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Mentors' Perspectives on the Mentor–Mentee Relationship in High School Mentoring Programs

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Yasmin Ahmed

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Walden University
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Abstract

Mentors' Perspectives on the Mentor–Mentee Relationship in High School Mentoring

Programs

by

Yasmin Ahmed

MA, Walden University 2009

MS, National University 2005

BS, San Diego State University 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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Abstract

Mentoring improves high school students' academic outcomes by enhancing their engagement and educational attainment and reducing school dropout rates. The mentoring relationship is one of the identified factors in successful mentoring programs' outcome. Previous research mainly focused on investigating the relationship from the mentee's perspective. There is limited research regarding the relationship of professional mentors who work in programs that have been designed to engage mentees at the high school level. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore the mentor–mentee relationship with high-school-aged mentees from the mentors' perspective. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory was used to provide a holistic understanding of the lived experience within the mentor–mentee relationship. Twelve participants who have mentored high school level mentees in the state of Maryland participated in semistructured interviews via Skype or Zoom. Data were analyzed using IPA principles. Results of this study showed that participants used various approaches to gain the mentee's trust and establish rapport. They adjusted their strategies to meet their mentees' needs. Participants described short- and long-term rewards in their mentoring tasks. This study may bring about positive social change by creating awareness of what makes a productive mentoring relationship, which in turn may positively effect student achievement and future success.

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Dedication

With this accomplishment as well as everything in my life I must give the glory first and foremost to God Almighty because He is the Alpha and Omega, and He has and continues to make all things possible in my life. There were many obstacles I encountered during the culmination of my Dissertation to include multiple family deaths, life threatening issues, and other challenges but God continued to Bless my journey through each Dissertation phase and allowed me to make it through to this conclusion. He also showed me my next steps which have included launching a nonprofit that will address the issues and lack of awareness regarding mental health and mentorship within the County I reside in. It is one of the richest counties with the worst school systems. We are failing our youth and it must stop immediately. They are our future, and we are accountable to them.

Also, I dedicate this Dissertation to all the mentors, future, past, and present that have committed their lives to others well-being while making their own personal sacrifices. Finally, I dedicate this Dissertation to the mentees that have benefited from the mentorship of the mentors that I had the honor of interviewing for my study. My goal is to ensure mentoring is evaluated fully for its usefulness, because if early research indications are correct, mentoring has the capacity to revolutionize how we educate and support our youth. There is a need for greater community involvement and funding to help establish mentoring programs in districts around the state and country.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for without Him I would not have made it. I thank my deceased parents for having me and for be a shining example when it came to their academic pursuits and for my mother always making me feel as though I could achieve any dream that I set my mind to. I would also like to thank my close friends and those I consider my family for their support as I chose to embark on this journey. I would also like to thank my doctoral committee who was a guiding light throughout my Doctoral journey. To Dr. Elizabeth Clark, who retired as my committee chair, thank you for tolerating my perspectives and entertaining my hard headedness and getting me through to my approved Proposal and Oral Defense. or their invaluable insight and leadership. To Dr. Susana Verdinelli, my committee chair, who took over at chapter 4 and got me across the finish line sooner than anticipated and was always there with encouragement and supportive comments. Thank you to Dr. Rynearson and Dr. Talpade for your prompt and insightful feedback. I appreciate all the assistance that my committee provided throughout all the phases of my dissertation.

Finally, I thank all my participants who volunteered their time to participate in my study and additionally I thank them and all the mentors that are making a difference in the lives of mentees throughout Prince George County, Maryland. Because of you I can show Prince George County officials and educational institutions the need for formal mentorship programs so others like yourselves can make an impact on the youth of today.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Educational mentoring is defined as the pairing of an experienced individual with an inexperienced person to provide support and guidance and to facilitate educational and social development (Smith, 2015). Educational mentoring can be structured as a dyadic (one-to-one) psychosocial intervention and can be employed across a range of educational settings and age groups (Doblhofer et al., 2017).

Educators have successfully implemented mentoring to prevent or remediate negative academic outcomes, including disengagement, lack of attainment, and dropping out (Mims & Waddell, 2015). Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America has been providing positive role models and building social skills for more than a century to ensure that young people acquire 21st century skills (Alfonso et al., 2019). However, most formal mentoring programs are relatively novel, and researchers have only recently begun to rigorously evaluate their impact on changing at-risk youth's perspectives and providing opportunities for them to achieve better life outcomes. While a variety of mentoring and counseling programs have emerged around the world in recent years, their effectiveness in improving student outcomes and social skills remains unknown in literature. It is acknowledged that mentoring programs are expected to decrease depression and negative academic outcomes (Callahan, 2016; Fountain & Newcomer, 2016). However, despite numerous mentoring programs in schools and communities, poor academic performance and school dropouts occasioned by depression are a worrying trend across the country (Kalpazidou et al., 2016). According to Fried (2019), the rate of suicide among students attributed to depression is still high among

students. On this account, it is plausible to affirm that mentoring the students to address depression can have a positive effect on reducing suicidal rates. This provides reasons to conduct a qualitative study to gain insights into mentoring programs for high school students.

Educational mentoring has been used successfully to prevent or remediate negative social outcomes, including substance use and gang involvement by potential mentees (Jenson & Fraser, 2016). Some mentoring programs are open to students who have received a referral from a teacher, parent, or another concerned individual (Nakkula & Harris, 2015). Humbred and Rouse (2016) emphasize that the success of educational mentoring programs in improving outcomes for mentees has elicited support from the U.S. government in the extensive funding over several decades.

Researchers have only recently begun to explore factors that influence the success of mentoring relationships, and most previous research on those factors has been focused on investigating the relationship from the mentee's perspective rather than the mentor's perspective (Doblhofer et al., 2017). However, mentor experience, mentor–mentee identification, and mentoring style are known to contribute to the engagement and satisfaction of mentees, which, in turn, are associated with positive mentoring outcomes (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Exploring the perspectives of mentors is essential in gaining positive outcomes. Doblhofer et al. (2017) posit that the dependence of the factors on the mentor's discretion and influence, the dearth of literature on mentors' perceptions and lived experience leave a significant determinant of mentorship outcomes largely unexplored.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to provide a detailed understanding of mentors' lived experience about educational mentoring programs for high school students. The study findings fill the empirical gap by focusing on this aspect from the perspective of mentors for better understanding. The study is expected to positively impact society by creating awareness of what makes a productive mentoring relationship and outcomes for high school students. The research could aid the school's policymaker in improving education mentoring programs for students. Hence, this may have a positive effect on student academic achievement. Ultimately, families, and society, in general will reap the benefits of an educated population.

Chapter 1 will address the background, problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Additionally, I will identify the research questions and explain the theoretical foundation, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

Past studies in the field of mentoring focused largely on the impacts of mentors on mentees. However, few studies are reporting on both mentors and mentees, and if any, very few have focused on the lived experience in the mentor–mentee relationship from the mentor's perspective (Smith, 2015). The research on mentoring is extensive, but there is a gap in the literature that is combining the mentor's lived experience in a mentor–mentee relationship and especially in a school environment (Smith, 2015). While informal mentoring is likely as old as humanity, formal mentoring programs are relatively recent. Most mentoring programs are either school- or community-based

mentoring programs, and over 70% of mentorship programs in the United States are school based (Edlund, 2019). The most common programs include peer- and teacher-based school, situational, development, and career mentoring programs (Holmes et al., 2018).

In the typical mentoring model, an experienced person (the mentor) assists a disadvantaged, at-risk young person (the mentee) in developing the skills and knowledge to enhance professional and personal growth (Aschenbrener et al., 2017). This relationship can be one-to-one or group mentoring, in which one mentor is assigned a group of mentees. Many mentoring programs and models seek to build strong positive relationships between (mostly) at-risk youth or students and mentors. These programs work by helping mentees develop self-esteem, motivation, tenacity, trustworthiness, perseverance, and resiliency, among other noncognitive skills, and to reduce personal, familial, and social barriers that prevent young people from valuing school and succeeding academically (Aschenbrener et al., 2017). Mentors may help mentees build social and cultural skills-such as study habits, style of speech, dress, and physical appearance to guide them through secondary school and the transition to college.

Because of the gap in the research, there is a need to close the gap that exists by providing a detailed understanding of the essence of the lived experience and meaning-making processes of the mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships. The mentoring relationship is an efficient instructional method, which is less promoted in an educational setting, and identifying various mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships could be beneficial (Doblhofer et al., 2017). Qualitative research by

Humberd and Rouse (2016) discussed how mentor identification is an integral process within the mentoring relationship as it impacts the quality of the relationship over time.

Rigorous analyses of mentoring programs find positive but modest effects, with the most disadvantaged or at-risk youth benefiting the most (Lucey & White, 2017). The evidence indicates that mentoring programs tend to be better at improving youth's noncognitive and social skills than their academic performance (Kalpazidou et al., 2016). There is evidence that benefits dissipate quickly over time, and that programs can backfire, especially in the long term (Rhodes, 2000). Young people tend to be among the big losers of many economic and financial crises, with their rates of unemployment frequently double those of the adult population in many developed and developing countries (Rodríguez-Planas, 2012). Beyond the scarring effects of joblessness on future earnings, job satisfaction, health, and family formation, other severe consequences of joblessness are poverty, violence, and social instability. Understanding what mechanisms can improve youth's opportunities is a top priority on many government agendas. Mentoring and counseling programs are one type of intervention that aims to help youth achieve better outcomes. Humberd and Rouse (2016) affirmed that mentors seek to assess the unmet needs of at-risk youth and the barriers they face and then facilitate access to a service mix that can address both needs and barriers.

Recently, researchers have begun to explore factors influencing the success of mentoring relationships, and most previous research on those factors has been focused on investigating the relationship from the mentee's perspective (Doblhofer et al., 2017). However, Humberd and Rouse (2016) disagreed with previous research citing that

mentor experience, mentor–mentee identification, and mentoring style contribute to mentee engagement and satisfaction, which, in turn, generate positive mentoring outcomes.

A qualitative analysis of factors influencing the success of mentoring relationships revealed that mentors' perceptions of the youths, the environment in which their mentees were situated, and their role as mentors impact the mentor–mentee relationship (Lakind et al., 2015). According to Lakind et al. (2015), mentors viewed the environment and age as other factors influencing the mentor–mentee relationship. Several other risk factors, such as behavioral problems or heightened familial stressors, influenced the mentor–mentee relationship. Lakind et al. noted that mentors with higher levels of self-efficacy and more experience of dealing with youth in their communities were able to buffer against the issues faced in the mentoring process. This usually leads to higher rates of success than inexperienced mentors and those with low levels of self-efficacy. Lakind et al. affirmed that some of the major challenges faced by the mentors include tracking outcomes of the mentoring process and setting goals for the mentees. Addressing such challenges could enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring process.

As this brief review of the previous literature indicates, most of the previous research has focused on investigating the mentor–mentee relationship from the mentee's perspective (Doblhofer et al., 2017). Thus, there is a gap in the literature related to mentors' perceptions and lived experience of the educational mentoring relationship, and additional research is needed to explore those perspectives (Doblhofer et al., 2017; Schwarz & Rhodes, 2016). The current study helped fill the gap in the literature on the

essence of the lived experience and meaning making processes of the mentors' lived experience in the mentor–mentee relationship. This study can provide practitioners and education policymakers with valuable insights for improving the effectiveness of mentorship programs and improving mentor–mentee relationship (Schwarz & Rhodes, 2016). As noted by Heffen et al. (2017), this has the potential to result in better academic and social outcomes for the mentees. Specifically, the findings from the study in the Prince George County high schools may be used and replicated in other school districts with similar demographics.

This study offers a deep understanding of the meaning of the mentors' lived experience within the construct of the mentor–mentee relationship. As the relationship between mentor and mentee continues to become a component in achieving student success, it is vitally important that policymakers and school districts gain a better understanding of how to meet the specific needs of students at each high school level. It is my goal that the findings from this study offer glimpses into some essential factors that need to be put in place, such as better equipped mentors, strategic mentor/mentee pairing, and prescriptive mentor activities for mentees at different high school levels. The findings from the study in the Prince George County high schools may be applicable to other school districts with similar demographics.

Problem Statement

A mentor is considered a *natural mentor* when there is an unstructured but important relationship with a young person (Rhodes, 2005). Natural mentors, those adults that many former students will later say made a significant difference in their lives, may

include teachers, youth leaders, coaches, or family members. Many teachers will informally assist a student, or the student will enjoy hanging out in the teacher's classroom before or after school, and the relationship has meaning to the student. These relationships, because they are not part of a formal referral or matching procedure, are considered natural mentoring relationships (Rhodes, 2005). In a review of research by Herrara and Karcher (2014), the researchers found several studies that showed "having natural mentors in schools is associated with an increased likelihood of graduation and postsecondary education" (p. 207).

At a time when more pressure is on schools to be accountable for students' success, it is also a time of diminishing resources for nonacademic programs (Randolph & Johnson, 2008). As DuBois and Karcher (2014) summarized, "The one thing we can be sure about the future is that there will likely never come a day when there are enough programmatic mentors to meet the needs of all youth who could benefit from a mentor" (p.530). Schools may look for more structured resources for volunteers to help increase available volunteers to be mentors. Programs such as AmeriCorps' Promise Fellows provide full-time volunteers in schools and community organizations.

In academia, researchers have focused primarily on the social and educational benefits of mentoring relationships for mentees within the general high school-aged population (Schwarz & Rhodes, 2016). There is limited research regarding the experiences of professional mentors who work in programs that have been designed to engage mentees at the high school level (Schwarz & Rhodes, 2016). This research study practices an example of a formal form of mentoring, and an example of such a program is

the Big Brother Big Sister (Herrera et al., 2011) which has been established in the youth development field to nurture the development of adolescents, specifically those experiencing some form of an impediment to the development (Kram, 1983). Formal youth mentoring programs provide formalized frameworks within which the establishment and development of mentor–mentee relationships are supported and supervised. Within this frame, the work of youth mentors has generally addressed the social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development of "at-risk" mentees (Rhodes, 2005). For instance, some of the programs such as School based management (SBM) programs have been established in the United Kingdom's education system.

Factors such as mentor–mentee identification, mentor experience, and mentoring style contribute to mentee engagement and satisfaction, which, in turn, contribute to mentorship success (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Through mentors, the mentees are encouraged in one-on-one talks and discussions which equip the mentees with the necessary skills and the characteristics needed for them to succeed both academically and in their career.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to use the paradigm of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to provide a detailed interpretation of mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships with high school-aged mentees. This study examined how the experiences of the mentor shape the essence of the social, personal, and professional worlds of the mentor. The focus of the study was on the mentor. I analyzed the interview data utilizing IPA, from which the lived experience

and the meaning-making experiences of the participants are being described (Smith, 2015). According to Smith (2015), IPA design was well suited for a phenomenological study to gather the data and analyze the transcripts of the lived experience of current mentors, focusing on their reflections and describing the meaning-making processes. My research study goal was to provide an understanding of the lived experience from the mentor's point of view and frame of reference within the mentoring relationships.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study focus on understanding the lived experience of mentors who have worked with high school-aged mentees.

- **RQ1:** What is the lived experience of mentors in the mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level?

- **RQ2:** What is the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship for the mentor?

Theoretical Foundation

To gain a deep understanding of the experiences of mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships with high school-level students, I used Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. Social constructivists consider learning as an active process in which learners discover principles, ideas, experiences, and realities for themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory's referencing of the learner as an active participant in the learning process is contrasted with an alternative in which the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge conveyed by an instructor (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivist theorists (Vygotsky, 1978) developed the social constructivist theory with an emphasis that learning cannot be separated from social experiences, and that knowledge is a shared

understanding between individuals whose communication is grounded in common interests and experiences (Kang, 2018; Soysal & Radmard, 2018). The focus in this study was on mentors' experiences of the mentor–mentee relationship. Social constructivist theory is an appropriate model because of its focus on the influence of the teacher–learner relationship on learning outcomes. By focusing on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, I was able to understand the role of a mentor and the meanings of the relationships. This study concurred with the research conducted by Shanks et al. (2012) whose interpretations concerning mentoring are that there is a point of departure for people to engage in conversations, take part in close collaborative working, and support the integration of off-the job learning into everyday practice. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory underscores the importance of receiving support from other people as well as individual effort and equal participation in the process of learning. The issue of investigation is the lack of understanding about the experiences of mentors regarding mentor–mentee relationships. Therefore, integrating the perspectives of Shanks et al. (2012) and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory could provide a detailed interpretation of mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships in high school-aged mentees. These perspectives are critical tools to aid interpretation of social, personal, and professional worlds and experiences of mentors while working with mentees. In aggregate, they guided me in interpreting and understanding the lived experience of mentors regarding the mentor–mentee relationship in high schools.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative. Within the qualitative tradition, the approach used is phenomenological and the methodology for this study was IPA (Smith, 2015). This approach and design were best for my study because the focus of a phenomenological study is to get to the essence of the meaning-making that the participants experience. Data collection was through video conferencing where I used semistructured interviews with 12 mentors who have worked with high school-level mentees in Prince George County, Maryland, in the past 4 years for 6 months or more. The IPA research design was used to interpret gathered data to reveal the essence of participants' lived experience of the mentor–mentee relationship and of how they make sense and meaning of mentoring in their personal, professional, and social worlds. The three-step IPA procedure described by Smith and Osbourn (2008) was used to analyze the data. Chapter 3 of this study provides more details about this procedure.

Definitions

The following terms will be used in this study:

- **Mentoring**. "Nurturing process in which a skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels a less skilled or less experienced person to promote the latter's professional and/or personal development" (Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p. 40).

- **Mentee**. Someone who is given support and advice about their job by a mentor (i.e., a more experienced person who helps them; (Kram, K. E., 1985).

- **Mentor**. A person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school (Kram, K. E., 1985).

Assumptions

This study considered certain assumptions concerning the design of the research. Assumptions are notions that are believed to be true but are unable to be verified. The assumption in this study was that participants were honest and accurate in giving their interview responses. This assumption is necessary because self-report is the known data source that was used to gain a deep understanding of the perceptions and meaning-making processes of the participants in this study to develop a description of the essence of their lived experience.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to the lived experience of mentors who have worked with high school mentees. Previous literature research on mentorship in education has given and emphasized the perspectives of mentees, leaving a gap in the literature on the perspectives of mentors in educational mentorship.

This study was restricted to interviews with high school level mentors in Prince George County high schools in the state of Maryland. The exclusion includes the experiences of mentors at other levels other than high school and mentors outside Prince George County. I was not interested in interviewing the mentees to get the experiences of the mentee in the mentor–mentee relationship. The participants' race, socioeconomic status, and education level were not taken into consideration in this study.

The delimitation of the study population to mentors who have worked with high school students may limit the transferability of the findings to other populations and samples due to familiarity with subjects and data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To assist future researchers in assessing the transferability of the findings to their research contexts, rich descriptions of the sample and the participants' responses were included in the presentation of results.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

The findings of this research were limited to the population of high school level mentors working in Prince George County in the state of Maryland and did not apply to those in other geographical areas.

I had biases in favor of mentors making all reasonable accommodations to ensure the success of mentoring relationships and, as a result, there was a risk that I placed undue emphasis on data that confirmed my bias and deemphasized data that conflicted with it. To minimize the potentially distorting influence of my biases on the study results, I engaged in a continual process of reflection and notated my biases during data collection, analysis, and reporting. I continually questioned my automatic interpretations of participants' responses to ensure my preconceptions were not obscuring intended meanings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings, I used member checking to mitigate the impact of possible bias. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a qualitative technique that is used by researchers to test and establish the tenet of credibility in trustworthiness of the results, mainly when primary data collection methods are used (Nowell et al., 2017). In so doing, credibility was enhanced through member

checking as I sent the participants their transcripts to be sure their thinking was accurately captured (Birt et al., 2016).

Despite the large body of evaluation literature on mentoring programs, not enough is known about their effectiveness. Most of the evidence comes from the United States, and few of the studies examine youth empowerment outcomes. More evaluation is needed of the long-term impacts of mentoring programs considering the findings of diminishing effects over time-and of detrimental effects in some cases. Studies need to take a broader, multi-angle focus on the effects of the program on young people's lives, including employment outcomes, earnings, risky behaviors, and other measures of family life and physical and mental well-being.

