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# The Impact of Adult Male Participation in Formal Mentorship on Male Youth Connectedness as Influenced by Age and Cultural Background of Mentee

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***ABSTRACT***

*The study from which this article is drawn employed a quasi - experimental design with a control group in determining the effectiveness of adult male participation in formal mentorship on male youth self-esteem and connectedness. This article addresses the impact of age and cultural background of male youth on the effectiveness of formal mentorship. The study involved 52 male youth and 13 adult male mentors. These participants were selected from Kiserian town in Kajiado North and Kajiado West constituencies of Kajiado County. The 52 mentees were aged between 15 and 23 years from different cultural backgrounds in Kenya who live in Kiserian Township. After mentorship, the male youth connectedness mean subsequently went up from 29.31 (moderate connectedness) to 38.12 (high connectedness). This is a difference of 8.81 points in improved male youth connectedness. The hypothesis stating that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly refereed by their age ($F(2, 23) = .275$, $p = .762$) and cultural background ($F(7,18) = 1.102$, $p = .403$) was therefore rejected at $\alpha = 0.05$. This is because the connectedness increase was not statistically significant across the male youth ages and cultural background. This article therefore concludes that a mentee's age and cultural background may not significantly impact on the effectiveness of mentorship on their connectedness. Recommendations are therefore made for adult male mentors to pay attention to coaching male youth on social skills that will enable them to make, keep and utilize healthy value-based relationships for their psychosocial wellbeing.*

***KEYWORDS:*** *Adult male mentors, Kenya, male youth age, male youth cultural background, connectedness, formal mentorship, quasi-experimental design with control group.*

## INTRODUCTION

The World Bank (2008) reported that male youth in Kenya are prone to risk factors which diminish their psychosocial well-being. These psychosocial concerns may perhaps precede or proceed from lack of or inadequate connectedness with peers and significant others coupled with unhealthy intergenerational relationships of men within a community. Besides, The World Bank (2007) reported that this susceptibility inclines male youth to criminal behavior, violence and commercial sex work. Consequently, these Kenyan male youth find it difficult to translate their aspirations into a productive and fulfilling future. Moreover, The World Bank adds that frustration, unrealistic expectations and depression have generally been observed to be soaring among male youth in Kenya. Mentorship can work and has been utilized in many countries under differing contexts as a mitigating dynamic against male youth risk factors. Mentorship of male youth by male mentors can go a long way in mitigating against male youth psychosocial issues, concerns and risk factors.

### The Concept of Mentorship

The National Mentorship Partnership (NMP) (2004) terms a mentor as an adult who, alongside parents, offers male youth support, counsel, friendly bolstering, and positive examples. Mentors are found in innumerable relationships. It is therefore not uncommon to find the term mentor being used to mean teacher, friend, guide, coach, adviser (Gardiner, 2008); as well as counselor and role model (Johnson & Howe, 2003). It is interesting to note that mentors too benefit immensely from mentorship relationships especially in terms of individual fulfillment and growth (Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent, 2004). Natural mentorship relationships are not uncommon in Kiserian. Informal mentorship is conducted by fathers, uncles, older brothers, teachers and members of the community who are not blood relatives. This kind of mentorship however, seems to be inadequate in addressing male youth psychosocial issues while raising their self-esteem and connectedness.

## LITERATURE UNDERPINNINGS

Self-awareness is male youth's ability to identify himself as an individual, responding to himself appropriately and to value or appraise self. This skill may benefit a male youth in assuming responsibility for his conduct; reacting to others appropriately, and to adopt a variety of roles. It may also empower him to attach a positive value to himself- without which he cannot be motivated to act in his advantage rather than disadvantage (Haviland, 1997). Self-awareness can boost male youth self-esteem and aid in building healthy relationships (Haviland, 1997). According to O'Neil (2008) high self-esteem and healthy relationships with peers, family and other community members, are shielding factors which may lead to male youth selecting ways of life that are fruitful (O'Neil, 2008). Additionally, connectedness coupled with high self-esteem can go a long way in mitigating the erosion of male youth psychosocial capital.

