



Reviewing the effectiveness of a university employability enhancement program in undergraduate mentoring

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Introduction

- COVID-19 has changed tertiary education
- Graduate employment opportunities is greatly reduced
- Higher institutions faced increased pressures to enhance graduate employability
- Research indicated mentoring programs can positively impact student development and employability (Gershenfeld, 2014; Mckinsey, 2016; Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2015).
- Research on undergraduate mentoring has not kept pace (Law, Hales, & Busenbark, 2020; Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan, & Wuetherick, 2017)

Introduction

- Lacks consensus on mentoring concept, measurement instruments and theoretical frameworks (Gershenfeld, 2014; Law et al., 2020).
- Lacks research on mentoring effectiveness and outcomes
- This study employed a mixed approach to
 - examine the effectiveness of a public university's new undergraduate mentoring program
 - validate the College Student Mentoring Scale (CSMS) which was developed by Nora and Crisp (2007).
- Results can provide feedback to improve mentoring program initiatives

Methodology

- ▶ Study research instrument - questionnaire comprising closed and open ended questions.
- ▶ Closed ended questions are adapted from the College Student Mentoring Scale (CSMS) developed by Nora and Crisp (2007).
- ▶ The CSMS comprises four latent mentoring variables
 - ▶ Psychological and Emotional Support
 - ▶ Degree and Career Support
 - ▶ Academic Subject Knowledge Support
 - ▶ Existence of a Role Model.

Methodology

- ▶ Study population are first year undergraduates from a Malaysian public university.
- ▶ Study sample comprised 530 duly completed usable questionnaires were obtained via cluster sampling.
- ▶ The profile of the respondents in the sample are presented in Table below.

Table 2. Respondents' profile ($N = 530$)

Classification		N	%
College / Field of study	College of Arts and Science (CAS)	60	11.3
	College of Business (COB)	311	58.7
	College of Law, Government and Internal Studies (COLGIS)	159	30.0
Gender	Female	415	78.3
	Male	115	21.7
Ethnicity	Malay	292	55.1
	Chinese	193	36.4
	Indian	20	3.8
	Peribumi Semenanjung, Sabah dan Sarawak	14	2.6
	Others	11	2.1
University entry qualification	Diploma	107	20.2
	Matriculation Certificate	76	14.3
	Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia (STAM).	33	6.2
	Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM)	314	59.2

Findings

- ▶ Cronbach's alpha values indicated high reliability in the Malaysian context

Table 3. Measurement Instrument Reliability Statistics

	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
University Student Mentoring Overall Scale	17	.982
Academic Subject Knowledge Support Subscale	3	.890
Degree And Career Support Subscale	5	.945
Psychological And Emotional Support Subscale	6	.950
Role Model Subscale	3	.922

Effectiveness of Mentoring Qualities

- ▶ The results of the t-tests were all statistically significant and are reported in tables 4 & 5.
- ▶ Mentor qualities perceived as least effective
 - ▶ questioning assumptions to guide students in appraising their skills
 - ▶ providing emotional support

Table 4 :T-test of Overall and Latent sub-scales (N = 530)

	Mean	SD	Test value=3	
			t(529)	p
University Student Mentoring Overall Scale	2.44	0.98	-13.22	0.00
Academic Subject Knowledge Support Subscale	2.45	1.04	-12.26	0.00
Degree And Career Support Subscale	2.48	0.99	-12.15	0.00
Psychological And Emotional Support Subscale	2.45	0.99	-12.84	0.00
Role Model Subscale	2.35	1.05	-14.34	0.00

Mentoring outcomes based on field of study and university entry qualifications

- ▶ ANOVA test show no differences in mentoring effectiveness
 - ▶ as perceived by student groups from different fields of study
 - ▶ as perceived by student groups from different university entry qualifications.

Table 6: Test of differences in mentoring outcomes between groups

	College / Field of Study		Entrance Qualifications	
	Levene test Sig	ANOVA Sig	Levene test Sig	ANOVA Sig
Academic Subject and Knowledge Support	.541	.611	.520	.499
Degree and Career Support	.370	.724	.181	.466
Psychological and Emotional Support	.814	.717	.257	.480
Role Model	.768	.426	.253	.290

p > .05

Associations between mentoring outcomes

- ▶ Pearson's correlation test shows significant and positive relationships between different components of mentoring effectiveness.
- ▶ Highest correlation is between psychological and emotional support with degree and career support
- ▶ Likely because new undergraduates experience anxiety and stress in making decisions on future career paths and require lecturers who are able to provide good psychological and emotional support.

Table 8. Correlations between mentoring outcomes ($N = 530$)

	Academic Subject and Knowledge Support	Degree and Career Support	Psychological and Emotional Support
Degree and Career Support	.928**		
Psychological and Emotional Support	.916**	.944**	
Role Model	.869**	.891**	.905**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Open ended questions

- ▶ Students suggested
 - ▶ mentors should first establish closer rapport and relationship with mentees.
 - ▶ mentors should ideally be subject lecturers.
 - ▶ Lecturers should create whats app group and other social media communications
 - ▶ University should allow students to choose which lecturers they want as their mentors.
 - ▶ Mentors must be committed, caring, willing and be able to mentor students.
 - ▶ Mentors should be equipped with training and counselling skills
 - ▶ Mentors should be contactable by providing their mobile numbers to students
 - ▶ Mentoring session should be held at more conducive times and venues for mentees.
- ▶ Need to consider mentor competencies as well as mentee expectations and readiness in developing effective mentoring programs. This new dimension should be incorporated to improve existing mentoring measurement instruments (V. Black, Taylor, Reddick, & Smith, 2019; Wyre, Gaudet, & McNeese, 2016).

Conclusion

- ▶ Study found that the undergraduate mentoring initiative to be moderately effective in all four mentoring domains but weakest in the degree and career support mentoring domain.
- ▶ Lecturer mentors are perceived as least effective in the following aspects
 - ▶ questioning assumptions to guide students in skills appraisal
 - ▶ providing emotional support
 - ▶ helping students to perform to the best of their abilities in class.

Conclusion

- ▶ College Student Mentoring Scale by Nora and Crisp (2007) found to be highly reliable even in Malaysian context.
- ▶ Responses to open ended questions indicate mentors competencies and mentees readiness affect mentoring effectiveness
- ▶ This dimension should be incorporated in new measurements to improve validity.
- ▶ Study Limitations
 - ▶ provides the mentees' perspectives only
 - ▶ does not include the perspectives of lecturers' or mentors.
 - ▶ future research could study e-mentoring mentoring programs

THANK YOU

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect against the white background.