Significance

The mentoring relationship is an intervention for engaging mentees in education and positive pursuits, while providing positive role-models where these may be lacking in a young person's life (Spencer et al., 2016).

Through my results, I have provided evidence to teachers that mentoring students is beneficial when office hours, student tutoring, and other methods of aiding struggling students did not yield positive results. The research may be helpful to practitioners and researchers as it identified some tasks and activities by which mentors can engage in formal communication, and thus help youths how to learn and how to teach for those who have a career path in teaching. Evaluations of mentoring programs find positive but modest effects, especially for females, the most disadvantaged or at-risk youths. The results vary depending on the characteristic of the individuals involved and the quality of

the relationships formed between mentors and mentees (Rhodes, 2008). However, there

are concerns that the benefits dissipate over time and that, in some cases, like case

management where the expertise and characteristics of the mentor play an important role,

these programs may worsen outcomes for some mentees (Vehovar et al., 2016). This

assertion underscores the important role of mentor characteristics and expertise in the

success of mentoring programs.

Considering the potentially unintended medium- to long-term effects of some of

these programs, through the help of the findings of this study, policymakers,

practitioners, and researchers should be able to design programs and evaluations to better

identify who benefits most (and least) and why so that programs can be tailored to the

problems and needs of youths. I recommended future studies and data collection to focus

on a broad spectrum of life outcomes (including noncognitive skills) over a long period

through my findings. Experts agree that the benefits of mentoring programs are greater

for the most disadvantaged and at-risk youth and increase with the quality of the mentor–

mentee relationship. Studies have emphasized that activities aiming to improve youth's

social and emotional skills are most effective among younger children, who are more

receptive and malleable, and youth whose individual or environmental circumstances

place them most at-risk. However, while it may be effective to intervene with youth

considered most at-risk based on environmental characteristics or both individual and

environmental characteristics, one study cautions that few benefits have been found in

programs that identify youth for intervention based solely on individual characteristics

(such as academic failure) since few benefits from mentoring have been identified for such a group.

Another key element in determining effectiveness is program quality. When mentors build strong personal relationships with mentees, the positive effects tend to endure, as the benefits of greater socialization and integration into mainstream society foster further personal and emotional development. Indeed, secondary analyses of both school- and community-based programs such as Big Brother Big Sister of America interventions find that outcomes depend on the quality of the mentoring relationships (Rhodes, 2008), with greater benefits for mentees in stronger relationships and neutral or even negative outcomes.

Summary

This study offered a deep understanding of the meaning of the mentors' lived experience within the construct of the mentor–mentee relationship. As the relationship between mentor–mentee continues to become a critical component in achieving student success, it is vitally important that policymakers and school districts gain a better understanding of how to meet the specific needs of students at each high school level. The findings from the study in the Prince George County high schools may be used by other school districts with similar demographics.

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the study along with its background, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. In Chapter 2, I will present relevant literature related to the importance of the mentor–mentee relationship. The literature I review will

both lay the groundwork for the study and demonstrate the need for an exploration of this

phenomenon using the IPA paradigm.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem being addressed in this study was that little is known about mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships with high school-aged mentees. By developing a greater understanding of what it means to be a mentor, I hoped that the findings might better inform practices on matching mentors and mentees. The research into the positive effects of mentorship programs is in its infancy, which suggests, according to quantitative studies by Duke et al. (2017), Humbred and Rouse (2016), and Stump et al. (2018), that mentor–mentee matches may have largely been based on qualification at face value and on convenience. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to use the paradigm of IPA to provide a detailed interpretation of the essence of the lived experience and meaning-making processes of the mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships (see Smith, 2015).

To get an understanding of the experiences that mentors have when mentoring students, it is critically important to underscore the outcomes that are linked to taking an active role as a peer mentor in a high school. However, because limited research has been conducted on the topic, to get a deeper understanding of the outcomes of high school mentoring experiences where mentors are concerned, this chapter will address my literature search strategy, theoretical framework, types of mentoring programs, experiences of mentees, teacher-led mentoring programs, peer-led mentoring, and current research on mentoring programs. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key areas discussed before transitioning into the methodology chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

To retrieve and abstract sources that were used in this literature review analysis, I used the following databases: PubMed Central, Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, PsycINFO, UpToDate, PubMed, Psycharticles, ProQuest, PsychInfo, Academic Premier, Sage, JSTOR, ResearchGate, EMBASE, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, Emerald, EBSCO, and Elsevier. To increase the accuracy and reliability of the sources used, I ensured that only sources published from 2015 onwards were included. The keywords and keyword phrases used were *mentoring experiences*, *learning experiences*, *mentor–mentee relationship*, *mentoring perceptions*, *mentees*, *perceptions*, *attributes of a mentor*, *benefits of mentoring*, and *mentors' perceptions of mentoring*. All articles were limited to the 5-year range since the date of publication to ensure that current information was used to investigate the topic.

Theoretical Foundation

To gain a deep understanding of the experiences of participants in mentoring high school students, I used the social constructivist model. Social constructivists accentuate that an individual's cognitive functions, such as learning, are contingent and determined by the nature of interactions that the person has with others (Vygotsky, 1978), including teachers, mentors, peers, and parents (Soysal & Radmard, 2018). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learning or mentoring is dictated by the mentor's and mentee's personal qualities in a collaborative process with the educational or training framework within a social context (Vygotsky, 1978). Mentors' and mentees' attitudes and values are critical in the mentoring process, and according to the proponents of the social constructivism

theory, such attributes as emotional intelligence and communication skills define the nature of relations between a mentor and mentee and subsequently the resulting experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivists emphasize that learning should be conceptualized beyond the primary assimilation of novel knowledge by individuals, but as the foundational process through which learners get integrated into a knowledge community (Kang, 2018). The social constructivist model was vital in explaining mentoring as a learning process for improving student achievement and success in life. By focusing on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, I was able to understand the role of a mentor and the meanings of the relationships and, therefore, was able to gain an insight into RQ1.

Social constructivists believe that learning is influenced by the environment; rather, it is related to the current knowledge with the new information from the mentor to mentee (Vygotsky, 1978). In turn, such information can be incorporated in expanding the present understanding and develop a new perception toward a given phenomenon. In this regard, the relationship between the mentor and mentee determined the nature of experiences that each party has toward each other (Carroll, 2018). A successful learner is the one who will embed new knowledge within the old and for whom the new understanding expands to include the new experiences, including those that are determined by social interaction between them (Vygotsky, 1978). Bozkurt (2017) noted that social constructivists presume that learners' views relating to the acquisition of new knowledge are often subjective because each individual is likely to interpret his or her experiences through pre-existing frameworks coupled with their social experiences.

Concerning the nature of learning experiences, social constructivists uphold that learning is a real-life adaptive problem-solving that takes place in a predefined social context through shared experiences and conversation with other people such that new ideas are harmonized against current knowledge (Kang, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism places the focus on the learner as part of a social group and learning as something that emerges from group interactions, not as something that takes place within the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is seen as an active and socially engaged process that has varying experiences, not one of a passive development in response to external forces (Soysal & Radmard, 2018). To the social constructivists, to learn is to see the meaning or significance of a social experience or concept. As a result, social constructivists recognize the exceptionality and complexity of individual learners and experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

The nature of reality in social constructivism is fashioned not discovered through human activity. According to social constructivists, the process of sharing individual perspectives, experiences, and collaborative elaboration (Carroll, 2018) results in learners constructing a new understanding together that would not be possible when alone (Soysal & Radmard, 2018). Vygotsky (1978) maintained that while it is probable for individuals to have shared experiences and meanings, which are exchanged through discussion, it recognizes that no two persons will have the same experiences with the same individuals. To this extent, social constructivists assume that multiple realities exist regarding experiences that mentors have within the social context, which sometimes is culturally diverse (Vygotsky, 1978).

Social constructivists consider learning purely as an active process whereby learners ought to learn to discover principles, ideas, experiences, and realities for themselves (Bozkurt, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). The proponents of this theory do not consider a class as a place where the teacher or mentor discharge new knowledge into passive students, as an alternative, it underlines how students must be actively involved in the learning process or experiences. The focus of social constructivists is regarding the role that social interactions, experiences, and social processes play in creating and sharing knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning could not be separated from social experiences. Knowledge is a shared understanding among individuals whose interaction is based on common interests and experiences that form the ground for their communication (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, the research built on key constructs of social constructivist theory such as social learning and attributes of mentors and mentors to describe their experiences, which according to Vygotsky is determined by social interactions. Therefore, integrating the perspectives of Shanks et al. (2012) and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory could provide a detailed interpretation of the mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships in high school-aged mentees; and therefore, provide an insight into the RQ2.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

In this section, I discuss various areas relating to mentors' experiences. I will show that mentoring and subsequent experiences are a widely researched topic through an evaluation of the existing literature. However, to maintain the focus of the study, I will divide this discussion of the literature into the following sections: Types of Mentoring,

Attributes of the Mentor, Mentor Experiences, Effective Mentoring Programs, Benefits of

Mentoring Programs, Current Research on Mentoring Experiences, and Summary and

Conclusions.

Types of Mentoring Programs

The concept of mentoring has received a lot of attention from scholars because of

its perceived importance in assisting people to attain their professional or academic goals.

According to Akella (2018), *mentoring* is defined as the process through which an adult

provides supportive guidance and care to a younger person. Akella acknowledged

mentoring as a form of "non-parental relationship" between two people to promote

positive health outcomes for each other. In this type of relationship, Van et al. (2016)

suggested that the mentor has the responsibility of providing psychological or emotional

guidance, to individuals who experience psychological and emotional distress.

According to Duke et al. (2017), limiting mentoring to only non-parental

relationships is wrong since the end-goal of any form of guidance and encouragement is

to develop skills and competencies in the protégé. Duke et al. argued that when defining

the concept of mentoring, scholars need to focus on the intended outcomes of the process

rather than the prior relationship that exists between the mentor and the mentee. The

general idea is that mentoring involves a person receiving guidance, care, encouragement,

and direction from an expert who is a more experienced person to enhance their chances

of achieving their goals (Chhibber, 2019).

In the existing literature, there are different types of mentoring programs, such as

school-based including teacher-led mentoring and community-based mentoring

programs, which include peer-led mentoring Sourk et al. (2019). The specific settings in which the mentoring process takes place forms the fundamental difference between the community-based and the school-based settings (Sourk et al., 2019). In community-based mentoring, the mentor offers their services to the mentee outside the scope of school activities (Sourk et al., 2019). On the contrary, school-based mentoring entails the mentor and the mentee meeting in a school environment that is defined by formal rules such as meeting hours and duration of lessons (Sourk et al., 2019). Whereas Sourk et al. (2019) only identified the two settings in which mentoring is effective, other scholars have evaluated the effectiveness of each environment in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired. In the subsequent sections, further discussion of the mentoring programs is provided.

Planned mentoring and natural mentoring are the two types of mentoring. Planned mentoring is structured and programmed while natural mentoring can be undertaken through activities such as coaching, teaching, counseling, and friendship (Bozkurt, 2017). Beginning teachers can be supported through mentoring. It is one of the methods through which their skills are enhanced and reduces their chances of leaving the teaching sector (Callahan, 2016). The mentoring programs that schools develop should be carefully selected per the background and needs of the teachers. When the programs go against the teacher's values, their motivation level will be much lower, thus increasing turnover in learning institutions. To improve education, the mentoring of new teachers in the industry is essential (Campbell, 2019).

Community-Based Mentoring

According to McKinnon et al. (2017), community-based mentoring programs provide mentees with high levels of flexibility because they are not confined within a particular given environment, such as a location. Mentoring may take place at any convenient location. McKinnon et al. found that a higher degree of autonomy on the part of the mentees allowed them to be more creative than their counterparts on whom mentoring had been conducted within a confined school-based environment. However, Schenk et al. (2019) reported different findings suggesting that a school-based environment is more conducive for learning and issuing instructions and guidance. These contradicting results indicate an existing gap in the literature regarding whether a community-based or school-based mentoring program is more effective for mentoring.

Apart from the differentiation of community-based settings from school-based settings, Lyons et al. (2019) suggested two types of relationships between the mentor and the mentee: developmental versus instrumental. The core factors that assist researchers in differentiating between these two styles include purpose, focus, authorship over time, and patterns of interaction (Lyons et al., 2019). In a developmental relational model, it is the purpose of the mentor to create a profound relationship with the protégé to facilitate the mentoring process (Lyons et al., 2019). For the mentorship process to proceed effectively, the mentor and the mentee must be in a healthy relationship. Such a healthy relationship, as McQuillin and Lyons (2016) contended, allows the mentees to freely interact with the mentors, which increases their chances of getting quality support from

mentors. In the developmental model, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee grows over time (McQuillin & Lyons, 2016).

McQuillin and Lyons (2016) argued that in the community–based mentoring programs, the mentor–mentee relationship must include goal setting so that the mentor and mentee have a common focus that brings them together and maintains their relationship. For the mentoring process to be effective, the mentor and mentee must focus on a clearly defined purpose for which they came together. A typical example of the instrumental style was presented by Van Ginkel et al. (2016) in their study attempted to explore the importance of mentorship on students' engagement in school. In their study, Van Ginkel et al. indicated that the purpose of the mentor–mentee relationship was to improve students' engagement in school activities within the community. The researchers concluded that establishing a clear distinction between the instrumental and the developmental relationship styles is essential as it allows for clear understanding of the concept of mentoring (Van Ginkel et al., 2016).

School-Based Mentoring Programs

Since 2000, there has been a proliferation in the number of both school-based and community-based mentorship programs. However, the rise in the number of school-based programs has been much greater than the rate of growth in community-based ones. According to the findings reported by Edlund (2019), over 70% of mentorship programs in the United States were school based. Edlund reported that most mentors preferred school-based mentorship programs to community-based programs because the mentor–mentee relationship was highly organized in school-based mentoring programs. Edlund

reported that, in 2015, over 960,000 mentors were offering mentorship services to children in school environments.

Researchers have cited a few reasons for the popularity of school-based mentorship programs. Edlund (2019) noted that formal schooling is common in the United States. Because most children spend a significant portion of their time at school, it was only reasonable that adult mentors can only find these children at school (Lyons et al., 2019; Van Ginkel et al., 2016). Additionally, Schenk et al. (2019) asserted that the school environment offered not only a conducive environment but also several resources and facilities that would enhance mentorship. In research aimed at exploring mentorship among school-going children in the United States, Campbell (2019) reported the increased accountability of schools with regards to the performance of students as one of the most likely reasons for the proliferation of school-based mentorship programs.

School-based mentoring programs should be carefully selected per the background and needs of the teachers (Schenk et al., 2019). Similar thoughts are expressed by Sheehan et al. (2016) who noted that school-based mentoring programs go against the teacher's values, their motivation level will be much lower thus increasing turnover in learning institutions (Campbell, 2019). According to Sourk et al. (2019), the two major types of school-based mentoring programs are teacher-led programs and peer-led mentoring, which is discussed below because it is directly related to the topic studied when describing the experiences that instructors or teachers have when mentoring students.

Teacher-Led Mentoring Programs

According to Spencer et al. (2016), within the school environment, teachers are the main source of mentoring to students who have different problems, such as social, emotional, and even challenges relating to their academic performance**.** However, while they form a key source of psychological support and guidance to learners, Spencer et al. (2017) argued that teachers struggle during the early stages of their career as they find it difficult to provide effective mentoring to learners in a highly hostile environment. Similar thoughts are expressed by Callahan (2016) who contended that it is difficult for new teachers to develop their own identities and personalities for mentoring learners.

Peer-Led Mentoring

Peer mentoring is a relationship that involves a mentor and a mentee. In this section, the researcher discusses peer mentoring benefits for the mentor and the mentee. According to Gunn et al. (2017), peer mentoring decreases depression in mentees when compared to students not mentored. Furthermore, peer mentoring improved the persistence and motivation of mentees while mentors get a chance to learn more about themselves more so on their strengths and weaknesses. The mentoring process equally develops and improves their communication and time management skills (LaChenaye et al.,2019).

Several researchers agree that peer mentoring decreases depression since mentees feel accepted by the mentors (Callahan, 2016; Fountain & Newcomer, 2016). Fried (2019) established that depression is high among students who did not have mentors while there is a decrease among those who undergo mentoring. Peer mentoring enables

mentees to make friends and have a sense of belonging from their mentors (Collings et al.,2016). Equally, Callahan (2016) found that stress levels are low among students who are in peer mentoring relationships. In most cases, mentees usually share their stressful moments with their mentors thus are less likely to feel alone. Fountain and Newcomer (2016) affirmed that mentors are not judgmental and therefore, mentees always feel comfortable talking to them.

Gunn et al. (2017) note that mentees who open up about their feelings to a mentor who understands them experience reduced stress levels. Similar thoughts are shared by Kang (2018), who indicates that there is an increase in stress levels from fall to spring semesters among non-mentored students, whereas there is a decrease in stress levels among mentored students from fall to spring semesters. In their study, Fried (2019) states that peer mentoring relationships help students manage stress and depression, and this translates to improved classroom performance.

Mentees receive encouragement and support from their mentors, and this effects their persistence and motivation in school (Collings et al., 2016). Peer mentoring programs, as indicated by Tracy and Wallace (2016), positively inspire mentee students to study and graduate since the mentor supports and encourages the mentee. According to Gunn et al. (2017), consistent encouragement from the mentor improves persistence by the mentee. Fried (2019) share the same thoughts, that while non-mentored students have decreased academic motivation from fall to spring semester, mentored students record good academic motivation. In this regard, college drop-out is low among students who maintain motivation and persistence throughout the semester. The encouragement and

support provided by mentors to mentees have a positive influence on the retention rates of students in colleges (LaChenaye et al., 2019).

Collings et al. (2016) stated that mentoring helps the mentor discover more about themselves, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn helps them recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their mentees. Mentors' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses could help them understand who they are and how best they can learn, thereby improving their workplace knowledge (LaChenaye et al., 2019).

Communication is a key factor in the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (Nicholson et al., 2018). Mentored students, according to Fried (2019), tend to gain communication skills as compared to non-mentee students. Fountain and Newcomer (2016) further suggested that effective communication with each mentee is enhanced by the mentors' understanding of how to interact with different groups of people with diverse personalities. Effective communication during peer mentoring helps mentors grow in their careers. Collings et al. (2016) affirm that mentors have their schedules to manage as well, including attending classes, studying, and working. Kang's (2018) research results show that for mentors to teach time management to mentees, they ought to understand the topic, mentoring, thus helping mentors improve on their time management skills.

Attributes and Characteristics of the Mentor

Apart from types of mentorship settings and relationship styles, Schenk et al. (2019) have focused on the attributes that define a mentor. Exploration of these attributes such as pedagogical knowledge, communication skills, and emotional intelligence are

important because they allow mentors to adequately prepare before engaging in any

mentorship relationship. According to Holmes et al. (2018), a successful mentor has

effective critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to influence their

mentees into adopting certain behaviors or decisions deemed desirable and dropping

those that are deemed detrimental. Critical thinking skills assist the mentor in evaluating

their strengths and weaknesses in the mentoring relationship hence develop improvement

measures (Holmes et al., 2018). Effective critical thinking skills assist mentors in

assessing their subordinates and develop operative improvement plans for the mentees.

As Holmes et al. (2018) noted, emotional intelligence is among the essential skills

that a successful mentor must possess as it allows the construction of a profound and

strong relationship with the mentee. A strong and profound relationship is the precursor

to a fruitful mentor–mentee relationship (Kuperminc et al., 2020). Lastly, the ability to

influence assists the mentor to convince the mentee that particular decisions or behaviors

are wrong, and therefore should be dropped.

In their research, Waljee et al. (2019) argued that on top of the qualities that the

mentor must possess, the perception of both parties in the mentoring relationship

determines its success in terms of assisting mentees to realize certain pre-defined goals.