Connectedness refers to male youth understanding of the concept of friendship and the important aspects that form healthy relationships with peers. According to King, Vidourek, Davis and McClellan (2002) a healthy self-esteem and effective relations with school mates and significant others can act as protective factors that can mitigate risky behavior. In October 2000, 283 fourth-graders in a Midwestern public school were taken through the multidisciplinary healthy kids mentoring program. Running from January to May 2000 the program had four elements; one of which was building connectedness. Study participants recounted a significant posttest increment

in connectedness with school mates and family members. Besides, the mentees were highly unlikely to get involved in risky behavior.

Intergenerational male participation in formal mentorship is reciprocally beneficial to both mentors and mentees. Intergenerational mentoring is the involvement of younger men with much older men where mentors draw from their previous experience as mentees (Ward, 2012). An intergenerational mentorship study carried out in Australia involving teenage boys and older male mentors found mentorship relationships reciprocally beneficial for both mentee and mentor (Wilson, Cordier & Whatley, 2013).

Another study carried out in Rwanda showed that mentorship programs can enhance availability of care and community connectedness among the youth Brown, Thurman, Rice, Boris, Ntaganira, Nyirazinyoye, De Dieu and Snider (2009). This study was conducted to establish if mentoring youth in Rwanda would positively affect their psychosocial well-being. The study which was quasi-experimental utilized a model where adult mentorship and support was offered with the aim of improving the psychosocial well-being of youth-headed families in rural Rwanda. The findings of this study were indicative of the mentorship ability to enhance availability of support and connectedness of the respondent youth to their community.

## METHODOLOGY

This article is drawn from a study which utilized a quasi - experimental design in established the effectiveness of adult male participation in formal mentorship on male youth self-esteem and connectedness. The independent variables in the study were mentors' participation and personal qualities which were operationalized as age coupled with cultural background. The dependent variables are mentees' self- esteem and connectedness. On the other hand, the extraneous variables include mentors/mentees' ages and culture. Also, the SAVE mentorship model which was employed as protocol for the study was an intervening variable.

The quantitative and qualitative research instruments used for gathering data comprised of questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion Guides (FGDGs), a mentors' selection criteria and the SAVE mentorship model. The study also espoused the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale which was incorporated into both the pre- and post-test mentees' questionnaires. The study was carried out in Kiserian town which is at the border of Kajiado North and Kajiado West constituencies of Kajiado County. The mentees comprised of out of school male youth aged between 15 and 23 years, from different cultural backgrounds that live in Kiserian. Out of this group, 26 male youth were put through a mentorship intervention and 26 provided control for the quasi - experiment. The study used 13 adult male as mentors for the 26 male mentees.

### Male youth (Mentees) Distribution by Age

The options provided in the relevant item of the questionnaire for extracting data on mentees' age were three namely; 15-17 years, 18-20 years and 21-23 years old. Those in the 15-17 age bracket were 11= 42.3% (experiment) and 10= 38.5% (control); 18-20 years were 12= 46.2% (experiment) and 8 = 30.8% (control); while 21-23 composed of 3(11.5%) for the experimental group and 8(30.8%) in the control group.

Male youth cultural distributions as presented on Table 1 were reminiscent of the general demographic data of the metropolitan Kiserian location. Nine ethnic groups were represented in the study sample. In the experiment group, the Luhya group was the largest at six (23.1%), followed by the Maasai, Kikuyu and Kamba which had four participants each. There were three Luo mentees, two Meru and Kisii each and one Swahili respondent. On the other hand, the control group was composed of; Five Maasai and Kikuyu each, four Kisii, three Luo and Kamba each, two Meru, Luhya and Kalenjin each.

**Table 1: Male Youth Cultural Background**

| Ethnic Background | *f* | | Percentage (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Experiment Group | Control Group | Experiment Group | Control Group |
| Maasai | 4 | 5 | 15.4 | 19.2 |
| Kikuyu | 4 | 5 | 15.4 | 19.2 |
| Luhya | 6 | 2 | 23.1 | 7.7 |
| Kisii | 2 | 4 | 7.7 | 15.4 |
| Meru | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7.7 |
| Luo | 3 | 3 | 11.5 | 11.5 |
| Kamba | 4 | 3 | 15.4 | 11.5 |
| Kalenjin | 0 | 2 | 7.7 | 7.7 |
| Swahili | 1 | 0 | 3.8 | 0 |
| **Total** | **26** | **26** | **100.0** | **100.0** |

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A key question that this study sought to answer was whether mentorship has any influence on male youth connectedness. One of the study's hypothesis postulated that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly refereed by their age and cultural backgrounds.

