of course it is…they should train us". (PI,5).

Another participant said….

"Let them train us first… then assign us…we shall be working on what we know and someone can even require an output from you. Otherwise I can plainly say… student support is unavailable" "The kind of work we do here… I don't think if that mentorship can fit in… unless we readjust downwards in terms of work load" (P2,5).

Majority of the respondents felt that training is the game changer that will impact on the outcomes in the leaners. There was a consensus from the respondents that with training the learner will have positive outcomes both I their academics where both knowledge and skill will be enhanced as well as their social adjustment to university life and the profession as a whole.

3.3.3. Implications of Faculty Perception on BScN Student Mentorship

Concerning faculty perception, it is clear that peer mentorship is a key strategy to achieving student positive academic performance and social adjustment as demonstrated by all the respondents that strongly agreed to the fact. In as much as majority of the respondents did not agree to having peer mentorship as a separate programme within the schools, they felt that it was worth being integrated within the programme. The virtue of adequate mentorship could not be underscored as the faculty felt that if well-structured it was able to relief undue pressure on faculty while empowering the learner through peer mentorship. Where constant interaction with learners is embraced, respondents expressed their feeling that this could lead to improvement in communication skills and abilities not only within the faculty but also within the student fraternity.

One respondent said…

"Mentorship is the way to go… with this generation of students…. Without mentorship…we can say goodbye to professionalism in nursing." (P4,1).

Another said…

"The kind of environment these students are exposed to in the universities compared to high school experience is like heaven and earth…schools need to wake up to the reality that they need support…. otherwise teaching and teaching alone cannot transform them." (P4,6)

Another said…..

"By the way viewing mentorship from diverse perspectives…. In is imperative that we shift our thoughts on what is able to work in our circumstances. We all appreciate that the status of student support is not effective. Eh…can we look at models such as peer mentoring, explore and see what happens instead of ever complaining?" (P4,5).

3.4. Perception of Faculty on BScN Peer Mentorship

From the study, none of the institutions reported to be having or utilizing student peer mentors to support the students. However, majority reported that they have witnessed students being supported by their fellow students either by their own volition or when they are referred by the specific lectures. When asked what they think about peer mentorship among the students, majority felt that it was a long overdue idea that needed to be adopted. One respondent said…..

"This is a long overdue thing; it needs to be brought on board as soon as yesterday". There is some form of maturity exhibited by some senior students that when tapped into can be helpful in supporting the juniors." (P3,6).

Another respondent said…

"In fact we have upgrading students here who can support these young ones to maneuver their way through the university…its just a matter of finding out which model actually works for us … the need for peer mentorship is ripe…in fact, we better get started." (P2,3).

Another respondent said…

"I believe it is something evidence based, it has been found to be working elsewhere in other countries, we can try it and see…i have personally read about it severally in literature and belief it can be the game changer we are thinking of ". (P2,2)

This was a clear indicator that the respondent had a willingness to adopt peer mentorship activities in their institution if initiated.

Another respondent said…

"We cannot underscore the fact that students in themselves are a resource and so when supporting their peers…information sharing is achieved which eventually leads to change in behavior reflected across all the domains of learning… I even believe that we struggle with challenges of workload because we have not just found the chemistry of this peer mentoring." (P4,1)

4. Discussion

Mentorship as a professional relationship, adequate communication and interaction with mentors in any kind of mentorship relationship had demonstrated to be having a distinct positive impact on their academic performance and social development hence a necessity (10). In as much as the study identifies with this reality, the present study did not establish any kind of training conducted to faculty to support them in mentoring thus creating a somewhat negative perception. Faculty reported more satisfying relationships when they received training and this relates to the current study that demonstrates the feeling of inadequacy that was demonstrated by faculty towards mentoring and the subsequent unwillingness to take up the mentoring activities as expressed in their focused group discussions. This was an expectation of the faculty at entry into training in addition to expecting the workshop to cover areas related to the process, relationship, personal development and roles of faculty mentors, a finding similar to this study that participant feel there is need to be taken through the mentoring process through training to better understand and apply the roles expected (6).

Collier reported that to ensure that the learners are successful, several forms of mentorship needed to be utilized to include group, staff -student, hierarchal and peer mentoring among others yet faculty in this study could not account to any form of mentorship being applied (11). Fountain & Newcomer in their study were able to identify the groups at risk of experiencing stress and uncertainties and the mentoring support accorded which was unlike for the current study since in as much as the need was felt, the compelling pressure of the workload could not be overcome (4).

On the other hand, MacMillan et al reported how students talked of great experiences emanating from peer mentorship, an indication that if well-structured can yield positive outcomes to learners.(12) These findings are well echoed in this study when the faculty express themselves on the likely benefits of the peer mentoring and the dire need for it. The massive willingness to adopt mentorship if structured was a positive indication of their perception towards the same.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, several factors were found to influence BScN student mentorship to include their workload, mentorship training and perception on training as well as perception on mentorship and peer mentorship. It was clear that with adequate training and support in term, BScN student mentorship, students would be provided an environment nurturing all-round growth and development and therefore recommended mentorship for BScN students in universities in Kenya.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed

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