Findings from this study indicate that mentors claimed that the perceived mutual benefit

of the mentoring relationship was an important factor in enriching the relationship. In

research by Metcalf and Coggin (2016), mentors identified several barriers that hindered

effective mentoring of the students; hesitation on how to commence the mentoring

process, barriers in communicating with the student, intervention of the mentees' parents,

and schedule conflicts, especially in school-based settings. Metcalf and Coggin (2016) suggested that relationships in which mentors perceived these challenges were less likely to turn out successful (Hudson (2015).

Izadinia (2016) collected qualitative data from a sample of 50 adult mentors in the Netherlands. The purpose of the study by Izadinia (2016) was to evaluate the perceptions of mentors on the benefits of mentoring. According to the findings, the main benefit of mentoring was that it provided the mentors with an opportunity to contribute towards social development by nurturing young people into successful and responsible adults. In this light, mentors are expected to have the ability and skills to motivate mentees to gain positive social development to succeed in their future.

Hudson (2015) developed a mentoring model that consisted of five factors linked to the attributes of a mentor. The first factor includes the individual characters of a mentor. The attributes of a successful mentor include having a good and smooth flow of information between the mentor and the mentee, listening keenly about the views of the mentees, and supporting them during the process (Hudson, 2015). The mentor's character plays a major role in inspiring the mentees and raising their levels of self-confidence (Hudson, 2015). Personal attributes help mentees develop positive attitudes as they strive to emulate their mentors. System requirement is the second factor that directs mentors to communicate to their mentees the curriculum, objectives, and policies of the training system to be used. According to Hudson (2015), the process of executing these systems might be too complex, and therefore, mentors must explain it in depth to the mentees for effective learning.

The third attribute of a mentor is pedagogical knowledge which is an indication that mentors can plan for the teaching process (Hudson, 2015). In preparation for the process, the mentors must explain how resources will be used and the strategies to be employed. During the learning, as explained by Hudson (2015), mentors should have the capacity to help mentees in case they experience a problem.

The fourth factor is modeling, which acts as an indication of whether the mentor has the desired attributes to teach the mentees. Mentors need to have desirable characters that mentees can learn from. The relationship that exists between the mentor and the students is important in the learning process. A positive relationship, as explained by Hudson (2015), facilitates effective learning and acquisition of desired skills, competencies, and attributes by the mentees. Mentors need to develop good language and environment management during the mentoring process. Finally, Hudson (2015) stated that mentors could only be effective if they communicate expectations and give guidance to students and provide them with timely feedback regarding their performances. Mentees need to give back feedback about the training so that they can develop a better learning environment.

This model developed by Hudson (2015) showed that teachers could be supported to effectively to improve their teaching skills. Enhanced teaching practices, in turn, will have a positive influence on learning. As Hudson (2015) contended, supervision is necessary to ascertain whether instructions are followed, and is the best way of enhancing students' learning. Therefore, the school curriculums should be designed to include teaching strategies as well as evaluate whether they are feasible. To increase the

understanding of this model, mentors' experiences together with the mentor-student relationships were investigated through organized interviews. The results of this study aimed at developing ways through which mentor's needs can be improved, and their relationships with students enhanced (Hudson, 2015).

Benefits of Mentoring Programs

Among the many studies that focus on teacher retention, mentoring has been mentioned as an effective strategy for reducing turnover. As indicated by Akella (2018), institutions can carry out mentorship programs for as long as a year to ensure that the beginning teachers are motivated and equipped with necessary skills and knowledge. The right time for mentorship programs is during the beginning of a teacher's career (Campbell, 2019). The experienced teachers are expected to guide the novice ones on how to execute their duties.

Mentoring offers support to novice teachers in carrying out their duties (Akella, 2018). Specifically, mentoring assists the teachers to develop skills and knowledge that enhances their teaching strategies. In the study conducted by Chhibber (2019), it was reported that teachers' mentoring had a significant positive influence on their teaching practices especially those beginning their careers. Bozkurt (2017) found that training teachers on how to mentor children plays a significant role in the support of teachers to be effective in offering mentoring services to students who needed emotional and psychological support. A similar thought is expressed by Carroll (2018) who investigated the effectiveness of teacher-led mentoring programs in scholars and surveyed 76 teachers who were beginning their careers and had been subjected to mentorship programs in their

institutions. From the results, Carroll (2018) concluded that providing teachers with

support on how to handle mentees, in this case, students, positively influenced the self-

efficacy of teachers when mentoring students. Many of the teachers who took part in the

study agreed that mentoring had positively contributed to the quality of their teaching

(Campbell, 2019).

Bozkurt (2017) asserted that mentoring for teacher-led programs is vital in

helping beginning teachers to transition into experienced practitioners to offer valuable

mentoring services. The main objective of mentorship programs in schools is to ensure

that experienced teachers help the new ones on how to relate to students and adhere to

organization strategies that have been established (Bozkurt, 2017). Therefore because of

Spencer et al. (2016), learning institutions need to implement effective teacher-led

mentoring programs as they help teachers go through their first years which can be

stressful and tiresome.

According to Callahan (2016), little information is known regarding the use of

teachers as mentors for at-risk students. In their study, Metcalf and Coggin (2016),

examined programs within schools that involved at-risk students in middle school

subjected to mentorship programs from school-based mentors who were teachers. A total

of 35 teachers and other staff members met one-on-one with the students. The mentorship

programs were conducted for one full year with the students and teachers meeting twice

every week. The teachers and students worked on problem-solving, communication,

study, and good behavior as they aimed to improve the academic performances of the

students (Metcalf & Coggin, 2016). The study recorded a positive change in class

attendance and performance for students who took part. However, Metcalf and Coggin failed to investigate the experiences of the teachers who were mentors.

In another study, Bozkurt (2017) sought to find the role that teachers play as mentors of small groups of students in schools. The authors found out that mentorship programs in schools allowed teachers and students to relax and gave students hope that teachers were taking care of them regardless of their performances. As such, mentoring created a positive environment for learners in classrooms. According to Carroll (2018), teachers who took part in the study reported high levels of confidence. By interacting with different groups of students, the teachers were able to improve students' skills hence overcome their fears, particularly regarding establishing a profound connection with their mentors. Unlike other studies, Bozkurt's study involved a group of learners and not one-on-one situation. Similar findings are reported by Stump et al. (2018) who reported that Bozkurt stated that group learning is effective when the students are unresponsive and require close monitoring.

Another quantitative study was undertaken by Metcalf and Coggin (2016) that focused on finding the impact of mentorship programs on students between the age of 13 years and 15 years. The study used teachers and other staff members as mentors in the mentorship program, which lasted for 18 weeks. Unlike previous studies that focused on the outcomes of the students, Metcalf and Coggin (2016) recorded the experiences of the teachers as mentors. The authors conducted the study in middle school, thus providing staff members the opportunity to act as mentors. Students who took part in this study were selected based on their disciplinary cases and unexcused absenteeism. Before the

study, the staff members were informed about what is required for one to be a mentor and those who agreed to participate voluntarily did so (Mukeredzi, 2017). Mentors were not allowed to interact with students from their classes. Instead, they were required to encourage the selected students to take part in the study. In a similar study, Chhibber (2019) reported that staff members who acted as mentors were compensated for regularly meeting with their mentees during the 18-weeks. The two-day training was set aside for the mentors to help them understand the information they should look for (Metcalf & Coggin, 2016).

Using interviews and weekly logs, Callahan (2016) asked the mentors to record their experiences while interacting with the students. The collected data from mentors were analyzed to develop meaningful conclusions. From the interviews, the authors identified that mentor-student relationship that mentors regarded as successfully included behaviors such as resource sharing, active listening and playing of games together. An in-depth analysis of the data showed that some mentors experienced more positive relationships than others (Callahan, 2016). The positive relationships were mostly reported by mentors who met their mentees regularly. Tracy and Wallace (2016) argued that teachers need to meet their students more frequently to create a strong bond between them. It helps in developing a positive learning environment within the school.

Chhibber (2019) initiated a middle school mentoring program where both teachers and community members were used as mentors to the students. The study began with 20 teachers and each tutor was required to have at least two students whom they were to guide on school-based activities. According to Chhibber (2019), whose findings are

supported by Mukeredzi (2017), mentors and mentees require the development of the staff, regular feedback, and frequent training among the teachers for teacher led-mentoring program to be effective. The findings agree with Lombardo et al. (2017) who suggested 10 stages of the mentoring process for teacher-led mentoring programs, which include cliche exchanges, recounting, personal disclosure, and bonding, fear of infringement, revisiting framework, peak mentoring, reciprocity, and closure.

Mentor Experiences

Mentors encounter a varied set of experiences that are determined by the mentor–mentee relationship that could have negative or positive impacts on their personal, social, and professional lives. As defined by VanWeelden et al. (2017), negative mentoring experiences refer to the problematic facets of an otherwise constructive relationship and may not inevitably mean that the whole relationship is undesirable or harmful. The negative mentoring experiences may adversely affect productivity and self-esteem (Aschenbrener et al., 2017;). As noted by Lombardo et al. (2017), knowledge of the mentoring experiences of mentors can help mentors and mentees overcome harmful mentoring behaviors and foster positive outcomes for better mentoring outcomes.

Mukeredzi's (2017) description of negative mentoring experiences were derived from research on the development and functioning of people in a close relationship, such as friendship. In this context, negative mentoring experiences are primarily contextualized as a portrayal of interactions as either having good or bad intent (VanWeelden et al., 2017). Although negative intent may result in deleterious mentoring experiences—through bullying or exploitations, for example-negative mentoring

experiences may arise from otherwise positive intentions by both mentors and mentees. This may include failure to mention the opportunity to a prospective mentee as the mentor is preoccupied with the fact that the mentee is already overburdened or needing to support mentees, but with many other underlying obligations to honor. However, there is a probability that the mentees may conceive such omission by their mentors as a basic impression of their incompetence, a situation that creates negative experiences between the two parties (Sheehan et al., 2016).

Several studies have revealed numerous causes of negative mentoring experiences in a different social setting, which in most cases has been attributed to social interactions that defined the status of the people concerned. A particular study by Navarra et al. (2018) focusing on student mentorship experiences, established that over 25% of the graduate students in the field of psychology reported the existence of native mentoring experiences, shockingly, with their advisors. Some of the students who took part in the study noted that negative mentoring experiences were associated with unrealistic goals set by their mentors, mentor absenteeism when required and failure to provide adequate guidance during the mentoring process. In a different study, although similar, the researchers established that 50% of the participants, who were undergraduate mentees, eloquently noted at least one form of conflict with their chair during the dissertation writing processes and resulted in high attrition rates from most of the Ph.D. programs in different institutions (Mukeredzi, 2017).

Navarra et al. (2018) noted that negative mentoring experiences may unintentionally arise in a different social context. As a result, this may parallel the

concept of implicit bias. Sheehan et al. (2016) adduced that implicit bias is likely to occur in instances where automatic actions or practices tend to reflect implicit learning to respect people by the virtue of their social or group membership to mentoring programs. For instance, a study by Sheehan et al. (2016) suggested that gender based implicit bias is greatly ingrained in most of the gender stereotypes, a situation that worsens female mentors' experiences when engaging with stereotypical people. Likewise, Navarra et al. (2018) suggested that training relating to negative mentoring experiences may be an invaluable tool that can be used to addresses the automatic bias during the mentoring interactions and contribute to effective mentoring experiences.

Navarra et al.'s (2018) quantitative study noted that a plethora of studies on abusive supervision and coordination may give insights to the extent to which negative mentoring experiences could manifest in mentoring relationships or interactions, as forms of a mentoring relationship are purely based on supervision. Such a relationship, according to Sheehan et al. (2016), is characterized by evaluative ownership that may sometimes result in an imbalance of power between the two parties. Examples of abusive relationships in a mentoring process include an instance where the mentor tells the mentee that his or her thoughts or feelings are totally "stupid" or simply belittling mentees while in a group (Sheehan et al., 2016). The same results are supported by Navarra et al. (2018) who contend that inopportune supervision in the mentoring process may violate the integrity of the parties involved and result in negative experiences during the interactions.

A qualitative study by Lucey and White (2017) established that ineffective mentorship experiences may be so distressful that the mentees who go through it may be worse off compared to if they did not meet a mentor. Based on the study findings, the basic cause of negative mentoring experiences includes sexual harassment that deeply concerns female mentors. Undesirable mentoring experiences, according to Lucey and White (2017), may be predominantly damaging for mentees from different backgrounds considering the primary facilitative role that the mentored research experiences may have in different cultural or social backgrounds. For instance, Sheehan et al. (2016) postulated that researchers studying the positive effects of mentorship programs have shown that cultural norms significantly influence the nature of experiences that a mentor and mentee will develop.

Importance of Mentoring Programs

The emergence of several mentoring programs in recent years underscores their importance to mentees and mentors. Both mentors and mentees benefit from the mentoring process in multiple and varied ways, but importance varies across a specific group of people (Navarra et al.,2018). For many schools in the United States and even other countries staff retention remains a major concern (Gunn et al., 2017). Considering this, mentoring programs are vital in helping schools retain teachers. As noted by Kalpazidou et al.'s (2016) quantitative study one main process of retaining teachers in schools is through effective mentoring programs which have become prevalent in recent years. In their literature review, LaChenaye et al.'s (2019) quantitative study found out that teacher mentoring programs positively influence teacher retention in schools.

Moreover, teacher mentoring programs offer beginning teachers a lot of support, providing them with mentors from the same field and allowing them to participate in group planning and collaborative activities.

Mentoring programs have been introduced to facilitate student learning and achievement. Using students as participants, a quantitative study by Argente-Linares et al. (2016) study revealed that Information Technology (IT) integrated with the traditional mentoring model increase students' achievements and satisfaction with mentoring activities. Argente-Linares et al. (2016) study results are a resource for clarifying the importance of incorporating educational mentoring programs into student guidance for better academic and life outcomes.

Lunsford et al.'s (2017) quantitative study suggested that peer mentoring programs improve a sense of belonging to the schools and academic persistence and success. Cross-ethnic peer mentoring programs foster inclusivity. Peer mentors connect mentees to key resources and opportunities to navigate through high school. Peer mentoring programs lead to many achievements, including academic retention, integration, and success. Aside from mentees, Booth et al.'s (2016) quantitative study affirmed that mentors benefit from the mentoring process through self-satisfaction gained from helping disturbing others, nurturing collaboration, earned respect, and new ideas acquired in this process. Mentoring programs are both beneficial and challenging to various groups of people involved in the mentoring process.

Performance levels of beginning teachers are greatly impacted by effective mentoring programs since mentors offer the support with which the mentee can

experience success (Kalpazidou et al., 2016). Fountain and Newcomer (2016) carried out a quantitative study on the evaluation of perceptions of beginning teachers toward the mentoring support they received during their first teaching year. The results, which were supported by Sheehan et al. (2016), indicated that beginning teachers who have common planning time with their mentors as well as time to observe other teachers report that the mentoring experience helps them significantly as opposed to their counterparts who do not have mentoring experiences support.

Mentoring participation programs encourage beginning teachers to stay in their teaching profession (Gunn et al., 2017) besides having a positive impact on retention of beginning teachers in schools (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016). LaChenaye et al. (2019) in their study, show that the benefits of high-quality mentoring programs for beginning teachers include increased teacher effectiveness, high satisfaction, commitment, high classroom instruction and early career retention. Furthermore, several positive outcomes come with effective mentoring programs, such as enabling beginning teachers to make a proper transition from preparation to practice, helping them become more effective early in their career reducing teacher attrition and having increased job satisfaction (Kalpazidou et al., 2016).

Mentoring, like any other program, faces challenges. Gunn et al. (2017) carried out a 16-month study on mentoring in high-poverty urban schools in the north-eastern United States using a select group of teachers. This study scrutinized the struggle beginning teachers go through to survive in their first year of teaching. Some of the obstacles noted in the study include tracking the outcomes of the students and setting

goals for the learners. Despite the challenge these teachers faced, they still succeeded in various areas. One main component of success in the work of beginning teachers and their mentors, as identified by Kang (2018), is dispositions for social justice. With respect to the success of the new teacher, Kang (2018) argue that "program developers must recognize that most policy mandates lack an understanding of the learning needs of beginning teachers, particularly in urban schools, and the resources required to create effective mentoring programs" (p. 41). Kalpazidou et al. (2016) state that there is need for trained mentors as well as adequate resources to assist them in delivering quality mentoring programs.

Further insight on mentoring challenges, Tracy and Wallace (2016) alludes that mentoring programs can do more harm than good for beginning teachers. However, effective mentoring programs assist beginning teachers to survive hectic career starts and develop the confidence to become successful teachers in the industry (Kang, 2018). High-quality mentoring, as stated by Nicholson et al. (2018), is an important component in effective mentoring programs. Usually, when mentoring occurs between beginning teachers and veteran teachers, it is valuable to both parties and is perceived as highly effective (LaChenaye et al., 2019). Most states have taken up mentoring programs to promote growth in the teaching career. Nevertheless, effective mentoring programs are not guaranteed by requiring mentoring alone (Kang, 2018).

Effective mentoring programs reassure beginning teachers of continuity in their teaching profession (Kalpazidou et al., 2016). Retention of beginning teachers can be improved if schools and school districts become active in fostering mentoring programs

for beginning teachers. LaChenaye et al. (2019) suggest that the success of beginning teachers can be improved through provision of a comprehensive and coherent professional development program such as mentoring by school's districts.

Current Research on Mentoring Experiences

Studies show that at least 50% of teachers in various institutions leave their profession within their first five years of teaching because of negative experiences they encounter while acting as mentors to students, mostly those students who have been diagnosed with substance use disorders (Aschenbrener et al., 2017.While many researchers presume that developing mentoring programs in a socially and culturally conducive environment might promote knowledge transfer between the mentor and mentee (Lucey & White, 2017), statistics show that a majority of the district schools found it challenging to keep teachers for an extended period as a result of the past experiences they had when mentoring students (Gunn et al., 2017).

In most cases, Navarra et al. (2018) noted that teachers are subjected to humiliation, attacked, or abused by some of the students they are to mentor, a situation that negatively impacts their experiences. As a result, while Aschenbrener et al. (2017) and Lombardo et al. (2017) clearly show the importance of mentoring and how it builds a positive relationship between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds, Weiss et al. (2019) note that the exploration of their mentoring experiences remains limited in the present literature and the need for further research in this area. Similar thoughts are echoed by Mukeredzi (2017) who notes that mentoring happens in a culturally diverse environment within learning institutions, as a result, there is high possibility that cultural

factors, norms, and beliefs tend to influence the nature of content to be disseminated by the mentor (Navarra et al., 2018). In most cases, such content may negatively be viewed by students from other cultures thus causing a clash of interests (Mukeredzi, 2017). In turn, this may negatively impact their experiences as teachers are likely to be humiliated or abused for acting against certain cultural norms (Aschenbrener et al., 2017).

According to Weiss et al. (2019), the main reason is to encourage teachers to become confident in mentoring and remain in their career for a long time with reduced chances of attrition or burnout. However, Navarra et al. (2018) strongly contended that while district schools make it a requirement for new and old teachers to effectively participate in a mentoring program that seeks to promote their interactions with students within the learning environments, none of them consider the fact that the effectiveness of the mentoring programs depend on the relations and experiences that the mentors and mentee have when socializing. Izadinia (2016) note that because of the changing environment in which operate from while mentoring, negatively impact their psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing and tend to benefit less from such programs.

A quantitative study conducted by Aschenbrener et al. (2017) revealed that first-time teachers are extremely vulnerable in their first three years of their mentoring and teaching career, and most of the experiences during this period are negatively related to their career success because of the traumatizing experiences they encounter while mentoring students. Based on the findings, not only does the mentoring experiences influence teachers' commitment but changes their perceptions of mentoring practice in

the future. Aschenbrener et al., (2017) in most cases, while the mentoring program may benefit some students, the negative experiences from other students make it difficult for teachers to cope with their normal social life due to anxiety resulting from past interactions.

