

## A PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING DENTAL STUDENTS OF DOW INTERNATIONAL DENTAL COLLEGE (DOW UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES): A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective was to determine the perception and the effects on mentors regarding mentoring dental students at Dow International Dental College, Karachi; Pakistan. There was a qualitative research study consisting of 16 mentors, in which data collection was done by questionnaire designing. Study of the close-ended questions showed that the majority of the mentors had 6-10 numbers of mentees (81%), but unluckily they did not have any communication with mentees' parents. However, 50% of the mentors gave chief preference to their mentees. They helped their mentees in communicating with people which they did not find easy to approach (69%). Most of the mentors met their mentees once a week (62%). All the mentors shared their private phone numbers with their mentees (100%). Majority of the mentors were aware about their mentees' hobbies (69%). All the mentors guided their mentees in professional advancement (100%). If mentees showed misconduct or misbehaved with their mentors in any aspect then most of the mentors counseled them (87.5%). Unfortunately half of the mentors believed that by so much of effort on mentoring and supervision, their mentees did not show any enhancement in academics. It was concluded that mentoring program was acknowledged by the mentors to be a prosperous and pleasing approach for educating young dental students.*

**Key Words:** Mentor, Mentee, Dental students, mentoring programme.

### INTRODUCTION

The word 'mentor' means an honorable consultant or counselor.<sup>1</sup> Mentoring is basically a course of action which includes guidelines on career selections, establishing career plans and interpretation of career advancement by an accomplished, considerable and highly compassionate individual<sup>1</sup> 'the mentor', who guides his students 'the mentees' on these aspects, as well as in the reinforcement of their own ideas, personal perspectives and professional development.<sup>2</sup>

A Good mentor is necessary for students to have a successful career and personal life.<sup>3</sup> Dental students

experience an exceptionally distressful atmosphere which affects both their performance in academics and their health.<sup>4</sup> So, in order to overcome this stress, they require a person to whom they can meet for proper guidance and direction.<sup>5</sup> Thus, an able mentor is one, who has the ability to listen, ask questions and assist his mentees to develop problem seeking and decision making skill.<sup>6,7</sup> It is fundamental to select mentors with great responsibility. It is also necessary to speculate the age of the mentor, those at the onset of their profession are more likely to be anxious about their growth and promotion, leading to unresponsiveness in mentoring.<sup>8</sup>

It is quite interesting to know that students who were under supervision of dignified mentors, were likely to flourish more and published one or more research papers each year.<sup>9</sup>

A mentor should be good enough as an adviser who challenges his mentees by asking them questions rather than giving elementary answers and who assists his mentees establish the skills of problem solving and managing decisions.<sup>10</sup>

Mentoring must be credited as a charitable act without awaiting incentives. It builds a feeling of self-approval and increase in one's personal hike.<sup>11</sup>

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The relationship of a mentor with his/her mentee can be broken down if there is lack of appreciation, agreement and disregard from either side.<sup>12</sup> Hence, in order to maintain a successful mentor-mentee collaboration, it is essential that there should be good communication with regard for each other.<sup>13,14</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

There were 16 mentors and all agreed to participate in Mentoring program. This was a qualitative research study, in which data collection was done by questionnaire designing. The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended (Table) and open ended questions (Questionnaire). There were a total of 31 items in the questionnaire with variations in the pattern of responses. The options given in the close-ended questionnaire which were to be selected by the participants were different for every question to link the answers to the questions. The open-ended questions were set out to scrutinize the respondents' viewpoints more equitably.

For the close-ended questions the numbers of feedbacks were concluded and frequency was determined for each item. For the open-ended questions, each response was observed and noted.

## RESULTS

The response rate of the mentors was 100%. The close-ended questions were designed to determine the perception of the mentors regarding mentoring and the effect it has on them. Its design also focused on the behavior pattern of the mentors towards their mentee which was further enhanced by the open-ended questions. Analysis of the close-ended questions showed that the majority of the mentors have 6-10 numbers of mentees (81%), but unfortunately they did not have any interaction with mentees' parents. Although 50% of the mentors gave important priority to their mentees, they helped their mentees in connecting with people which they did not find easy to catch (69%). Majority of the mentors met their mentees once a week and they had interactive mentoring session (62%). Majority of the mentors had opposite gender mentees and they were comfortable with them (87%). Most of the mentors were very frank with their mentees (62.5%) and they were very friendly (87.5%).