### Age Differences in Male Youth Connectedness as Enhanced Through Formal Mentorship

The general mean for male youth connectedness across the ages was 29.31. This score falls within the range of moderate connectedness. Nevertheless, the score from the different ages varied slightly with the 15-17 age category participants scoring the highest at 30.09; followed by the 18-20 years olds who had a mean of 28.75. The 21-23 age category respondents scored the lowest mean (28.67). The 18-20 years old seemed to understand friendship less than the 15 – 17 years olds in the experimental group. This fact may the supported by the general view that young people of between 15 and 17 years tend to think they know or understand everything. In other words, they might not fully understand friendship but might only think they do. This fact is further confirmed by the ninth item of the connectedness scale in the pretest questionnaire, requiring that an individual states how many friends he has. This item was analyzed separately. The highest score of five (5) meant that a participant considered himself to have more than seven (7) friends. The participants of 15-17 years scored the lowest mean of 4.73. This mean indicates that according to participants each had seven (7) friends, instead of the highest indicator of over seven friends. Even though in their connectedness scale responses indicated connectedness, in reality they didn't have many friends. The last category made up of 21 – 23 year olds, scored the lowest mean of 28.67; even though these participants responded by saying that they thought they had over 7 friends each.

**Table 2: Treatment Pretest of Connectedness Based on Age of Mentees**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 11.713 | 2 | 5.856 | .613 | .550 |
| Within Groups | 219.826 | 23 | 9.558 | | |
| Total | 231.538 | 25 | | | |

The last category made up of 21 – 23 year olds scored the lowest mean of 28.67; even though these participants said that they had over 7 friends each. The results of one way analysis of variance on Table 2 are results from the treatment group. The pretest was meant to examine connectedness of male youth based on age. With $F$ (2, 23) = .613; $p$= .550, the results show no significant difference on connectedness of mentees across the various age groups.

In comparison, the control group had a mean of 27.62 which was lower than that of the experimental group but also falls within the range of moderate connectedness. In this group, the 15-17 years olds scored 27.40 points; slightly higher than that of the 21 – 23 age brackets which was 27.38. The 18 – 20 years olds had the highest mean at 28.13. Generally the control group had a mean of 4.23 on the number of friends; indicating that each had between 6-7 friends.

**Table 3: Control Pretest of Connectedness Based on Age of Mentees**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 3.004 | 2 | 1.502 | .146 | .865 |
| Within Groups | 237.150 | 23 | 10.311 | | |
| Total | 240.154 | 25 | | | |

ANOVA analysis was carried out for the control group too as displayed on Table 3. The results showed $F$ (2, 23) = .146; $p$= .865. Again even though means of connectedness differed somewhat for the three male youth age groups, these differences were not statistically significant. The posttest results were similar to the pretest ones.

After mentorship, the male youth connectedness mean subsequently went up from 29.31 (moderate connectedness) to 38.12 (high connectedness). This is a difference of 8.81 points in improved male youth connectedness. The one participant in the 21-23 age category scored 39.00 points; which was 10.33 points more than he scored in the pretest. The 15-17 years olds had a higher mean (36-42) than those aged between 18 and 20 years (37.77). The means on connectedness indicate marked improvement on the understanding of what friendship entails and the knowledge of how to make friends. With the new understanding of what friendship entails, the number of friends the mentees indicated as having fell across the age groups, from 7 friends and above to 4-5 friends. The results on Table 4; $F$ (2, 23) =.275, $p$ =.762 however, point to the fact that these variation were not significant across the age cohorts. The hypothesis which proposed that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly refereed by their age was therefore rejected at $\alpha$=0.05.

**Table 4: Experiment Posttest of Connectedness Based on Age of Mentees**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 3.429 | 2 | 1.715 | .275 | .762 |
| Within Groups | 143.224 | 23 | 6.227 | | |
| Total | 146.654 | 25 | | | |

**Cultural Background Differences in Male Youth Connectedness as Enhanced Through Formal Mentorship**

Lastly, the study sought to explore whether male youth (mentees) differed on how they experienced mentorship due to the perceived salience of their cultural identities. The hypothesis postulated that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly refereed by their cultural background. Male youth connectedness based on cultural identities in the treatment group was calculated prior to the intervention. The group's mean was placed at 29.31 which indicated moderate connectedness. The tallies from different cultural backgrounds differed

marginally. The mentees who scored the highest were those from the Kisii cultural background (31.00), while Maasai and Luo mentees' scores were ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively (30.75 and 30.67. Male youth from Meru, Kikuyu and Luhya communities scored 29.50, 29.00 and 29.00 correspondingly. Kamba mentees followed with 27.50 points and the lowest score was from the one Swahili mentee who scored a 26.00 points.