Findings by An et al. (2019) note that an effective way to enhance teachers' experience of mentoring is by providing teachers with training to support them on how to relate with deviant students who are sometimes aggressive or antisocial. Gunn et al. (2017) echo similar thoughts and adduces that supporting teachers to overcome challenging experiences during the mentoring process has been associated with increased retention rate and positive outcomes in mentees. Programs that are meant to equip teachers on how to handle the highly challenging environment during mentoring processes may help first-time mentors to survive atrocities in classrooms or other social gatherings where the interactions between the mentor and mentee are socially or culturally conflicting. In like manner, Lombardo et al. (2017) note that mentoring is based on bi-relational interaction between mentors and mentees. As such, positively constructed social interactions should help develop collaborative conversations that may, in turn, be counterproductive, thereby influencing the experiences that teachers have while mentoring students.

High-quality training programs are effective in relieving experiences that mentors have with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. According to Izadinia (2016), pre-training mentors on how to handle students from different backgrounds is effective in ensuring that they understand the local culture and mentorship programs that are

governed by local norms and beliefs. However, while such results depict the benefits of training, especially in students, Aschenbrener et al. (2017) assert that teachers' experiences have not been well-documented, especially when mentoring programs are contextualized. In effect, this creates a gap in the literature that the researcher seeks to address using the present study.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of conducting the literature section was to link the current research problem to the existing knowledge, which is the experiences that mentors have while mentoring mentees. While many studies have examined the concept of mentoring there is, however, limited research examining mentor–mentee relationships. Existing research largely focuses on the impact of more objective characteristics within the mentor–mentee relationship (Kupersmidt et al., 2017), as opposed to interviewing those involved for their actual views on the matter. Identity is a highly recurrent theme, as to how both parties perceive themselves before the meeting can effect the course of the relationship and potentially lead to a shift in self-identification (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). This ties in strongly to the impact of characteristics such as race or ethnicity, which was previously mentioned as being linked to the success (or lack thereof) between mentors and mentees (Kupersmidt et al.,2017; Raposa et al., 2018). Meanwhile, attitudes can typically influence how mentors and mentees go into their sessions viewing not just each other, but the maturity of mentorship (Wesely et al., 2017). It has already been established that these themes each effect mentorship.

The interrelationship of these themes (i.e., the "bigger picture") is not fully understood. The present study aims to address this and determine how it might be used to assist matching of mentors with mentees for effective, long-lasting relationships. This can be a complex task, and a robust methodology will help to achieve it. Some of the key themes that were discussed include mentoring, benefits of peer mentoring, effective teacher mentoring programs, attributes of mentors, teachers as mentors, negative mentoring experiences, and current research on teacher mentoring programs. In the next chapter, I will provide an extensive overview of the methods that used to conduct the study and achieve the study purpose.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to use the paradigm of IPA to provide a detailed interpretation of the essence of the lived experience and meaning making processes of the mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships. In this chapter, I present a detailed explanation of the research design based on Smith's (2015) approach and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions formed the foundation of this study:

1. What is the lived experience of mentors in the mentee-mentor relationships at the high school level?

2. What is the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship for the mentor?

The central phenomenon of this study is the mentors' process of meaning-making. In other words, I was curious about the processes mentors use to construct, understand, and make sense of their relationships with their mentees. As Almjeld et al. (2017) pinpointed, it is through meaning making that individuals are often able to reaffirm or revise their existing social orientation systems, making them more nuanced and useful.

The qualitative tradition was selected over quantitative research methods to gain a deep understanding of the mentors' perceptions of their lived experience within the mentor–mentee relationship. Qualitative researchers aim to discover the social aspects of human society and social relationships (Tuffour, 2017). Qualitative researchers typically strive to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences of the

phenomenon they are studying. According to Tuffour (2017), the qualitative method enables researchers to gather rich descriptive information regarding personal experiences including social, cultural, and professional contexts of the interactions. Qualitative researchers carry out their studies in a natural setting, utilizing narratives, recordings, and field notes, which sets them apart from quantitative researchers who carry out their studies under well-controlled and simulated conditions in laboratories (Hennick et al., 2020).

Since the focus of my research lies in gaining a deep understanding of mentors' meaning-making in the mentor–mentee relationship, the interpretative phenomenological approach was well suited for this study (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). Phenomenology is a qualitative approach concerned with human experience and perception. It is vital in cases where a researcher wants to know how individuals understand their world. The design is preferred over other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory or narrative inquiry. As the name implies, grounded theory is used to develop a framework of relevant phenomena, which was not the case for my study. Through my study, I interpreted the lived experience of mentors for meaning making of the relationship but not constructing a theory. The narrative design was not relevant because I was not interested in developing a sequential story about the experience of mentors but, rather, described their lived experiences within the mentor–mentee relationship. Thus, the purpose and research questions of this study were better attained using interpretive phenomenology design. The study utilized recordings and field notes and conducted interviews in the setting of the participant's choice, where there was privacy.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was to act as an observer-participant, which required observing the participants, collecting data, and interpreting and analyzing the data. I can ensure that I had no relationship, past or present, with the participants I interviewed for this study because my own experiences as a mentor were in a military context with adult mentees as an aquatics trainer, and that had no relevance to this study. The absence of preexisting personal or professional relationships between myself and potential participants in this study minimized any influence or power over my participants.

I was mindful of my biases which might influence the data gathering and analysis process. I had a bias about the mentor's role in the mentor–mentee relationship. Based on my experiences as a mentor I expected mentors in my study to be good listeners and supportive of the mentees. To manage these biases, I channeled my reactions through my detailed field notes. Additionally, I followed a reflexive practice while gathering and interpreting the data and kept a journal (see Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). In this journal, I recorded my field notes from the interviews and made notes of where my biases emerged. The notes from the interview were analyzed to establish any common themes. During this analysis process, researcher bias was likely to emerge, especially when I may have included only information perceived to be relevant to the study. To ensure the credibility of the findings of the study, I used member checking to mitigate the impact of possible bias. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a qualitative technique that researchers use to test and establish the tenet of credibility in the trustworthiness of the results. On this account, I sent the participants their transcripts to be sure their thinking

was accurately captured (Nowellet et al., 2017). I did not foresee any power differentials or conflict of interest issues.

Methodology

In the following section, I describe the qualitative study design and the interpretive phenomenological approach used in this study.

Participant Selection Logic

I recruited 12 participants who have mentored in any type of capacity high school level mentees in Prince George County high schools in the state of Maryland where I currently reside and am extremely familiar with the community and leaders within the school system who I noticed were eager to assist me with my research through my conversations with them through emails. The mentors in my study were current college students, retired workers, teachers, coaches, those who have an affinity for working with high school level students as a mentor. This sample size was effective in providing a sufficiently broad and varied selection of accounts on mentors' lived experience within the mentor–mentee relationship (Smith, 2015). I used a purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling is a nonrandom sampling method in which recruitment efforts are focused on individuals who are likely to have the knowledge and experiences necessary to provide relevant data (Palinkas et al., 2015). According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposeful sampling is appropriate when researchers need to collect as much relevant data as possible with only limited time and resources.

The selection criteria for participants were that participants had to have experience mentoring high school level students for 6 months or more within the last 4

years in Prince George County, Maryland, as mentors as they will have enough relevant mentoring experience to share. I chose for 6 months within the last 4 years because of the level of activity mentors will have with their mentees was necessary to provide enough exposure and continuity for the mentors to have a solid base of experiences to share. (Lombardo et al., 2017). I considered both active and past mentors who had at a minimum of 6 months of experience as mentors in the school. Flyers were posted at the administration office of the high schools to ensure that they can easily be seen by college students who mentor at the high school level. I received permission from the presidents of the nearby community college and the local university to post the flyers. Participants were recruited through the flyers and through the help of the school principals. The flyer listed the study participation qualification criteria. My contact information was present in a tear-off so potential participants could contact me regarding their willingness to take part in the research. I requested that the directors of mentorship programs within the county area of my research whom I have met at various community functions email my flyers to current and past mentors as a follow up of previous requests I had sent through email.

When potentially eligible participants contacted me, I scheduled screening phone calls with participants to identify my final 12 participants. I chose 12 participants as the sample size because that number should ensure saturation within the sample size and sufficient data for answering my research questions (Smith, 2015). Smith (2015) asserted that to reach saturation in a qualitative study, a minimum sample of 12 participants is required. Saturation in qualitative sampling is reached when no more new information or

data can be found with regards to the research question (Vehovar et al., 2016). I did not

reach saturation with obtaining 10–12 participants, so I incorporated the snowball

sampling technique, in which participants were asked to recommend potential

participants of their acquaintance who were likely to have the knowledge and experiences

that will enable them to provide relevant data (Naderifar et al., 2017).

Instrumentation

I proposed to collect the data for this study by interviewing participants who have

been mentors to Prince George County high school students within the past 4 years for a

period of 6 months or more. These interviews took place via the Zoom videoconferencing

platform (https://zoom.us) due to COVID-19 restrictions. I used an interview protocol

(see Appendix A) that I developed in the form of semistructured interview questions. The

interview protocol acted as a guide, as recommended by Boddy (2016), so I could gather

sufficient data by maintaining a focus on relevant topics while allowing participants to

express themselves in their own words. As I was the sole researcher for this qualitative

study, I was responsible for all elements of data collection, including recording, reading,

reflexive interpretation, and reporting the findings of the mentoring experience from the

participants. I used a computer recorder application on my laptop to tape each interview

that was scheduled for 1–1.5 hours. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed

verbatim by a professional transcription service under a signed confidentiality agreement.

I annotated my protocol through my field notes and utilized my journaling to reflect and

analyze the data I obtained and wrote down my personal biases and provided additional

clarification when needed.

As noted above, data collection instruments for this study included a semistructured interview protocol for participants. The protocol assisted me with developing thick, rich accounts of the participants experiences. In developing the interview protocol, I incorporated the use of the literature review and research questions directly connecting them. I leveraged the literature review to develop document protocols and link themes found in the literature review to the research questions.

The participants responded to the questions during the Zoom interviews regarding various lived experiences as mentors in mentor–mentee relationships with high school-aged mentees. Demographic data relevant to the study was collected during interviews, and a minimum of 12 participants were in the final sample.

Semistructured interviews have long been an effective approach to qualitative psychological research (Kallio, 2016). The flexibility in semistructured interviews makes them an ideal foundation for original researcher-developed instruments, which can lend adequate focus to research studies (Keenan, 2017).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I conducted one semistructured interview with each of the 12 participants, collecting data from each person over an hour via the recording function of the Zoom application. The files from the interviews were saved to my laptop and uploaded to my cloud as back-up data. To ensure confidentiality of information, I used a password to secure data on both my laptop and cloud storage.

Purposive sampling was used because this strategy allows qualitative researchers target specific sources of data such as human beings, documents, and artifacts to examine

a specific problem deeply and to help answer the study's research questions (Bailey, 2007, p. 64). Regarding sample size, Smith (2015) recommended approximately 12 participants for IPA studies. I selected the first 12 participants regardless of color, race, gender, or religion but, rather, based on an experience of being a mentor for 6 months or more in Prince George County high school students within the past 4 years. This number of participants facilitated thick, rich feedback about the problem as well as answers to the research questions to the point of saturation. Since I did not have enough participants, I used the snowball sampling technique (Fusch, 2015), in which I asked the selected participants following their interviews if they knew of other mentors who might be interested in participating in this study, and if so, request that they contact me and they did.

After I asked all the questions in the interview guide, I debriefed my participants, by thanking them for their time and cooperation, and inquiring about their availability for follow-up in accordance with the member checking procedure. I also informed them that I may contact them if I had a question about the data they provided.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Smith (2015), semistructured interviews are effective for eliciting detailed accounts of participants' experiences and perceptions, in participants' own words, in the context of their own lives and cultures. I used the data to address the first research question by giving a descriptive analysis of the variety of experiences, along with the participant's social, cultural, and professional contexts.

Following Smith and Osborn's (2008) guideline for IPA, I developed the codes inductively by identifying patterns of meaning in the data, rather than applying deductive codes drawn from previous literature. Data analysis comprised the following steps:

1. Reading and rereading each transcript while making initial notes of significant statements or ideas,

2. Formulating preliminary titles for emergent themes in the transcript,

3. Clustering similar themes,

4. Identifying common themes across participants and,

5. Writing up the results (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Smith (2017) recommended coding by hand instead of using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo or MAXQDA, so I coded the data by hand. I handwrote annotations on printed copies of the transcripts so I could report any discrepant data in the analysis of results, including their potential implications for the trustworthiness of the results. However, no discrepant cases were identified.

When reviewing and analyzing data there may have been some missed opportunities in the questioning process. Perhaps most researchers acknowledge the need for asking another question or to further examine a reoccurring theme with greater intensity. Therefore, during the initial interview, I informed each participant of the possibility that the dialogue may be extended beyond the predetermined questions. It was important for me as the researcher to be intentional and transparent in the approach to account for the need to ask more probing follow-up questions after the initial interview to gain more pertinent information.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Transferability is the extent to which the findings in a qualitative study holds true in other research contexts or setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability can be achieved by readers because I provide thick descriptions of my research context, sample, and findings. Thick descriptions include the cultural and professional contexts in which the data collection takes place through video conferencing or face-to-face interviews, including the locations of participants during the interview (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), the time in participants schedule when the interview takes place, and other details which can provide a rich picture of the setting.

I tailored the semistructured interview guide to this study, relying on a body of previous research and ensuring that all research questions are adequately addressed. To ensure the credibility of the findings of the study, I used member checking to mitigate the impact of possible bias. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a qualitative technique used by researchers to test and establish the tenet of credibility in the trustworthiness of the results.

I sent the transcript to the corresponding participant to review the words and ensure that what is in the transcription is what the participant meant and by them providing me with the correct data, my study will be regarded as credible (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data saturation in qualitative sampling is reached when no more new information or data can be found with regards to the research question (Vehovar et al., 2016). The number of participants helped to ensure saturation (Nowell et al., 2017). In

my study, I determined that data saturation was achieved when novel themes no longer emerged during data analysis.

Dependability is essential to any qualitative study offers the required confidence in the study when the reader of the study is exploring it (Connelly, 2016). To attain dependability, I ensured that all participants met the criteria for the study and that they were asked the same interview questions. I provided detailed descriptions of my study procedures. Dependability was attained using data collection by documenting all data collection processes clearly (Hadi & Closs, 2016), which enables other researchers can use the process to replicate the present research.

Providing participants, a copy of the transcribed notes from audio recordings (in recorded interviews) enabled them to review detailed interview responses (member checking) and verify the interpretive accuracy. This increased reliability (Carlson, 2010). Verifying participants' answers, response uniformity, and within method triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2009) provided a construct to test instrument reliability related to the interview questions. The similarity in responses among the participants throughout the interview corroborated the research instrument and the accuracy of responses (Stevenson & Mahmut, 2013). Harvey (2014) has suggested a continuous member-checking loop as part of the reliability process. Member checking is a powerful tool in promoting the trustworthiness of my study (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but needs to be done right. Asking participants to comment on my interpretations allowed them to make sure that what I've extracted through my analysis is faithful to what they believe. In case of disagreement, I was motivated to return to my data with a new perspective toward

understanding my analysis. Keeping in mind that member checking did not need to occur once the final research report was concluded. I asked members to read over my typed transcripts (triangulation) to see if they find any discrepancies or ask them about my initial interpretations before I moved to a deeper analysis. I presented this process with transparency within my final report as one of the most crucial parts. I was more open about the process and in cases where I was required to even admit when member checks found my interpretations unsound- as it will lend credibility to my work. Through conducting member checking, I was able to ensure that the final analysis reflected the participants' original thoughts and views (Birt et al., 2016).

I attained confirmability by use of data collection through documenting the data collection process clearly so that other researchers can use the process to replicate the present research (Hadi & Closs, 2016). I openly acknowledged all personal biases at the start of the research so that they do not affect the data analysis process and the results (Nowell et al., 2017). When I present the findings from my study, I included evidence in the form of direct quotations from the data to allow the reader to assess confirmability independently. In addition to these methodological considerations, it would be somewhat irresponsible not to acknowledge the human error.

Ethical Procedures

I gained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Walden IRB approval number 06-11-21-0026185, which expires on June 10, 2022, before engaging with my participants. I also gained secondary IRB approval through Bowie State University approval number 12-56 (2021-2022) with an expiration date of

August 19, 2022, before engaging with my participants or requesting my flyer be emailed to potential participants by the department heads. Recruitment materials were designed to ensure that contact with potential participants is voluntary by providing my contact information so individuals interested in participating may contact me at their discretion. Participants were provided with relevant information about the study during the screening phone call when they first contacted me. Participants were requested to provide their email address where the consent form and transcripts for member checking validation was sent. The participants were expected to reply in an email back to me "I consent to participate in the study' or I do not consent to participate in interviews. After the researcher reviewed the consent form, the participants were expected to raise any concerns regarding their participation in the research. For member checking, the interviewees were e-mailed their transcripts to read over and confirm if their views and experiences were accurately captured.

Participants' decisions to join and remain in the study were entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any interview question, with or without stating a reason, and that there will be no negative consequences for doing so. Participants were designated with an alphanumerical identification code (i.e., P1, P2, etc.) instead of with their real names, and all other potentially identifying information will be redacted to maintain confidentiality. I understand that breaches of confidentiality may have several repercussions for participants, like psychological distress, loss of employment, damage to social standing, and potential loss of insurance (Dinardo et al., 2019). If a participant wanted to withdraw

from the project at any time during the study without any penalty, all confidential

information provided by that participant was removed.

Each participant filled out an informed consent form. Since data was collected in

electronic form in laptop and cloud, a password was used to secure data from

unauthorized persons. Any form of hard copy data will continue to be kept under lock

and key until the end of the three-year required retention period when all consent forms

and transcripts will be destroyed.

All interview transcripts and field notes were saved to a Google drive folder and

password protected and accessible only to the researcher and research committee

members and will continue to be stored up to 3 years per Walden University guidelines

following the completion of the study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, a summary of the rationale to utilize the qualitative tradition and

IPA methodology was described including the justification for using my chosen approach

in the study. The approach was particularly suitable due to it being in line with the

research questions and because of its smaller sample size and providing insights into

study phenomena and interpreting the lived experiences of mentors. I explained the four

factors that are considered the key characteristics of IPA.

I presented the procedures I used in this study to collect the data and recruit the

participants, and I explained how issues of trustworthiness were addressed. I stated how I

functioned as the interviewer and my primary data collection instrument, the

characteristics of qualitative research studies, my goal for the interviews I conducted with

the participants, and the interview protocol I used to collect data. The Issues of

Trustworthiness section explained the efforts that I undertook to minimize

misinterpretations of the data and how I engaged in effective collection of data and its

analysis, how the participants were interviewed (via Zoom) and explained the

characteristics of the sample. Chapter 4 will include the results of my study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to use the paradigm of IPA to provide a detailed interpretation of mentors' lived experience in mentor–mentee relationships with high school-aged mentees. The study identified two research questions to address its purpose:

1. What is the lived experience of mentors in the mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level?

2. What is the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship for the mentor?

This chapter illustrates the results of the two-stage qualitative analysis. In this chapter, I present the details of the setting of the study, demographics of the participants interviewed, a summary of the data collection, and data analysis procedure. Finally, I will discuss evidence of trustworthiness and the results of my study. In this chapter, I also present a detailed data analysis from interviews with 12 mentors who have mentored at the high school level in Prince George County, Maryland for 6 months or more within the last 4 years.

Setting

The study targeted mentors of high school level mentees in Prince George County high schools in the state of Maryland. Mentors were considered for the study if they had practiced mentorship cumulatively for 6 months or more within the past 4 years. Mentors were recruited through the posting and emailing of flyers at Bowie State University after obtaining secondary IRB approval. Mentors were also recruited through various Prince George County mentorship programs where flyers were posted and emailed to potential

participants. I screened interested candidates via phone to identify the 12 study

participants.