All the mentors shared their personal contact numbers with their mentees (100%), but no one shared their home address with their mentees. Most of the mentors had good knowledge about their mentees' hobbies (69%). All the mentors guided their mentees in professional development (100%). Most of the mentors allowed their mentees to access them any time when in need (62.5%). If mentees crossed their limits or misbehaved with their mentors in any aspect then most of the mentors counseled them (87.5%). Unfortunately

half of the mentors believed that by so much of effort on mentoring and guidance, their mentees did not show any improvement or they were not up to the mark in academics.

## Questionnaire

### 1. What is your perception on mentoring?

Most of the mentors perceive that mentoring is to counsel and to guide the youngsters in their studies, professional lives and character building. Some believe that mentoring is an interactive session in which mentors and mentees can discuss and talk about each other's issues. It's mutually beneficial for both to interact and progress in positive direction.

### 2. For how long have you been mentoring?

Most of the mentors are mentoring since a semester length.

### 3. How helpful do you think mentoring is for the students? Explain?

Most of the mentors believe that mentoring is very helpful and beneficial if mentees take keen interest and attend mentoring sessions regularly. These sessions help them convey their problems and queries to be answered that proved to be helpful in their studies.

### 4. Do your mentees perceive you as a useful mentor? How?

Majority of the mentors think that their mentees perceive them as useful mentors because mentees always discuss their problems, seek their future career guidance and mentor try to resolve their issues as much as they can.

### 5. Do your mentees enjoy and participate in the mentoring sessions? Give reasons why?

Some of the mentors believe that most of their mentees enjoy and participate in the mentoring session, and try to learn more about their academics for getting good results; while others believe that mentees do not enjoy and are always ahead in complaining about others.

### 6. If your mentee puts his /her faith in you and discloses any of his/her secrets to you and ask you not to disclose it further. What do you do?

Majority of the mentors believe that they keep it as a secret unless its harmful to stay quiet.

### 7. Do you feel mentoring is helpful to you in anyway? How?

Mentors believe that it helps them in consulting problems and issues regarding academics and professional growth.

TABLE 1:

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
1. What number of mentees do you Have?	5 or less	1	6.2%
	6-10	13	81.25%
	10 or more	2	12.5%
2. Do you have any interaction with mentee's parents?	Yes	0	0%
	No	16	100%
3. What priority do you have for your mentees?	Not important	7	43.8%
	Very important	8	50%
	My promotion depends on it	1	6.2%
4. Do you help in connecting your mentees with the people who are important to them?	Yes	11	68.8%
	No	5	31.2%
5. How often do you interact with your mentees?	Once a week	10	62.5%
	Once a month	6	37.5%
	Annually	0	0%
	Multiple times	0	0%
	None	0	0%
6. Are all your mentees of the same gender as yours?	Yes	2	12.5%
	No	9	56.2%
	Both gender	5	31.2%
7. Would you be at ease if your mentee will or will not be of your gender?	Yes	2	12.5%
	No	14	87.5%
	It does not matter	0	0%
8. How open are you with your mentee?	Very frank	10	62.5%
	Not at all frank	3	18.8%
	Not sure	3	18.8%
9. What attitude do you share with your mentee?	Collegial	2	12.5%
	Friendly	14	87.5%
	Strict	0	0%
10. Do you share your contact with your mentee?	Yes	16	100%
	No	0	0%
11. Do you share your email address with your mentee?	Yes	6	37.5%
	No	10	62.5%
12. Have you given your home address to your mentee?	Yes	0	0%
	No	16	100%
13. Do you have any idea regarding your mentee's hobbies/ interest?	Yes	11	68.8%
	No	4	25%
	I don't think I should be knowing that	1	6.2%
14. Do you guide your mentee with professional development?	Yes	16	100%
	No	0	0%
15. Do you give access to your mentees to contact you when in need?	All the time	10	62.5%
	In the morning/evening only	5	31.2%
	Don't know	1	6.2%