**Table 5: Treatment Pretest of Connectedness Based on Cultural Background of Mentees**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 44.622 | 7 | 6.375 | .614 | .738 |
| Within Groups | 186.917 | 18 | 10.384 | | |
| Total | 231.538 | 25 | | | |

The results on Table 5 show no significant difference on connectedness of male youth from the various cultural groups which participated in the study $F$ (7, 18) = 6.14; $p$= 738.

**Table 6: Control Pretest of Connectedness Based on Cultural Background of Mentees**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 3.004 | 2 | 1.502 | .146 | .865 |
| Within Groups | 237.150 | 23 | 10.311 | | |
| Total | 240.154 | 25 | | | |

In like manner Table 6 has outcomes indicative of insignificant difference in the various cultural backgrounds represented in the study's control group $F(2, 23) = .146$; $p = .865$. The male youth pretest connectedness of the control group differed from that of the experimental one. The Maasai, Luo and Kalenjin mentees scored means of 27.80, 26.33 and 27.50 respectively. The Kamba mentees scored 27.00 points on connectedness, Kikuyu (29.40) and Kisii (29.50) correspondingly. In the control group, Meru mentees scored a mean of 26.00, while Luhya male youth scored the lowest mean (comparable in the treatment group) of 23.50.

**Table 7: Treatment Post-test of Connectedness Based on Mentees' Cultural Background**

| | *Sum of Squares* | *Df* | *MS* | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 43.987 | 7 | 6.284 | 1.102 | .403 |
| Within Groups | 102.667 | 18 | 5.704 | | |
| Total | 146.654 | 25 | | | |

The Kikuyu and Meru mentees had a mean of 40.00 each; the highest possible scored for connectedness. These two groups were followed by Kamba male youth at 31.00, Luhya (27.50), Kisii (37.50), Luo (37.33) and Maasai (37.00) followed. The Swahili mentee scored lowest with 35.00 points. As ANOVA results displayed on Table 7 illustrate ($F(7,18) = 1.102$, $p = .403$), the cultural differences in male youth connectedness at posttest were not statistically significant. The second part of $H_4$ which suggested that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly arbitrated by their cultural background was therefore rejected at $\alpha=0.05$.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Seeing how important male youth connectedness is to their psychosocial wellbeing, there is need to train them on social skills. These skills should be to enable them to be self-aware, select helpful value-based friendships and know how to maintain these relationships.

## CONCLUSIONS

Formal mentorship was found to be effective in increasing male youth connectedness. The connectedness mean increased with 8.81 points from 29.31 to 38.12 after mentorship. Inferential statistics from the data analyzed propose that these changes were significant. The study established that formal mentorship has a positive effect on male youth connectedness. With the new understanding of what friendship entails, the number of friends the mentees indicated as having fell across the age groups, from 7 friends and above to 4-5 friends. Their age and cultural background differences however did not significantly interfere with their uptake of connectedness interventions. The hypothesis stating that male youth connectedness as enhanced through mentorship is significantly refereed by their age ($F$ (2, 23) =.275, $p$ =.762) and cultural background ($F(7,18)$ =1.102, $p$ =.403) was therefore rejected at $\alpha$ =0.05.

With the new understanding of what friendship entails gained from the coaching conducted in the intervention, the number of friends the mentees indicated as having fell across the age groups, from 7 friends and above to 4-5 friends. There are other ways in which mentees benefited from mentorship. These included knowing how to live with peers, understanding the importance of friendship and how to make friends. They also learnt how to self-express; as well as the meaning of trust and honesty. This could mean that many male youth just hang out with peers without forming meaningful relationships. Yet according to according to Self Determination Theory, connectedness is one of the three imperative human needs for psychosocial well-being (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Additionally, lack of healthy interpersonal relationships does predispose male youth to risk factors such as lack of optimism, lack of purpose in life, hopelessness and depression, leading to suicidal tendencies, drug abuse and low self-esteem, may be primarily embedded in disturbed interpersonal relationships.

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