Demographics

Purposive sampling was used to select 12 mentors to participate in the

semistructured interviews. The sample size was guided by the requirements of data

saturation according to Smith (2015). Three participants (25%) were African American

females, and nine (75%) were African American males. Participants' mentorship

experience ranged from 4 to 25 years with an average of 14 years. Table 1 indicates the

characteristics of study participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Gender	Length of mentoring experience in years
Participant 1	Male	20
Participant 2	Male	15
Participant 3	Male	13
Participant 4	Male	17
Participant 5	Male	21
Participant 6	Male	11
Participant 7	Female	25
Participant 8	Female	4
Participant 9	Female	8
Participant 10	Male	14
Participant 11	Male	9
Participant 12	Male	15

Data Collection

Prior to the collection of data, I obtained IRB approval through Walden

University, as well as Bowie State University where data was ultimately collected. Once

IRB approval was obtained, potential participants from Bowie State University who mentored in high school level mentees were recruited via email. Twelve mentors were ultimately recruited and each participated in one semistructured interview. Participants served as mentors between 4 to 25 years. Interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, and they lasted for 60 to 90 minutes. I saved the audio files from the interviews to my laptop and uploaded them to the cloud as back-up data. To ensure confidentiality of information, I used a password to secure data on the laptop and cloud storage. I used a professional service for verbatim transcription on Microsoft Word. The transcripts were anonymized and sent to participants for them to check the correct transcription.

Data Analysis

IPA procedures were carried out as guided by Smith and Osborn's (2008) recommendations for the process of sense-making between the participants and the researcher. Before data analysis, I changed the transcripts, removing identifying information such as names of participants, mentees, and schools or programs where participants or their mentees had associations. Analysis was done manually on Microsoft Word. The following five steps were adhered to in the deductive analysis process: (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) creating initial codes, (c) clustering similar codes, (d) validating and defining codes, and (e) completing a writeup of the results. For the first step, I read and reread each transcript while making initial notes of significant statements or ideas in the word document. The purpose of this step is to gain an overview of the entire dataset in preparation for data coding. The second step was formulating preliminary titles/codes by analyzing participants' responses and identifying codes that

represented the most elemental essence of different portions of the text from the semistructured interviews and creating a table to document my progress and initial findings. The coding process was carried out for all the responses from the 12 participants. I used a coding template developed in Microsoft Word to formulate the initial codes. I used the template to code each of the 12 transcripts. As illustrated in the sample in Table 2, the template had three columns: interview content, line-by-line coding, and focused coding. I copied each interview transcription (i.e., the interview content) into the first column, the middle column contained line-by-line coding, and in the third column, I identified focused codes.

Table 2

Example of Transcription Code Book

Interview content	Line-by-line coding	Focused coding/ trends
Well, the main thing was I wanted to give back. I've been successful in my life in the military and the government. You know, I come from an inner city of XX, New York. Even though I grew up pretty much middle class, but just through the years learning and working in the federal government and the military, I'm at a point in my life where I want to give back and help the youth so that we have a future. The youth have a future and they can be successful as well. I think a lot of times people take care of themselves, but they don't give back.	Participant wanted to give back and help the youth to have a future. Participant had a successful career in the military and the government. The youth have a future and can be successful as well. A lot of times people take care of themselves, but they don't give back	DESIRE TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY DESIRE TO HELP YOUTH SUCCEED IN THE FUTURE

After the coding of all transcripts had been completed, I created a list of codes with definitions (see Appendix B). For instance, the focused code "Desire to give back to the community" was listed and defined as "This node contains narratives indicating that participants viewed mentorship as a way of giving back to their community and desired to give back." The definition of codes was based on the participants' shared experiences and description of the concept.

The next task was development of a codebook with three columns. Table 3 demonstrates a sample of the codebook, and the detailed codebook is in Appendix C. The first column outlined the codes, the middle column specified how many times each code appeared in all 12 transcripts. In the third column, I recorded the interviews where each code appeared.

Table 3

Sample of Interview Code Book

Code	Number of times code appeared in data	Participant interviews containing code
Approaches to mentorship	Aggregate node	
Combination of various approaches	15	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12
Large group mentorship	10	P1, P2, P8, P9, P12
One-on-one mentorship	8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P12
Small-group mentorship	5	P1, P3, P4

After the initial reviewing and coding was complete, I proceeded to establish the themes. This third step involved the clustering of similar codes to create larger thematic groupings in a table in Word. In this step, all codes were grouped into several thematic categories that showed perceptions expressed by the participants. A table of the emergent themes was then created (see Appendix D). The fourth step was validation and defining of themes across the data. This step involved evaluating each theme to make certain that it could be supported by the codes created. This process led to review of themes including actions such as merging or deletion where themes were not adequately supported by raw

data. In definition of themes the responses were read and a sentence relevant to the research question was constructed to represent the contents of each theme. No discrepant cases were identified in the analysis process. Therefore, all original 12 participants' data were included in the analysis. The fifth and final step was the writing up of the results, where I discussed each theme and supported them with quotes from the data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness in qualitative research is defined by four components of fidelity. The four elements of trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Braun & Clark, 2019). To outline the evidence of trustworthiness in this study, these four concepts will be described in relation to how they were attained in the methodological framework of this study.

Credibility

According to Tracy (2019), *credibility* is defined by the ability of a researcher to confirm that the results of the methodology and analysis are an accurate interpretation and representation of the data. Although there are in abundance of modalities to establish credibility, this study employed consistency checks throughout a comprehensive review of literature to develop the foundation of this study. I integrated consistency checks into the development of the qualitative design, interview guide, and theoretical applications of the study's aim. For example, I invested sufficient time to familiarize myself with the study setting and participants to ascertain credibility. The most relevant characteristics to address the research question were identified through an in-depth literature review. I also

gathered data until saturation was achieved, indicating that a similar pattern of responses

was reported by the participants, further ensuring the credibility of the study's results.

In addition, I encouraged participants to be honest during interviews by inspiring

voluntary participation in the study. Participants were informed that they could choose

not to participate or answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. At the

beginning of each interview, I created rapport and encouraged the participants to be frank

by informing them that no answers were considered right or wrong. The research project

was reviewed by an academic supervisor whose inputs allowed me to improve the

methods, develop a superior justification of the research design, and reinforce the

arguments. The interview transcripts were subjected to member checking to represent the

participants' opinions accurately.

Transferability

The term *transferability* is operationalized by the ability to interpret and apply the

findings of this study to populations beyond the study's sample (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative

studies are inherently limited in terms of transferability given the general use of small

sample sizes; however, efforts were made to support the transferability of the study's

results. To ensure transferability, I included a description of participants' experiences and

their context to further expound on the sample this study may be relevant to. In doing so,

I helped to ensure that individuals not familiar with the study context may be better able

to determine the relevance and meaning to other populations. In addition, the Background

section of the research project included an adequate account of the phenomenon under

investigation to ensure clarity for the readers. I included the following information:

number of study participants, data collection methods employed, length of interviews, and data collection period to reinforce transferability further. In providing this level of clarity, I enabled readers to compare the study findings with what they have seen emerge in their situations, and employ similar modalities and recommendations made from this study.

Dependability

The term *dependability* is conceptualized by the extent to which other researchers can implement the same methodological plan and obtain similar findings as the original project (Tracy, 2019). Dependability was maintained in this study using triangulation, which consisted of using several data points to draw similar meaning from the interviews. Likewise, I recruited a diverse group of study participants to ensure that individual perspectives and experiences could be confirmed together with those of others. In doing so, the analysis procedures helped to construct a rich picture of the perceptions and experiences of study participants that are likely to be replicated by other researchers. I included a detailed record of the research processes throughout the study to enable future researchers to replicate the work or gain similar results. I described the design, implementation, and data collection to further extend the dependability and confirmability.

Confirmability

According to Tracy (2019), the notion of *confirmability* refers to the neutrality of a study's findings. The neutrality of findings of measured by limitations inherent to the study's methodology, such as researcher biases, tools used for the analysis, and

procedural errors in the analysis phase (Tracy, 2019). Confirmability was maintained in this study by strictly adhering to the three-step analysis approach outlined by Smith and Osborn (2008). Details of the methodology were provided in Chapter 3 to enable the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from the analysis procedures may be accepted. Therefore, an additional method employed to support the confirmability of the study's findings was the application of an audit trail. Using an audit trail, detailed descriptions of the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the analysis are presented for readers to determine whether the description of the findings is an alliance with the data obtained. In this way, I adopted a data-oriented approach, which further demonstrated how the data were gathered, processed, and ultimately, led to the formation of recommendations. Below is a description of the findings from the analysis procedures.

Results

In this section, the study findings are presented to respond to the two research questions. Two primary themes and three subthemes were identified in the data as related to the two research questions. Table 4 presents the themes and subthemes that address each research question. Each of these themes is explained in detail in the section below.

Table 4

Research Questions and Data Themes

Research question	Data themes
RQ1: What is the lived experience of mentors in the mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level?	Theme 1: Mentors lived experiences in high school influenced their mentorship experience. Subtheme 1.1: Mentors displayed resilience despite challenges in the mentorship practice.
RQ2: What is the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship for the mentor?	Theme 2: Mentors perceived that the mentor–mentee relationship was rewarding. Subtheme 2.1: Mentorship strategies used. Subtheme 2.2: Reasons for engaging in mentorship

RQ1: What is the Lived Experience of Mentors in the Mentor–Mentee Relationships at the High School Level?

The first research question sought to explore the lived experiences of mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level. One primary theme and one subtheme were found to address this research question. In the section below, each theme and subtheme are discussed and illustrated by quotes.

Theme 1: Mentors' Lived Experiences in High School Influenced Their Mentorship Experience

This theme focuses on various approaches to mentorship that participants utilized with their mentees in high school. First, participants indicated that they utilized four approaches to deliver the mentorship: large groups, small groups, one-on-one, and a combination of approaches. The majority of the participants ($n = 9$) reported combining

different mentorship approaches on the same individuals. For instance, Participant 1

sometimes met mentees separately and combined them with others for a small group

mentorship. Participant 1 described an instance where they combined mentees (three boys

and one girl) that they sometimes met individually out for a joint mentorship session and

lunch:

> There were three young men and one young lady from the same high school. So,
>
> we would meet individually, but I think the most fun was when we met together.
>
> And we would have dialogue. One experience was when we went out to dinner.
>
> Seven of the participants indicated that they provided one-on-one mentorship that

targeted one young person at a time. The meetings often included one mentor (the

participant) and the mentee. On the other hand, five participants reported that they

provided mentorship to large numbers (more than 10) of young people at one time, such

as over a day, several days, or a series of meetings over a given period. Large groups

were defined as groups of more than 10 people. Finally, only three participants offered

mentorship in small groups ($n = 3$) of less than ten participants.

Secondly, participants discussed various approaches to build rapport with the

mentee. For instance, Participant 2 noted that it was easy to build rapport when the

mentee was previously known to the mentor: "I had known the young man (mentee), had

interacted with them on several occasions. I think that made it very beneficial to build

rapport." Participants 2, 3, and 8 argued that the mentee needed to know that the mentor

was there to support them to gain their trust. In addition, Participant 7 noted that building

trust with mentees takes time, and therefore, mentors would need to practice patience.

The third issue discussed by participants is approaches used to match mentors with mentees. Most of the participants ($n = 8$) indicated that their mentees were members of a youth program that offered mentorship exclusively or as part of other services targeting young people. Participant 1 reported that they were linked to mentees by an organized mentorship program within their geographical location. In this case, the mentorship sessions were group-based and occurred at periodic intervals such as annual conferences/ meetings. Some participants were matched to mentees by youth program facilitators who identified young people in their programs who required mentorship. Also, some participants chose mentors from individuals previously known to them.

The final topic discussed under this theme was the characteristics of young people targeted by the participants or by the mentorship organizations that participants represent. It provides a selection criterion for the youth perceived to require mentorship. The vulnerabilities reported included youth likely to be part of the justice system, live in violent neighborhoods, and live in environments with easy access to alcohol and drugs. In addition, youth who lacked a support system at home, school dropouts and the homeless, and those making career choices after high school.

In summary, participants were utilizing various approaches to establish rapport with mentees, to deliver mentorship, to match mentors with mentees. The findings demonstrate that many of the mentors used a combination of approaches to deliver mentorship such as combining one-on-one and small group approaches.

Subtheme 1.1: Mentors Displayed Resilience Despite Challenges in the Mentorship Practice. In this subtheme, participants described the experience of

developing and maintaining resilience despite enduring challenges in the mentoring process. Resilience is a sought-after attribute researched in many fields, notably psychology and education, for being critical for learners and professionals in stressful situations. Resilience, in this case, refers to those times when a mentor had to navigate difficult situations related to their mentorship practice. For instance, Participant 6 noted that resilience was important where mentees lacked a parent:

> Your (mentor's) role is not the fixer and working with young males, if they do not have a father figure, sometimes you become almost a replacement, but you do not provide all of what a father or a counselor or a psychologist or a teacher would provide. So, there are limits to what you can do.

Despite these challenges, mentors strived to make suggestions and offer guidance when they could. According to Participant 4, it is critical to ensure that the youth feel comfortable and not as though mentors are authoritative figures. Participant 4 stated,

> I can say to that young person I have a relationship with, "Man, you might want to try therapy." Moreover, because it is coming from the mentor's mouth, not the judge or the teacher, it is coming from big homey, your big uncle, or your OG or whatever, what have you.

Participant 6 argued that mentors should be self-aware about their limitations in guiding a young person exists. In the following quote, they suggested that where a mentor has limitations, they should refer a young person to an individual who has the skills to meet their need:

I try my best to point people in the right direction. Like "Hey, if I were going

through that situation, I would reach out to this person, or I would reach out to

these individuals because that is who handles things like that."

Participant 1 demonstrated that referring mentees to individuals who could meet

their needs was effective. They gave an example where they linked two young men with

a friend who was a sports attorney and had played football in high school. The two

mentees were playing football in high school, and the friend told them about the limited

chances available in professional football. He encouraged them to focus on other careers

without putting all their energies into football. The two mentees eventually took up

careers in medicine, and Participant 1 associated that decision with the guidance they

received. The mentor's role spans the gap between youth and adulthood, as reflected in

the participants' descriptions. A mentor must have the resilience to provide a moment to

step back and assume the adult role and have difficult but meaningful conversations to

induce positive change in the youth's life.

Another challenge that Participants *(n = 3)* had to navigate was the lack of support

from mentees' family members. For instance, Participant 1 reported that he had faced

opposition from siblings to one of his mentees. His mentee was a young man who needed

his guidance to disengage from a life of crime. The mentee's siblings (brothers) were

involved in crime, and they did not support their brother's decision or relationship with

the mentor (Participant 1). The siblings had no trust in the mentor because he was a

stranger, and they had not had a mentorship experience. Also, they thought life of crime

was okay for them and their brother. To win the support of the mentee's siblings,

Participant 1 invited them (siblings and the mentee) to a football game, and they shared a

meal afterward. The purpose of this was to give the mentee's siblings a chance to know

them and observe how he related with their brother. Participant 1 also provided the

mentee's siblings information about the mentorship activities. This approach displays

resilience and a high level of skill from Participant 1.

Participants identified limited human and financial resources allocated to

mentorship as a challenge. For example, Participant 1 reported that parents and the school

administration sometimes lacked resources or were unwilling to invest in mentorship.

They argued that some mentorship programs have ended because of a lack of resources,

and such programs could benefit from voluntary human resources. Also, they proposed

that an opportunity could be offered to individuals who lacked time, but could use their

financial resources to support mentorship by providing food:

> Some people may not have time to meet with somebody regularly and
>
> consistently. However, they may have time, and that is what I learned. When you
>
> have the flexibility and work with people, that person may say, 'Hey, look, I
>
> cannot be there every week at the same time. However, what I am going to do is
>
> drop off these books.' Or 'I will give you guys a coupon to get some pizzas one
>
> week.' Anything you can do to help us is helpful, better than nothing (Participant
>
> 2).

Participants *(n* = 3) pointed out that sometimes mentors lacked the expertise or the

right ingredients to help a mentee with their current problem. For example, Participant 4

indicated that, at times, young people needed psychological support or therapy to deal

with the issues in their lives. Psychological support was often not a skill that mentors could provide, and Participant 6 argued that in such situations, a mentor needed to be aware of their limitations.

Participants *(n* = 2) indicated that mentees' lack of trust was a challenge to mentorship. For instance, Participant 5 argued that some kids had experienced disappointment from adults in their lives, which made it difficult for them to trust anyone. Participant 5 pointed out that trust was key to a successful mentor–mentee relationship. Participant 5 referred to lack of trust as a brick wall and explains how it affects mentorship:

> The brick wall, or that initial mistrust from the kids (that happens) if a kid has always experienced something wrong from every adult that has come into their lives such as being disrespected, abused, lied to, used for something, or just poorly treated. And that brick wall is up, and you have got to find a way to get around that, but it could be a joke, it could be some disciplinary action that you had to put on the kid. You let the kid know that you are serious and that you care about them, but this is where we are ... If they do not trust you, they will never have a relationship at all (.

Participants *(n* = 7) also indicated that they had a challenge managing their time. They struggled to balance time allocated to mentorship, family, and other work for those mentors who had other jobs. In the quote below, Participant 9 proposes that a mentor should not over commit and should reach out when they need support:

The biggest thing was probably time because we each have our demands from our

careers, our family, personal life, but, once again, it is that commitment. So not

trying to be perfect and always do everything on schedule, on time, but balancing

things out. So, it became an example, like for the students, do not over-commit,

hold yourself accountable and work through it, but at the same time reach out

when you need support (Participant 9).

Participants ($n = 2$) indicated that sometimes young people found it hard to form

connections with older people, including mentors. Participant 12 indicated that it was

tough to form connections when providing mentorship through the virtual setting. In the

quote below, they describe their experience mentoring young people in a virtual

environment:

It was virtual, so it was a little bit different. You cannot touch and see the

mannerisms as clearly, but you could see in the virtual classes, which were three

classes a week for three weeks, and it was for three hours from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon.

And you could see the ones that did not care, the ones that were still laying on

their bed, the ones who were astute at the edge of their chair bright-eyed and

bushy tailed. So, I concentrated on the ones that were not so bright-eyed, although

I did not ignore them. I wanted to pull the other ones in because they were not

feeling a part of it (Participant 8).

Some participants ($n = 5$) identified that sometimes mentees lacked interest in

mentorship. For example, Participant 3 talked about youth who decided to discontinue

mentorship, or failed to honor appointments, changed their known contacts (telephone

numbers or emails), and sometimes gave no reasons for their change of interest: "When somebody is not mature enough to say hey, this is not working. They will stand you up for dates and not call you, change their phone number, and change the email address" (Participant 3). Participant 1 proposed that mentors stop engaging with mentees who express a lack of interest in mentorship to address this challenge.

The other challenge identified by participants ($n = 4$) was dealing with mentees with poor social skills. Participant 5 indicated that some mentees were poor at expressing themselves, making it difficult for mentors to figure out what was going on in their lives. Whereas Participant 8 argued that mentors need to be incredibly patient to deal with young people who have poor communication skills and may appear to be offensive:

> So, if you are going to be a mentor, no matter your status, celebrity-ism, or
> layman, you better have some tough skin and be someone who wants to help
> children because I have witnessed some things. I am not perfect, but I have
> witnessed some things that I would have yanked that person off the stage the
> minute they said it because you must stay respectful and empathetic because kids
> are growing (Participant 8).

Another challenge that a participant highlighted was conflicting with their spouses due to the time spent mentoring or allowing mentees to visit their homes. Participant 4 narrated that they had experienced problems in their marriage because their partner did not support their mentorship work. In their reflection, they indicated that it was important for mentors to identify partners who support their work and share the same passion for helping young people:

So, as a mentor, I have been divorced two times. Twice. No infidelity, no, nothing like that. But the infidelity was like I was just too committed to these kids. So, you must find a great spouse that's in agreement with you. And they love kids just as much as you do (Participant 4).

The other challenge identified by participants ($n = 2$) was that mentors experienced vicarious trauma due to constantly caring for mentees with traumatic experiences. Vicarious trauma is common among individuals who work with victims of trauma and violence. Participant 4 argued that having the support of family members made it easier for mentors to deal with the stressful situations that they encounter at work:

If you do not have the trust of your family to be able to go out there and do what you need to do, that is going to eat you from inside out. You know what I am saying? And then you are going to deal with this stressful situation over here, and then you have got to come home and argue with your family and deal with that stressful situation over there. The next thing you know, you are not good to nobody (Participant 4).

The final challenge was COVID 19 related limitations experienced by participants ($n = 3$) and their mentees, such as limited physical connection and youth adopting anti-social behaviors (for instance, crime and disrespect). Participant 4 noted that young people are social beings, and COVID 19 caused an interruption to their interactions with peers in school and at home and interrupted youth programs for at-risk youth. They further noted that some young people may have shifted back to destructive behaviors due

to the influence of the home environment during the COVID 19 period. In addition, Participant 5 pointed out that social isolation may have negatively impacted young people's mental health.

In summary, although participants had experienced many challenges in mentorship, they displayed resilience which helped them navigate through most of the challenges. Their experiences offer solutions that can be utilized by individuals involved in mentorship. Finding resilience among mentors despite challenges in their mentoring practice is promising, as it is not known if mentoring attracts resilient people or if the practice of mentoring might impact resilience in mentors.

RQ2: What is the Meaning of The Mentor–Mentee Relationship for The Mentor

The second research question explored the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship to the mentor. One theme and two subthemes were found to address this research question. Illustrative quotes for the theme and subthemes are described in the section below.

Theme 2: Mentors Perceived That the Mentor–Mentee Relationship Was Rewarding.

Theme 2 discusses participants' perceptions of the mentor–mentee relationship. In their reflections, participants indicated that mentoring was a practice that provided rewarding experiences and offered fulfillment in the present and long term. Participants reported that they felt rewarded through three scenarios: (a) mentees acknowledged the mentor's support, (b) mentees succeeded in their goals, and (c) benefits of mentorship had a ripple effect.

Participants indicated that mentoring offered feelings of reward for many years as generations of youth being mentored proceeded to live successful, productive lives. The rewards were highlighted in the interviews with participants, who reported that the reward for mentoring lasted for years. Participant 7 stated,

So, it is extremely rewarding, and it is rewarding over time, too. So, it is not even like instant gratification. It is the gratification that's going to live in a sustainable over the years because you literally can instill something in someone, and they have a child, and they instill them in their child.

The participants' first reward scenario discussed the importance of instilling change in someone else, evident across the interviews. Participants ($n = 6$) indicated that they felt rewarded to see their mentees achieve their goals or overcome life challenges. They elaborated on the sense of accomplishment derived from evoking lasting change in others. Below are quotes that illustrate fulfillment for the mentor associated with the mentee's success.

For example, Participant 1 narrated an interaction with a young mentee who had difficulties paying her school fees. Participant 1 paid the school fees for the mentee, which enabled her to finalize her education. In the quote below, they recounted feelings of fulfillment when the young woman graduated and became successful in her career:

So, she (mentee) came to the issue (during) her senior year; she could not pay tuition. So, I paid her tuition for her for that last semester. Because that was the only way she could graduate. It was like $16,000. I paid for it. She graduated. She got a job as a senior editor at Sports Illustrated. Okay? It took her five years, and

she paid me back. Furthermore, I told her no thank you when she came to me with

a certified cheque. You know, pay it forward towards somebody else.

Nevertheless, it was rewarding that the young lady was brilliant (Participant 1).

A second example was illustrated by Participant 4, who narrated that he had

mentored three brothers who went on to join professional football. One of the young men

bought Participant 3 a Corvette to appreciate his support, for believing in his potential.

Although the participant declined to take the Corvette, he was proud of the achievements

of the three young men and highlighted it as something that stood out and inspired them.

In the quote below, he reflected on their relationship and the young men's achievement:

I did not take the car (Corvette), but they sent me to Greece. I went to Greece and

the South of France. So that was a highlight of a mentor because I had those kids

since ninth grade. I went (with them) through ninth grade, high school, college,

and post-college. And then when I looked up, six years after, man, they are Pro

Bowlers now. They are four, five-year veterans in the NFL. So, it helps me; it

shapes my moral compass (Participant 3).

The second scenario illustrates instances where participants (*n*=7) felt rewarded

because their mentees acknowledged their support. For example, Participant 3 narrated

about a young man who, through their mentor–mentee relationship, became like a son to

them. When the boys' father was on his death bed, he requested Participant 3 to care for

his son because he knew their excellent relationship. The boys' mother also

acknowledged the special relationship between her son and Participant 3 and would refer

the son to them for advice when needed. In the quote below, Participant 3 fondly recounts

an experience with the mentee on Father's Day and sums up their relationship as rewarding:

> He calls me on Father's Day. He talks to me once or twice a week. Furthermore, he always says, "When my dad died, there were many people that said, …okay, do not worry about it (Name Withheld), we got you". Moreover, he said, "After the funeral, there was only one person that kept in contact with me, and that was you (Participant 3)." His mother calls me to the day. She will say, "Hey, (you) need to call your son." Excuse me, that is a reward for me (Participant 3).

The second example was from Participant 10, who pointed out a rewarding moment when they received a letter of appreciation from a young mentee. The young lady recognized them as a father figure who made her a better person. Participant 10 in the quote below notes that this experience inspired them to continue with mentorship:

> A young lady from (Place Withheld) wrote me this letter on a scratch piece of paper. Moreover, I am paraphrasing, but she mentioned how I was like a father. "You made me become a better person. You were nice to me". I went to her and said (Name withheld) thank you so much. I said, let me ask you, why me? She said because you made me a better young lady (Participant 10).

The third example was from Participant 12, who also noted that it was rewarding to impact someone's life positively. They stated that positive feedback on how their guidance was helpful for mentees was encouraging. In the quote below, they describe how the feedback made them feel:

So, it is the direct feedback I got from individuals, either emails or people coming back and relating the experiences that I had shared with them, how that has personally benefited them and helped them make real-life decisions. So that is the rewarding part, and often you do not get that during the session. You come in with a game plan, and you are connecting, and sometimes you do not know, but it is usually after the fact that you get the feedback when people come back and tell you (Participant 12).

Participants ($n = 7$) reported a third scenario where the benefits of mentorship had a ripple effect: the impact was felt by other individuals beyond mentors and mentees. For example, Participant 7 captured the ripple effect of mentorship by arguing that when you instil values in a child, they pass it on to the next generation. In the quote below, they noted that mentorship benefits were intergenerational and rewarding to the mentor:

So, it is extremely rewarding, and it is rewarding over time, too. So, it is not even like instant gratification. It is the gratification that's going to live in a sustainable over the years because you literally can instill something in someone, and they have a child, and they instill them in their child. So, you are talking about your footprint being left on this world for such a long time, and I think that is probably the most rewarding part. It is not a monetary thing; it will not help you financially, but the feeling of joy you get from somebody saying, "Hey, thanks, I did this because of you. It is something positive. Oh, it is such a great feeling (Participant 7).

An example of the ripple effect of mentorship was reported by Participant 1, who indicated that they paid school fees for a mentee (young lady) to stay in school. The lady graduated from high school and eventually got a job. With the mentor's advice, they invested the money they owed to pay for another young person's school fees:

> She graduated. She got a job as a senior editor at (Company Withheld) Illustrated. Okay? It took her five years, and she paid me back. And when she came to me with a certified check, I told her, no, thank you. You know, pay it forward towards somebody else. But it was rewarding that the young lady was very smart. She went to one of the top high schools, the top public high school in Washington, DC. But she stuck through it with a minimal support system (Participant 1).

The second example of the ripple effects of mentorship was reported by Participant 4. They indicated that some young people they mentored had also become mentors. In the quote below, they argued that their mentees were offering similar support to others just like what their mentor had done for them:

> That is how we build them(mentors). It is like, I will be what I need to be for you. But I am going to need you; once you get through, you will have to turn around and be there for somebody else. You will be you (that) you needed (Participant 4).

In summary, participants indicated that mentorship was rewarding to them. The prevalence of this theme points towards substantial potential benefits of mentoring. A mentor who believes they have a significant positive impact on their community for generations to come is more likely to continue engaging in meaningful mentoring

practices. They identified that the benefits of mentorship were visible in the short term and long term. Through the three scenarios reported, it was clear that the benefits of mentorship went beyond the mentor and mentee to affect other individuals too positively. These experiences led to great fulfilment for the mentors and inspired them to continue mentoring.

Subtheme 2.1: Mentorship Strategies Used. This subtheme discusses the various strategies utilized by the participants in their practice of mentorship. For instance, class management skills were identified as a requirement by a mentor delivering mentorship to a group in a classroom set-up. It included actions such as mentor steering the conversation and encouraging participation of all mentees. Participant 12 indicated that they used group mentorship and, in the quote below, they reflect on the importance of classroom management:

I took those experiences and improved as I did better sessions because teachers

are lovely. They have to be able to control the class and control the students.

Thus, that is a unique skillset; being a mentor in that environment, you have to do

the same thing. Control the class and control the individual because there is

always the one heckler in the class that will try to be the class clown, and they are

going to be more popular than you that day. Furthermore, you have to be prepared

to meet them where they are, so you regain that control (Participant 12).

The following strategy was reported by participants ($n = 7$), mentors need to prepare for mentorship sessions. Planning for mentorship activities ahead of the session ensured that the mentor could deliver a successful session in person, on the phone, or in a

group. Participant 2, in the quote below, noted that it was essential to plan for a mentorship session to ensure that young people got the best out of it:

A typical day is, first you have to prepare for what you're going to discuss. It depends on if it's just a meet and greet. But if this is where you are providing training or classes or events, activities, because the thing about young people you have to keep them engaged. If it's not exciting, and it's not engaging they will drift off. And you will lose them. So typically, you have to prepare for what you're going to discuss and have a plan (Participant 2).

The next strategy utilized by participants ($n = 2$) was to get mentees out of their usual environment. Participants or their mentees chose the mentorship venues. For example, Participants 1 and 2 took their mentees to restaurants for meals and attended sporting events. Whereas Participant 9 took mentees to the local museum to help them appreciate the African American history. In the quote below, Participant 2 noted that meals helped to set an appropriate and conducive environment:

The young man (mentee) needed to go to Walgreen's. And the young man wanted dessert. Let's go get some dessert. And so, making it sort of informal, but formal, but you are letting them know that the main concern is about them, that seemed to be successful (Participant 2).

The other strategy closely related to getting mentees away from their usual environment was seeking mentees' preferences during the mentorship. The preferences could be regarding mentorship venue or activities undertaken during the mentorship. For

instance, Participant 2 in the example above consulted their mentee on their desired venue.

The following strategy refers to the transfer of practical skills to the mentee by the mentor. The practical skills mentioned by the participants ($n = 5$) included research skills, writing a resume, how to ask questions during an interview, grant writing, and verbal communication. The skills helped the mentees achieve their desired goals, such as securing employment or completing a difficult assignment.

Participants ($n = 7$) also demonstrated examples to teach mentees about life situations. They provided the mentee with illustrations or stories to help them understand current or future life situations. For instance, Participant 1 used the following illustration on the contribution of why the mentees should respect women:

When you're in high school, and you don't have anything to eat after school, and your parents are not home. If you want something to eat, where would you have a better chance? If you call one of your boys, and say can I come over and get a ham and cheese sandwich? Or if you called one of the girls you know at school. If you call the young lady, she's probably going to say sure, and she'll fix you a sandwich. If you call one of your boys, they're going to probably say well when you find one, let me know 'because I'm hungry too. So, they(mentees) kind of get it, why we must respect women in our lives (Participant 1).

The next strategy proposed by participants ($n = 5$) was using fun and interactive activities to engage youth. The participants used a variety of activities based on what was essential to their mentees, such as purchasing tickets to sporting tournaments, attending

formal dinners together, going to the museum and local cemetery to do community service, and learning history. In addition, Participant 11 pointed out the importance of music in reaching out and connecting with youth:

> Music usually is the icebreaker for me because everybody listens to young rappers. So, I make it my business to stay on who the young rapper is or what they are talking about, especially the suburban kid. Because they are rapping that song and singing it with all they got, but he is talking about riding around the playground to shoot somebody. You are in there going like you (mentee) are furthest from this situation, and why do you want to be in that situation? Why is it cool to you? (Participant 11).

Use of personal experiences in mentorship. When participants ($n = 7$) used their personal experiences, mentees could relate with them and draw some similarities with their own lives. For example, Participant 12 reflected on how sharing their personal experiences helped them gain credibility with their mentees and connect with different categories of individuals in the audience. In the quote below, they reflected on the impact of sharing experiences:

> I shared my personal story of getting my first job. I had a paper route, and I got a job working at a shoe store as a salesman, and then I landed my first job, you know, with (Company) as a service representative. And I worked my way up to an executive position, but when I got the job, I didn't have the degree, so I only could get to a certain point. And so, I had to share that story with people so that I could connect with them, and they could see me as an average person just like

them. A person who could get a decent job without a degree, but at some point,

that degree was going to be very crucial. So, I was able to connect with the people

that did not have a college aspiration and able to connect with the people who did

want to go to college and be able to show them what that degree did for me once I

finally got it, right? (Participant 12).

Involving family members (parents and siblings) were identified by participants

($n = 2$) as an essential strategy to address mentee issues such as mental health, safety, and

academic. Participant 5 indicated that it was essential to involve parents to address the

negative norms that bar youth from accessing mental health services. Participant 1 also

noted that mentorship was difficult when a young person faced opposition from siblings.

Participant 1 was able to use their skill to win the approval and support of their mentee's

siblings. The support was crucial for the mentee to walk away from a life of crime

successfully.

In summary, participants identified various strategies that they utilized with their

mentees. The strategies were indicated as helpful in enriching the mentor–mentee

interactions and supporting the mentees to achieve desired goals. They included

involving family members in mentorship, using personal experiences in mentorship, and

incorporating fun and interactive activities. Also, use examples to teach mentees about

life, transfer practical skills, get them out of their usual environment, and seek their

opinions during the mentorship process. In addition, mentors need to prepare for sessions

in advance and utilize class management skills in group mentorship sessions.

Subtheme 2.2: Reasons for Engaging in Mentorship. This subtheme discusses the participant's motivations for engaging in the mentorship of high school students. Four main reasons for engaging in mentorship emerged from the data; mentor's desire to give back to the community, mentor inspired by their lived experiences, mentor extending parenting role to their children's peers, and mentor encouraged to intervene by the needs of young people.

Four participants reported the desire to give back to the community as a motivation for mentorship. Giving back implies that mentors were volunteering their time, skills, and knowledge to benefit young people in high school. For instance, Participants I indicated that they had a "desire to go out into the community and help the next round of employees that will come to corporate America." (Participant 1) In addition, Participant 2 reported that they "wanted to give back and help the youth have a future." (Participant 2). Participant 12 stated that they were inspired to give back to individuals (young people) so that they can learn from their experience and achieve their full potential: "I wanted to give back to individuals so that they could also achieve their full potential by hearing it from someone, hearing my stories and seeing how there was more to life and to gain." (Participant 12)

The majority ($n = 10$) of the participants indicated that they were inspired to engage in mentorship by their lived experiences in high school. Two scenarios emerged from the data. In the first scenario, the participant had a support system in high school that helped them navigate through their challenges, and they felt inspired to offer support

to young people like someone else did for them. Participants (*n* = 4) stated that they had a

high school support system either from a family member, football coach, or mentor.

The first example was provided by Participant 5, who narrated that their football

coach in high school offered them, and their friends support to deal with the death of a

high school friend. This experience inspired them to become a football coach to guide

and coach young people. They noted that because their high school friend died of a heart

attack, and as a result, health and diet became a topic of discussion with their mentees. In

the quote below, they explain how the loss of their friend impacted them: "It (To have

positive role models who were his coach in high school) shaped me to a degree on how to

deal with people, how to deal with kids. However, the catalyst was (High School friend's

name withheld) passing away." (Participant 5)

The second example was narrated by Participant 10, whose football coach was his

mentor and an essential part of his high school support structure. The coach was

significant because he did not have a father figure in his early years. In the quote below,

he indicated that he was inspired to be a mentor like his coach who supported them in

high school:

> I did not have a father figure in my life, and I remember that when I had my
>
> football coach. He became one of the most influential persons to come in my life
>
> to mentor me and I want to give back. My cup was full, so I was able to pull from
>
> a full cup (Participant 10).

The second scenario was participants who had challenges in high school and

lacked a support system. They want to help young people avoid the pitfalls they had

navigated without support. Participants (*n=6*) indicated various support systems which they desired during high school; some needed a positive male role model, others a consistent father figure, some the support from people of color, and others required mentors or someone to offer them guidance.

The first example was narrated by Participant 3; after their parents separated, their father was not consistently involved in their life, and they were expected to take care of themselves, their mom, and their sibling. They lacked a positive male role model. Participant 4 also lacked a support system and ended up in the justice system. In the quote below, they narrated how their experience inspired them to provide the support they lacked to other young people:

> I was a teenager; I spent a lot of time in juvenile facilities. I ended up spending all my 20's into my 30's in prison, penitentiaries, so forth, and so on. Moreover, when I look back over my life, it resulted from having nobody to help me through that tiny space between that eighth-grade summer and that ninth-grade school year. There was no guidance. I figured if I could be what I needed to be, for me, if I could be what I needed at 15 for somebody now? (Participant 4).

The second example was from Participant 6, and they indicated that a single mom raised them. In high school, they struggled to define their identity as a man because he lacked a consistent male role model in his life. In the quote below, they report how he struggled to find his identity as a man:

> So, about the eleventh grade, when puberty hit hard, I really at that time started to figure out who I was and my stride, but it was hard. It was hard just being me. It

was my mom and me at that time, so just trying to identify as a man, being raised

by a woman, became a little tough (Participant 6).

Participant 6 proceeded to report how the experience of not having a consistent

male role model inspired them to be the person they lacked in his early life: "…I did not

have whom I thought I needed in my early stages of life. So, when I got into my 20s, I

started mentoring, and I just wanted to be that person that I did not have" (Participant 6).

The third scenario was participants ($n = 2$) who were inspired to mentor their

children's peers or friends. For example, Participant 3 indicated that they started

mentoring their son's friends when they were younger and slowly progressed until high

school. In the quote below, they report that the connection with youth occurred because

their son would bring his friends home from the age of seven years:

I started with youth at seven-eight years old. My house was the hangout house for

my son's friends. So, it kind of started there. And then you know being a youth

football coach, and the next thing you know it just kind of kept, kept rolling, till it

got to the high school level (Participant 3).

A similar experience was reported by Participant 8, whose pathway to mentorship

was also through parenting. They indicated that the progression to mentorship occurred

because they were engaged in the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) at their child's

school and made connections with students who were their children's peers. In the quote

below they indicated how the progression into mentoring occurred:

No, I think it was just a natural progression of being an engaged parent and part of

PTA, and then you end up meeting lots of parents, lots of students and your

children's friends or classmates. You end up spending a lot of time together when

you're engaged in their activities, so it was kind of a natural progression for me

and then becoming a leader in certain organizations. You know, active parents

take on lots of active roles, so it was just a natural progression (Participant 9).

The fourth scenario was where participants ($n = 7$) stated that they were inspired

to intervene by the needs of young people. The needs that inspired the participants

included young people who were not ready for the job market, homeless, experiencing

suicidal ideation and identity crisis, and having absentee parents. Also, some youth need

to disengage from gang culture and violence and guide them to navigate the transition

from childhood and adulthood.

In summary, some participants reported more than one reason for engaging in

mentorship. For instance, some said they desired to give back to the community and

could identify past experiences that also motivated them to focus on high school. In

addition, some participants whose high school-inspired lived experiences also indicated

that they saw a need in young people's lives that they wanted to meet.

Summary

This phenomenological study sought to provide a detailed understanding of

mentors' lived experiences about educational mentoring programs for high school

students. The study had two research questions (a) RQ1: What is the lived experience of

mentors in the mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level? (b) RQ2: What is

the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship for the mentor?

The first research question sought to explore the lived experience of mentors in the mentor–mentee relationships at the high school level. One theme and one subtheme were found to address this research question. Theme 1 demonstrates that the participants utilized various approaches to gain the mentee's trust and establish rapport. Participants delivered the mentorship sessions through large groups, small groups, one-on-one, and a combination of approaches. There were several ways to match mentors with mentees, including targeting youth already enrolled in a youth program that also offered mentorship. Also, some participants chose mentees who were already known to them, and others were matched to mentors by geographic location. In addition, some mentees were linked with mentors through youth program facilitators who were aware of their needs.

Subtheme 1.1 demonstrated that although participants had experienced challenges in mentorship, they displayed resilience by navigating through challenges and highlighting solutions. The challenges identified included lack of support from mentees' families, limited financial and human resources, conflict with spouse due to time spent in mentorship, and little experience mentors. In addition, some mentees were difficult because they had poor social skills and lacked interest in mentorship. Also, COVID 19 limited the interaction between mentors and mentees, some mentors had poor time management skills, and others had experienced vicarious trauma while mentoring.

The second research question explored the meaning of the mentor–mentee relationship to the mentor. One theme and two subthemes were found to address it. The findings indicate that mentorship had short-term and long-term rewards for the mentor.

Participants reported that they felt rewarded through three scenarios: (a) mentees acknowledged the mentor's support, (b) mentees succeeded in their goals, and (c) benefits of mentorship had a ripple effect.

Subtheme 2.1 discussed strategies that participants used in their mentorship practice, such as class management skills, mentor's planning for mentorship sessions in advance, getting mentees out of their usual environment, and seeking the mentee's preferences during the mentorship. Also, transfer practical skills to mentees, use examples and personal experiences to teach mentees about life, utilize fun and interactive activities to engage youth, and involve mentees' family members in mentorship.

Subtheme 2.2 discussed the participants' motivations for engaging in the mentorship of high school students. Four main reasons for engaging in mentorship emerged from the data; mentor's desire to give back to the community, mentor inspired by their lived experiences, mentor extending parenting role to their children's peers, and mentor encouraged to intervene by the needs of young people. In Chapter 5, I will present an interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, and my recommendations. The chapter will conclude with a section on implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentor–mentee relationship experience with high-school-aged mentees from the mentors' perspective. Although there is a myriad of research examining the impact of mentoring programs on mentees, there is a relatively limited number of studies that focus on the mentoring process from the view of the mentor. This represents a significant gap in scholarly literature since mentor experience, mentoring style, and the nature of mentor–mentee identification and engagement play a role in the outcomes of the mentoring relationship (Doblhofer et al, 2017; Holmes et al, 2018).

Several themes were revealed from this study. First was the fact that mentors' experiences in high school had an impact on their mentorship experience. Second, it was determined that most mentors viewed their roles in the mentor–mentee relationship as rewarding. These main themes were supported and described by one and two subthemes respectively. Factors of note included the following: mentor resilience in practice; the challenges of mentoring in general, the specific challenges of mentoring students during the COVID pandemic as well as the beneficial strategies for mentoring high school students in practical real-life situations. These findings and how they are related to existing literature on mentor–mentee relationships within the high school setting are presented in this chapter. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research and application are also introduced. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research and its findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from this study served to contribute to existing knowledge about the nature of the mentor–mentee relationship in educational mentoring. This was of particular benefit because it examined this relationship from the viewpoint of the mentor in contrast to that of the mentee which has served as the predominant focus of previous research over the years (Aschenbrener et al., 2017; Doblhofer et al., 2017; Humberd & Rouse, 2016). The themes arising from the study are relevant and supported by evidence in existing literature. It therefore highlights the importance of examining this information critically in a manner that facilitates the identification of further areas for future research and practice.

Mentors' Experiences in High School Influenced Their Mentorship Experience

The roles of mentoring programs are to provide students with positive role models to guide their development of appropriate knowledge and skills to function effectively in the 21st century (Alfonso et al., 2019). The recognized impact of mentoring programs ranges from effects on academic outcomes to social functioning, mental health, and well-being of the mentees. This therefore emphasizes the importance of identifying factors that could potentially affect such programs and their outcomes. Although the aim of mentorship programs is to influence mentees positively, it must also be recognized that the mentor plays a central role in the process and the importance of their perceptions, experiences, and contributions cannot be overemphasized (Doblhofer et al., 2017). This theme firmly demonstrated this fact, highlighting that the mentors' personal experience influenced their experience of the mentorship process.

Interactions between mentors and mentees arise in different ways including the fostering of mentorship relationships with youths who are members or participants in ongoing youth, community centers, or school mentorship programs. Although some mentees were selected based on a previous acquaintance with the mentor, geographical location and proximity was another relevant factor. These findings echo existing literature which highlights the role played by adults, teachers, and other individuals in authority in mentoring and encouraging high school students (Bozhurt, 2017; Carroll, 2018; Chhibber, 2019). The general perception from respondents was that when a mentor was previously known to the mentee, it was easier to build rapport and establish a positive relationship (Chhibber, 2019; Mukeredi, 2017). This is important since it is vital that mentors are able to win the trust of their mentees through a variety of different approaches. However, it was also recognized that regardless of the initial relationship between mentor and mentee, fostering trust and confidence in the mentor is often a long process that requires patience on the part of the mentor. Patience and commitment are therefore important characteristics needed for effective mentorship (Chhibber, 2019; Lombardo et al., 2017; Mukeredzi, 2017).

Mentors were discovered to have different approaches to conducting their duties in the bid to win the trust of and establish rapport with their mentees. This could be by carrying out duties with large groups, small groups, one-on-one or adopting a mix of different approaches. However, typically, there was a flexible approach to the mentorship process with mentors often combining several approaches based on the unique characteristic and needs of the individual mentee. Successful mentor–student

relationships were developed when a myriad of different activities and behaviors were adopted as a part of the program (Mukeredzi, 2017). This is also the view of Lombardo et al. (2017), who described a variety of approaches that have been used successfully in mentoring programs. Furthermore, it must be recognized that group-based activities are quite effective in facilitating positive results in students that might be otherwise unresponsive or who might require close adult supervision and monitoring (Bozkhurt, 2017). It could therefore be suggested that there is a place for flexibility in the structure and design of mentoring activities for high school students since this allows for the choice of methods that are best suited to each individual student.

It was also recognized that there were some challenges associated with carrying out effective mentorship. Van Weelden et al. (2017) described such negative mentoring experiences as having the potential to have a negative impact on the personal, social, mental, and professional lives of mentors. A lack of relevant experience is one main factor that influences the impact and outcomes of mentoring programs as highlighted by several participants in the study. It is important that mentors are matched to the specific needs of the individuals being mentored based on their knowledge, skills, and past experiences. According to Seshabela et al. (2020), the mentoring relationship is based on the development of a connection characterized by the active guidance and support of a less experienced individual by a more experienced individual. This is done in a manner that fosters positive personal, professional, and educational growth and development. It could therefore be argued that there is a need to ensure that the expertise, knowledge, and

skills of the mentor are relevant to the mentee and their personal situation or circumstances.

A lack of support from families of the mentee, lack of human and financial resources, as well as the intensive time requirements are some other factors that represent a challenge for mentors. The psychological effect of providing support for these mentees was also very evident since many of these mentees were not always easy to cope with. In addition to the fact that some possessed poorly developed social skills, there was also a lack of awareness of the importance of mentorship (Seshabela et al., 2020). However, while there is a place for ensuring a fit between mentor and mentee, mentor training is invaluable in facilitating positive achievements of school mentorship programs. This is of particular importance in situations when there are students who show aggressive, antisocial, or disruptive behaviors that could be a hindrance to the mentoring process. It is also of relevance when providing support for students from different domestic home situations. According to Gunn et al. (2017) and An et al. (2019), the provision of mentors with support and training that equip them with the skills and competencies to handle challenging mentorship environments helps increase retention rates while fostering positive outcomes for both mentors and mentees. In addition, training also helps mentors develop skills in handling students from a variety of different backgrounds (Aschenbrener et al., 2017).

Finally, a consideration of the lived experiences of mentors in high school mentoring programs cannot be complete without an acknowledgement of the impact of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on prepandemic social interactions.

This included interruptions in the interactions of students with their peers as well as the interruption of the relevant youth and mentoring programs. This global pandemic had made changes in the usual modes of communication between mentors and their mentees. This is relevant because the use of digital means of communication and interaction was thought to be less than satisfactory for reasons that included problems with time management as well as the inability to address the mentees' concerns adequately (Güner et al., 2020). In addition, it was difficult to form connections and relationships when mentoring students in the virtual setting. Although this represented a challenge for mentors and their mentees, it is anticipated that advances such as the development of vaccines and the gradual reintegration of society might reduce the impact of such distancing in the future (Noushad et al., 2021).

Mentors Viewed Their Roles in the Mentor–Mentee Relationship as Being Rewarding

Regardless of the challenges in mentoring students, there was a high degree of resilience and commitment on the part of mentors. According to Campbell (2019), there is recognition that participation in mentoring programs has a positive impact on productivity and skill as leaders and teachers. It could therefore be argued that when mentors are provided with appropriate training and tools for their programs, they can complete their goals regardless of the challenges facing them.

The nature of the mentor–mentee relationship differed among mentors. While the relationship for some was short-term, for others, it was long-term. However, regardless of the duration of the relationship, there were three main reported satisfaction/reward

scenarios: (a) mentees acknowledged the mentor's support, (b) mentees succeeded in achieving their goals, and (c) there was a ripple effect arising from the benefits of the mentorship relationship.

Considering these reward scenarios, one could not help but wonder about the strategies the mentors applied to communicate and work with their mentees. Amongst others, the mentors have mentioned impeccable class management skills, planning the session, breaking the ice, and making the mentees get out of their comfort zone, as well as seeking the mentee's preferences during the mentorship. Besides these strategies, participants reported that the most important one was their help with the application of practical skills and sharing of personal experience with the mentees regarding life, scholastic work, and studies. This was achieved through fun and interactive activities, aimed at engaging the mentees. In some cases, family members were urged to participate to help the mentee get accustomed quicker and better participate in all activities (Aschenbrener et al., 2017; Chhibber, 2019).

Active family involvement in mentorship could not go on for a long period, which is why determining participant motivation was important. According to the study, the participants' motivation is characterized by four main reasons: (a) the desire to give back to the community, (b) being inspired by their personal experiences as a mentee, (c) extending their parenting role to their children's peers, and (d) being encouraged to intervene by the needs of young people.

The modern Western European education system is based on a student-centered approach (learner-centered approach), the leading principle of which for higher education

is the principle of student subjectivity. For this reason, the teacher in the modern educational process is "trying on" various roles, increasingly becoming a mentor for the student. In the Anglo-American scientific literature, the phenomenon of mentoring young colleagues to improve skills and professional growth is denoted by the term "mentoring" (Seshabela et al., 2020). Mentoring, as described above, involves the provision of insights and support from a more experienced individual to a younger colleague just beginning steps to develop their ultimate career (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2020; Schulleri & Saleh, 2020).

Therefore, mentors are people who have extensive experience in a professional activity in which they conduct mentoring, and who have a social status that confirms their professional merits (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2020). Their tasks during personal interaction with mentees are to help develop competence and skills, promote career growth, and improve the psychosocial functions of the individual. In modern scientific literature, the following features of mentoring are distinguished: (a) it forms personal attachment and interest of the student, (b) it increases motivation for professional growth, and (c) it is an effective learning method for both parties (mentor and mentee). Furthermore, in some successful situations it serves to encourage the development of long-term relationships and friendships between the participants in the process (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2020). In view of the above, it could therefore be concluded that the opportunity to play an active role in growth and development is one of several factors that contributes to the sense of reward felt by mentors providing mentorship for high school students.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Constructivist Model

The social constructivist model was used to develop an insight and understanding of the experiences of participants in the mentoring of high school students. Social constructivists emphasize that learning should be conceptualized beyond the primary assimilation of novel knowledge by individuals, but as the foundational process through which learners get integrated into a knowledge community. According to Vygotsky's social learning theory, social interaction is the foundation of individual development and growth (Liu & Chen, 2010). The attitudes, values, and beliefs of both mentors and mentees are therefore critical in the mentoring process (Kang, 2018). This, in turn, is influenced by the nature of the knowledge and information being passed across from the mentor to the mentee as well as the nature of the experiences and the relationships that have developed between these two parties.

A successful learner is the one who will embed new knowledge within the old and for whom the new understanding expands to include the new experiences, including those that are determined by social interactions between them (Carroll, 2018). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the nature of the surrounding social, economic, and cultural environments exert an influence on the response to and outcomes from mentoring programs. This was demonstrated by the fact that many of the major challenges faced by mentors in reaching and engaging their mentees arose from their environments: the nature of the mentees home environment; family dynamics, socioeconomic status, neighborhoods, schools, and other facilities. It is therefore important to recognize that

these factors cannot be ignored in the development and implementation of targeted mentoring programs in any community.

In mentoring programs, mentees acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies by constantly communicating with their teacher-mentor. A mentor, being an active part of the mentoring process, must have—in addition to professional competence and recognized achievements in the pedagogical field—certain personal characteristics, which may include the desire to share one's own experience; "emotional balance; willingness to spend time developing the mentee; the ability to organize oneself and others; resolution of conflict situations with students; issues of discipline and subordination; relationships with colleagues" (Talbert et al., 2021). However, it must be recognized that learning is considered an active process where the learner discovers the principles, ideas, and experiences as they apply for themselves (Bozhurt, 2017). Therefore, it is important that there is active involvement of the students in the learning process. This was clearly reflected in the findings from this study which demonstrated that mentees who were in regular contact with their mentors had significantly positive outcomes.

At the stage of personality formation, any teenager needs to be guided by a significant person, a guide to a positive example (Hussey & Campbell-Meier, 2020). Of course, there are always important people nearby, such as parents, teachers, and coaches, who educate teenagers and serve as their defenders, advisers, and just friends. The mentor combines all these roles, helping the teenager and supporting them in the search for

individual life goals and ways to achieve them. It is mentoring that is a highly effective tool of socialization.

Education will be aimed at strengthening moral values, national and cultural traditions and ensuring the continuity of generations, as well as the formation of a person capable of bearing responsibility for their homeland (Talbert et al., 2021). In the conditions of value education, the school will contribute to the implementation of national ideas that consolidate the people, instilling patriotic feelings and contributing to their upbringing as open citizens of their country.

Between the mentor and the mentee, there is a constant dialogue, interpersonal communication. It is believed that communication between a mentor and a student should not be limited by the formal framework of the working day: joint rest, holidays since all these are tools that allow you to better understand a person (Talbert et al., 2021). The dialogue will not take place if there is a large distance between the mentor and the student. Frankness within the framework of professional duties between the mentor and the trainee is necessary to correctly formulate the tactical goals of the adaptation process, to offer the possibility of psychological relief and personal progress. This work is a long and laborious process. A person who holds the position of a mentor must be patient and purposeful. The mentor–mentee relationship is not the least difficult but is rather a relationship that both must work on to attain success. It is however evident that there is great potential for such relationships for fostering well grounded, developed youths that grow to meet their potential and contribute positively to society.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of this research study that can be used to guide the design, development, and implementation of future studies on mentor–mentee relationships in high schools. First, while the study was focused on the mentor–mentee relationship, it was limited to the population of high school mentors working in Prince George County in the state of Maryland. This therefore has implications for the transferability of the findings to other populations and it is acknowledged that the findings from this research might not be applicable to other geographical, social and/or cultural areas.

In addition, as a champion of mentoring programs for supporting young individuals, it was important to recognize the possibility of personal bias in the interpretation of the results. This included but was not limited to the assumption that individuals who choose to become mentors would make extensive accommodations to ensure that their mentoring relationships were all successful. This would therefore lead to the risk of undue emphasis on information and data that confirmed this assumption. To minimize this potentially distorting influence, I engaged in a continual process of reflection at every stage of the research process: data collection, analysis, and reporting. I also kept detailed notes throughout the project including careful notation of any bias at every stage and engaging in careful questioning of the automatic interpretations that were assigned to participant responses.

The process of careful note taking and personal reflection helped to ensure that preconceptions were not affecting the identification of participant meanings.

Furthermore, notes involved participant actions and non-verbal cues were carefully made so that they could be reviewed alongside the transcripts. Member checking was also used to mitigate the impact of possible bias. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a qualitative technique that is used by researchers to test and establish the tenet of credibility in trustworthiness of the results, mainly when primary data collection methods are used (Nowell et al., 2017). Participants were therefore sent transcripts of their interviews to ensure that these captured their thoughts and the messages that they sought to pass across. It was only after participants indicated that the transcripts correctly illustrated and captured their meanings and comments that the transcripts were subjected to further analysis.

Finally, while there is a large body of research evaluating mentoring programs, this has not provided a wide range of information relating to their effectiveness in the short-, medium- and long-term. It is therefore evident that there is need for evaluation studies that examine the impact of these programs over longer durations of time. Most formal mentoring programs are majorly based in schools or within local communities. They are also typically tailored towards fostering the development of skills, knowledge and competencies that aid the professional and personal growth of the mentee. Factors such as the nature of personal family circumstances and relationships, existing behavioral problems, socioeconomic status, and peer pressure are thought to impact the effectiveness of these mentoring programs. It has also been demonstrated that mentors must possess sufficient resilience to deal with the challenges of providing appropriate mentorship and guidance to children from diverse backgrounds with differing needs. Measures that are

thought to be effective include but are not limited to mentor training; the matching of

mentor areas of expertise, skills and capabilities to mentee needs as well as providing

mentors with evidence of the long-term impact of their efforts. This therefore highlights

the fact that there is a need for further research into the mentor–mentee relationship,

particularly studies that adopt broader, multi-stakeholder approaches to examining the

impact of such programs on young people. This includes a focus on short-term, medium-

term, and long-term outcomes of the programs. It is anticipated that this will facilitate the

development, design, and implementation of mentor programs in the future.

Recommendations

There is a need for more research on the mentor–mentee relationship and the

impact that it has on the outcomes of young students in high school. While it is

recognized that educational mentoring programs have been useful as a means of

improving outcomes for mentees. However, there is less focus on the factors that play a

role in the success of mentoring relationships, particularly in relation to the mentors

within the school environment (Doblhofer et al., 2017; Alfonso et al., 2019; Edlund,

2019). Insight into the characteristics, skills and competencies that increase mentor

resilience, effectiveness and success with their mentees would work well to facilitate the

development of mentor training programs. Mentor training is of relevance considering the

complex and diverse social, cultural, geographic, and economic environments that exist

today (Edlund, 2019; Schulleri & Saleh, 2020). It is anticipated that this will encourage

the development of skills and capabilities that will increase their effectiveness and

success working as mentors for high school students in present day schools and organizations.

As highlighted above, the study was limited to the state of Maryland. It is anticipated that differences exist in the guidelines and laws guiding the development, design, and implementation of mentorship programs in different regions. Furthermore, it is possible that socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic differences could exert an influence on the patterns of effectiveness and relevance that are demonstrated. There is therefore a place for a series of exploratory studies examining these relationships as well as relevant mentor skills and capabilities (Alfonso et al., 2019) in a range of different settings. It is anticipated that this will facilitate the identification of core competencies, characteristics and skills that are useful for mentors in such programs.

Implications

The mentoring relationship is aimed at engaging mentees in education and other appropriate pursuits, while providing positive role-models where these may be lacking in a young person's life (Spencer et al., 2016). The goal of the current study was to examine the mentor–mentee relationship from the perspective of the mentor. Since there are varied reports of the effectiveness of mentoring programs, such an approach to mentorship can facilitate the identification of factors that could increase effectiveness of these programs in the long term. Mentoring and counseling programs can help youth achieve better outcomes. It has been demonstrated that mentors can assess the unmet needs of at-risk youth, identify the barriers that they face and then facilitate access to a service mix that can address both these needs and barriers. According to Doblhofer et al. (2017) there are

many cases where the expertise and the characteristics of the mentor could play a role in determining the outcomes for the mentee. This was highlighted in this research which therefore emphasizes the need for attention on the characteristics, skills, capabilities, and the role of the mentor in these relationships. It is important as a means of encouraging the development of the requisite social, cultural, and academic skills that can be utilized to support these young people effectively.

A developing society needs modernly educated, highly moral, enterprising people. The formation of civil society and the rule of law, the transition to a market economy and the recognition of a person, his rights, and freedoms as the highest value determine the new requirements for the education system. It could therefore be argued that it is vital that individuals working as mentors possess unique insights about the modern-day world, skills, and capabilities to navigate this innovative world effectively; the capacity to pass these messages across to younger, less experienced individuals as well as the resilience and commitment to see the engagement to a conclusion (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020; Talbert et al., 2021). This was demonstrated by the determination of several of the mentors to persist at their roles regardless of the myriad of challenges they faced, gaining a sense of satisfaction and reward when their students were able to progress and achieve their stated goals and objectives. It is therefore evident that the adoption of a structured approach to the process of mentoring students could potentially result in significant improvements in outcomes and results from mentoring programs in high schools in the future.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the mentor–mentee relationship within the context of mentoring programs for high school students. It is anticipated that an increased understanding of these relationships; characteristics that are suitable for mentors and prospective mentors as well as factors that increase short-, medium- and long-term effectiveness of mentoring programs would work well to increase the value of these programs to their target audience.

The average young person is faced with the need to navigate life while skirting a myriad of different obstacles and challenges. The benefit of a supportive, more experienced individual to serve as a guide, inspiration, and support as they go through this process cannot be overemphasized. However, it is important that these individuals are well suited and sufficiently skilled to engage positively with their mentees. It is anticipated that a focus on the skills and talents of mentors will work well to encourage the design, development, and implementation of well-rounded mentoring programs in the future. It is hoped that the findings of this study will have helped contribute in part to the ultimate achievement of that goal.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. What influenced you to mentor at the high school level?

2. Describe your mentoring experience.

3. Tell me about a typical day in your life of mentoring.

4. What are the most notable experiences you have had during your mentoring experience?

5. What were some challenges that you encountered during your mentoring experiences?

Appendix B: Code Book

Name of codes	Description of Codes
Approaches to mentorship	This node is an aggregate node that includes a description of various approaches to mentorship that participants utilized. Examples include large group mentorship, small group mentorship, one-on-one, and multiple methods.
Combination of various approaches	This node contains narratives that indicate that different mentorship approaches were used on the same individuals. For instance, a participant sometimes met mentees separately and combined them with others for a small group mentorship.
Large group mentorship	This node refers to the mentorship of large groups of young people at one time such as over a day, several days, or a series of meetings over a given period. Large groups are defined as groups of more than ten people.
One-on-one mentorship	This node describes instances where mentorship was provided to one individual over some time. The

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	meetings were often between mentee and one mentor (the participant)
Small group mentorship	This node includes instances where the participant offered mentorship to mentees in small groups below ten people.
Building rapport with mentee	This node describes various approaches used by the participant to establish rapport with the mentee.
Definition of youth at risk	This node provides the various characteristics of young people targeted by the participants or by the mentorship organizations that participants represent. It provides selection criteria for the youth who were perceived to require mentorship.
Identification of Mentees	This node includes narratives that explain how participants were matched with mentees. It is an aggregate node with several children containing details of each matching approach discussed by participants.
Mentees enrolled in a youth program.	This node describes instances where mentees were already members of a

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	youth program that offered mentorship exclusively or as part of other services targeting young people. Participants were usually involved in these programs as mentors.
Mentees matched by geographical location	This node provides details of instances where mentors were linked to mentees within their geographical location by an organized mentorship program. In some cases, the mentorship sessions were group-based and occurred at periodic intervals such as annual conferences/ meetings.
Mentees previously known to Mentors	This node includes instances where participants indicate that they chose mentees from previously known individuals, such as children of family friends.
Recommended by facilitators of existing youth programs	This node describes scenarios where a youth program facilitator linked the participant with a young person in their program who needed mentorship.
Mentorship Challenges	This node is an aggregate code that includes the various challenges faced by

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	participants while providing mentorship to youth. Examples of the child nodes include limited resources, poor time management, and lack of mentees' family support.
Youth ignores mentors' advice	This node describes instances where the mentee ignores the advice of the mentor.
Lack of support from mentee's family	This node describes instances where the participant experienced a lack of support from the mentee's family and how it impacted the mentorship experience. The family includes parents or caregivers and siblings to the mentee.
Limited resources	This node describes how limited resources affect the mentorship process. Resources include financial and human resources.
Conflict with spouse	This node refers to conflicts between the participant and their spouse due to time spent mentoring or bring mentees home.

Name of codes	Description of Codes
Mentees with poor social skills	This node describes how some young people have poor social skills that may affect mentors
Mentor struggle to form connections in virtual session	This node describes the struggles of forming connections with mentees in a virtual setting
Mentee's lack of interest in mentorship	This node includes examples of instances where a mentee expressed a lack of interest in mentorship.
Mentors limited experience	This node indicates instances where the participants indicated that they lacked a particular skill to support a mentee in achieving their goals or overcoming challenges.
Mentor's poor time management	This node refers to instances where participants indicated that they struggled to balance time allocated to mentorship, family, and other work where mentors had other jobs.
COVID limited the mentorship experience	This node refers to the limitations experienced by mentors and mentees such as limited physical connection,

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	youth adopting anti-social behaviours (for instance, crime and disrespect).
Vicarious trauma	This node refers to the trauma experienced by mentors as a result of constantly caring for others who've had traumatic experiences.
Mentorship is rewarding	This node aggregates participants' perceptions of their lived mentorship experience, reporting that they found it rewarding.
Mentees acknowledge the mentor's support.	This node indicates instances when participants stated that the mentees' appreciation was rewarding.
Mentees' success in their goals rewarded mentor.	This node indicates instances where the participant reported that they felt rewarded to see their mentee achieve their goals or overcome life challenges.
Mentorship has a ripple effect.	This node includes instances where the benefits of mentorship impacted individuals beyond mentors and mentee
Mentorship strategies	This node aggregates various mentorship approaches that the participants utilized. Each of the

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	strategies is described further in the child nodes.
Class management	This node refers to a skill required to successfully mentor a group in a classroom set-up. It includes actions such as steering the conversation, encouraging participation by all, etc
Get mentee out of the usual environment.	This node indicates the various venues away from home chosen by participants or their mentees to ensure a successful mentorship experience.
Help young people plan for their life.	This node contains narratives that indicate participants guiding mentees to plan for their life.
Mentor to prepare for sessions	This node includes narratives that indicate the steps or activities involved in preparing for the various mentorship sessions. The steps vary based on the mentorship approach and venue.
Refer mentees for further support	This node describes instances where a participant referred their mentee to another professional who could offer

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	information or professional services needed by the mentee.
Seek mentee's preferences during the mentorship.	This node indicates examples of instances when the participant sought the mentees' preferences on venue or activities during the mentorship process and how this aids the process of mentorship.
Transfer practical skills to mentee	This node indicates practical skills that participants transferred or taught their mentees
Use examples to teach mentees about life situations	This node describes instances where the participant provided the mentee with examples from their own or other people's experiences to help mentees understand current or future life situations.
Use fun and interactive activities to engage youth	This node details the participants' use of various fun and interactive activities to keep mentees engaged. Examples include sharing a meal, attending sporting events,

Name of codes	Description of Codes
Use of personal experiences in mentorship	This node aggregates narratives that describe how the participant used his or her experience to help mentees make life choices.
Involving parents	This node refers to instances where a mentee involved parents to solicit their support in addressing issues such as mental health, safety, academic, etc
Needs of Mentees	This node aggregates the various needs of at-risk youth identified and addressed by the mentors most of the time. They include career insight, education for school dropouts, instilling discipline, learning to respect people, avoiding crime, communication skills,
Reasons for mentoring	This node provides details on participants' reasons for getting involved in the mentorship of high school students.
Parent to young people	This node provides details on participants who engaged in mentorship because they had children of similar age- high school.

Name of codes	Description of Codes
Desire to give back to the community	This node contains narratives indicating that participants viewed mentorship as a way of giving back to their community and desired to give back.
Participants were inspired by their own lived experiences.	This node includes narratives that indicate the participants' reflection of high school experiences that have shaped their decision to be involved in mentorship. These include participants having received support from individuals at home or school. It also includes participants' narratives of their struggles due to lack of support while in high school.
Inspired by the needs of young people	This node includes narratives that indicate that participants identified the needs of young people and stated that they were motivated to help young people navigate those challenges. Some examples include youth lack of career skills and knowledge, lack of discipline, violence experiences,
Solutions to mentorship challenges	This node aggregates the various solutions suggested by participants to address the identified mentorship

Name of codes	Description of Codes
	challenges. These include but are not limited to involving family members in mentorship activities, encouraging people to invest time and funds in mentorship, referring mentees to other professionals for further support, seeking informed consent from potential mentees.
Encourage people to invest time and money in mentorship	This node includes narratives that indicate that the participant or their mentorship program encouraged people to volunteer their time or money to support mentorship activities.
Involving family members in mentorship	This node includes narratives that demonstrate that family members were involved in mentorship activities and supported mentees as a result.
Refer mentees to other professionals	This node refers to instances where a participant realized that the mentee needed service or information that they were not qualified to offer and referred them to another professional for support.

Name of codes	Description of Codes
Seek informed consent from mentees	This node describes instances where the participant or another person sought the potential mentee's consent before engaging them in mentorship activities.
Impacts of mentorship on mentor	This node includes positive effects of the mentorship experience on the mentor
Ethics/ Principles of mentorship	This node includes various skills and values that a mentor must uphold for a positive mentorship experience such as observing confidentiality, obtaining informed consent from mentee, practising listening, empathy, commitment, content must be relevant for mentees

Appendix C: Interviews Code Book

Code	Number of times code appeared in data	Participant Interviews Containing Code
Approaches to Mentorship	Aggregate Node	
Combination of various approaches	15	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12
Large group mentorship	10	P1, P2, P8, P9, P12
One-on-one mentorship	8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P12
Small group mentorship	5	P1, P3, P4
Building rapport with mentee	11	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
Definition of youth at risk	14	P1, P2, P3. P4. P5.P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12
Identification of Mentees	Aggregate Node	
Mentees enrolled in a youth program.	12	P3, P4, P8, P9, P5, P7, P10, P12
Mentees matched by geographical location	1	P1
Mentees previously known to Mentors	4	P2
Recommended by facilitators of existing youth programs	1	P1
Mentorship Challenges	Aggregate Node	

Youth ignores mentors' advice	6	P4, P7, P10
Lack of support from mentee's family	13	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6
Limited resources	7	P1, P2, P3, P4
Conflict with spouse	2	P4
Mentees with poor social skills	4	P2, P5, P7, P8
Mentor struggle to form connections in virtual session	3	P8
Mentee's lack of interest in mentorship	5	P1, P4, P8, P9, P12
Mentors limited experience	2	P7, P12
Mentor's poor time management	7	P2, P4, P9, P10, P11
COVID limited the mentorship experience	9	P4, P5, P11
Vicarious trauma	2	P5
Mentorship is rewarding	Aggregate Node	
Mentees acknowledge the mentor's support.	9	P1, P4, P6, P9, P10, P11, P12
Mentees' success in their goals rewarded mentor.	15	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P10

Mentorship has a ripple effect.	11	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9
Mentorship strategies	Aggregate Node	
Class management	1	P12
Get mentee out of the usual environment.	2	P1, P2
Help young people plan for their life.	13	P1, P2, P4, P12
Mentor to prepare for sessions	10	P1, P2, P6, P7, P9, P12
Refer mentees for further support	9	P1, P8, P9, P10, P11
Seek mentee's preferences during the mentorship.	3	P1, P2, P7
Transfer practical skills to mentee	11	P1, P2, P9, P11, P12
Use examples to teach mentees about life situations	16	P1, P2, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12
Use fun and interactive activities to engage youth	11	P1, P2, P4, P9, P11
Use of personal experiences in mentorship	21	P1, P2, P4, P6, P9, P11, P12
Involving parents	1	P5
Needs of Mentees	20	P1, P2, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12

Reasons for mentoring	Aggregate Node	
Parent to young people	2	P3, P4, P4
Desire to give back to the community	6	P1, P2, P6, P12
Participants were inspired by their own lived experiences.	36	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12
Inspired by the needs of young people	33	P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P11, P12
Solutions to mentorship challenges	Aggregate Node	
Encourage people to invest time and money in mentorship	6	P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Involving family members in mentorship	6	P1, P3, P5, P9
Refer mentees to other professionals	4	P4, P6
Seek informed consent from mentees	3	P1
Impacts of mentorship on mentor	21	P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12
Ethics/ Principles of mentorship	20	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9, P11

Appendix D: Description of Codes per Theme

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
Theme 1: Mentors lived experiences in high school influenced their mentorship experience.		This theme is an aggregate of codes that includes a description of various approaches to mentorship that participants utilized. Examples include large group mentorship, small group mentorship, one-on-one, and multiple methods.
	Combination of various approaches	This node contains narratives that indicate that different mentorship approaches were used on the same individuals. For instance, a participant sometimes met mentees separately and combined them with others for a small group mentorship.
	Large group mentorship	This node refers to the mentorship of large groups of young people at one time, such as over a day, several days, or a series of meetings over a given period. Large groups are defined as groups of more than ten people.
	One-on-one mentorship	This node describes instances where mentorship was provided to one individual over some time. The meetings were often between mentee and one mentor (the participant)

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Small group mentorship	This node includes instances where the participant offered mentorship to mentees in small groups below ten people.
	Building rapport with mentee	This node describes various approaches used by the participant to establish rapport with the mentee.
	Definition of youth at risk	This node provides the various characteristics of young people targeted by the participants or by the mentorship organizations that participants represent. It provides selection criteria for the youth who were perceived to require mentorship.
	Identification of Mentees	This node includes narratives that explain how participants were matched with mentees. It is an aggregate node with several children containing details of each matching approach discussed by participants.
	Mentees enrolled in a youth program.	This node describes instances where mentees were already members of a youth program that offered mentorship exclusively or as part of other services targeting young people. Participants were usually involved in these programs as mentors.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Mentees matched by geographical location	This node provides details of instances where mentors were linked to mentees within their geographical location by an organized mentorship program. In some cases, the mentorship sessions were group-based and occurred at periodic intervals such as annual conferences/ meetings.
	Mentees previously known to Mentors	This node includes instances where participants indicate that they chose mentees from previously known individuals, such as children of family friends.
	Recommended by facilitators of existing youth programs	This node describes scenarios where a youth program facilitator linked the participant with a young person in their program who needed mentorship.
Subtheme 1.1: Mentors displayed resilience despite challenges in the mentorship practice.		This theme is an aggregate code that includes the various challenges faced by participants while providing mentorship to youth. Examples of the child nodes include limited resources, poor time management, and lack of mentees' family support.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Youth ignores mentors' advice.	This node describes instances where the mentee ignores the advice of the mentor.
	Lack of support from mentee's family	This node describes instances where the participant experienced a lack of support from the mentee's family and how it impacted the mentorship experience. The family includes parents or caregivers and siblings to the mentee.
	Limited resources	This node describes how limited resources affect the mentorship process. Resources include financial and human resources.
	Conflict with spouse	This node refers to conflicts between the participant and their spouse due to time spent mentoring or allowing mentees to visit their home.
	Mentees with poor social skills	This node describes how some young people had poor social skills that could affect their relationship with mentors.
	Mentor struggled to form connections in a virtual session	This node described mentees struggles of forming connections with mentees in a virtual setting.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Mentee's lack of interest in mentorship	This node includes examples of instances where a mentee expressed a lack of interest in mentorship.
	Mentors limited experience	This node indicates instances where the participants indicated that they lacked a particular skill to support a mentee in achieving their goals or overcoming challenges.
	Mentor's poor time management	This node refers to instances where participants struggled to balance time allocated to mentorship, family, and other work where mentors had other jobs.
	COVID limited the mentorship experience	This node refers to the COVID 19 related limitations experienced by mentors and mentees, such as limited physical connection and youth adopting anti-social behaviors (for instance, crime and disrespect).
	Vicarious trauma	This node refers to the instances where mentors experienced trauma due to constantly caring for mentees with traumatic experiences.
Theme 2: Mentors Perceived That the		This theme is an aggregate of codes of participants' perceptions of their lived

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
Mentor–Mentee Relationship Was Rewarding.		mentorship experience, reporting that they found it rewarding.
	Mentees acknowledge the mentor's support.	This node indicates instances when participants stated that the mentees' appreciation was rewarding.
	Mentees' success in their goals rewarded mentor.	This node indicates instances where the participant reported that they felt rewarded to see their mentee achieve their goals or overcome life challenges.
	Mentorship has a ripple effect.	This node includes instances where the benefits of mentorship impacted other individuals beyond mentors and mentees.
Theme 2.1: Mentorship Strategies Used		This theme is an aggregate of codes related to the various mentorship strategies that the participants utilized. Each of the strategies is described further in the child nodes.
	Class management	This node refers to a skill required by mentors to mentor a group in a classroom set-up successfully. It includes actions such as mentor steering the conversation and encouraging participation of all mentees.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Get mentee out of the usual environment.	This node indicates the various venues away from home chosen by participants or their mentees to ensure a successful mentorship experience.
	Help young people plan for their life.	This node contains narratives that indicate participants guiding mentees to plan for their life.
	Mentor to prepare for sessions	This node includes narratives that indicate the steps or activities involved in preparing for the various mentorship sessions. The steps vary based on the mentorship approach and venue.
	Refer mentees for further support	This node describes instances where a participant referred their mentee to another professional who could offer information or professional services needed by the mentee.
	Seek mentee's preferences during the mentorship.	This node indicates examples of instances when the participant sought the mentees' preferences on venue or activities during the mentorship process and how this aids the process of mentorship.
	Transfer practical skills to mentee	This node indicates practical skills that participants transferred or taught their mentees.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Use examples to teach mentees about life situations	This node describes instances where the participant provided the mentee with examples from their own or other people's experiences to help mentees understand current or future life situations.
	Use fun and interactive activities to engage youth	This node details the participants' use of various fun and interactive activities to keep mentees engaged. Examples include sharing a meal, attending sporting events.
	Use of personal experiences in mentorship	This node aggregates narratives that describe how the participant used his or her experience to help mentees make life choices.
	Involving parents	This node refers to instances where a mentee involved parents in addressing mentee issues such as mental health, safety, and academic.
	Needs of Mentees	This node aggregates the various needs of at-risk youth identified and addressed by the mentors most of the time. They include career insight, education for school dropouts, instilling discipline, learning to

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
		respect people, avoiding crime, and communication skills.
Subtheme 2.2: Reasons for engaging in mentorship		This node provides details on participants' reasons for getting involved in the mentorship of high school students.
	Parent to young people	This node provides details on participants who engaged in mentorship because they had children of similar age. Their children were at high school level when they started mentoring.
	Desire to give back to the community	This node contains narratives indicating that participants viewed mentorship as a way of giving back to their community and desired to give back.
	Participants were inspired by their own lived experiences.	This node includes narratives that indicate the participants' reflection of high school experiences that have shaped their decision to be involved in mentorship. These include participants having received support from individuals at home or school. It also includes participants' narratives of their struggles due to lack of support while in high school.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Inspired by the needs of young people	This node includes narratives that indicate that participants identified the needs of young people and stated that they were motivated to help young people navigate those challenges. Some examples include youth lack of career skills and knowledge, lack of discipline, violent experiences,
	Solutions to mentorship challenges	This node aggregates the various solutions suggested by participants to address the identified mentorship challenges. These include but are not limited to involving family members in mentorship activities, encouraging people to invest time and funds in mentorship, referring mentees to other professionals for further support, seeking informed consent from potential mentees.
	Encourage people to invest time and money in mentorship	This node includes narratives that indicate that the participant or their mentorship program encouraged people to volunteer their time or money to support mentorship activities.
	Involving family members in mentorship	This node includes narratives that demonstrate that family members were involved in mentorship activities and supported mentees as a result.

Theme	Name of codes	Description of codes
	Refer mentees to other professionals	This node refers to instances where a participant realized that the mentee needed service or information that they were not qualified to offer and referred them to another professional for support.
	Ethics/ Principles of mentorship	This node includes various skills and values that a mentor must uphold for a positive mentorship experience, such as observing confidentiality, obtaining informed consent from the mentee, practicing listening, empathy, commitment, content must be relevant for mentees.