16. What will your reaction be if your mentee breaks regulations?	Counsel him/her	14	87.5%
	Scold him/her	2	12.5%
	Take him/her to supervisor	0	0%
	Ask for mentee to be replaced	0	0%
17. Do you feel excited witnessing your mentee progress?	Yes	10	62.5%
	No	6	37.5%
18. After all your mentoring, do you feel any improvement in your mentee's academics?	Good Improvement	5	31.2%
	Satisfactory	3	18.8%
	Unsatisfactory	8	50%
19. Do you ask for personal feedback from your mentees?	Yes	9	56.2%
	No	7	43.8%
20. What answer do you give to your mentee when they come up with problems you are unable to solve?	It is out of your capacity	3	18.8%
	Ask a person that is involved directly	11	68.8%
	This is practical life	1	6.2%
	Face it boldly	1	6.2%
21. Do you compromise on giving time resolving issues of your mentees rather spending time with your family or studying for an exam?	Yes	6	37.5%
	Sometimes	1	6.2%
	Yes, most of the time	9	56.2%
	No	0	0%

8. How does mentoring help your students in academic?

Some of the mentor believes that mentee can perform better as they are guided and supervised by mentors where they share their first hand knowledge and experience with them. Some believe that students prefer self studies and group studies at their own. Some believe that mentees prefer to solve their issues themselves and do not discuss with mentors.

9. What do you enjoy most about mentoring relationship?

Most believe that it's a good way to interact with youngsters and solve their academic problems. If students really take interest then they can be benefitted by it and as a result it also creates bond of trust between individuals. It increases the social circle and creates a platform of interaction for all students, lecturers and senior faculty members. Some of the mentors don't enjoy anything about mentoring session.

10. What do you enjoy least about mentoring relationship?

Mentors enjoy least when their mentees do not show up, when mentors need to run after them for the smooth conduction of the session, when students show casual attitude, and then keep high expectations from mentors.

## DISCUSSION

Mentoring is an age-old perception that back dates to Greek mythology. According to literature search, the establishment of mentoring structured programme in medical colleges commenced in 1990's.<sup>15</sup> These programmes have been acknowledged at several levels. It focuses on the mentor-mentee relationship in which the mentor plays the key role.<sup>16, 17</sup> It requires co-operation of both parties in order to attain conclusive outcomes. However, mentoring must be thought about as a process rather than a decision.<sup>18, 10</sup>

There is an absence of these structured mentoring programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in maximum countries.<sup>19</sup> Focusing in mind the welfare of such a programme, Dow International Dental College proposed a structured mentoring programme in 2013, in which the skilled mentors who had assorted experiences all claim to gain a sense of personal gratification, The mentors deeply indulge in all the practices associated to their mentees and manage their transcripts in the form of a portfolio. On the first interaction with the mentee, the mentors were told to fill up a questionnaire consisting of basic information related to the mentee.

Over a 6 month period, the mentors have experienced a positive difference in most mentee's academic conduct, certainty, way of dressing and mutual relationships. The mentors regard the programme a success and give their mentee the credit for its accomplishment.

Over a 6 month period, the mentor-mentee relationship has become quite strong which enables the mentee to discuss their concerns easily with the mentor in a supportive environment. The mentors try their level best to help their mentees in all concerns. However they feel friendless when they are unable to guide their mentees at stages such as administrative problems.

The main objective of this project is to encourage change at both personal and academic growth levels. The portfolio<sup>20</sup> designed by the mentors is to keep aware both the mentor and mentee of their progress.

The process of mentoring at Dow International Dental College is performed every week. The program is a part of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the time table, and a slot is committed to the process which could enable the students and teachers to participate easily. Every week the students talk to mentors individually and in focused groups which consist of approximately 7 to 8 students. In their interactive sessions they talked about their studies in which they are having difficulties and talked about their personal matters which are kept confidential by their mentors. At this stage the mentor has to keep in mind the privacy rights of his or her mentee.

Several studies have analyzed that the qualities of a good mentor are that he must be available at all times, should be non-judgmental and must motivate his mentee in all stage of life,<sup>21</sup> be an example for his mentees who should be able to create a skillful environment and promote his mentees personal growth.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The Dow International Dental College's structured mentoring program is identified by the mentors to be a flourishing and rewarding strategy for educating young dental students. The mentors served as idols and they dedicated a lot of time in carving the academic, personal and professional hike of the new comers. Mentorship developed positive advancements in mentees over the 6 months mentoring program. This bond between mentor and mentee has proven to be fruitful for both. It is enclosed by a co-operative and motivating atmosphere with a two way learning process. The mentors manage a record of their mentees in order to remain aware of both their progress. Particularly, mentors convey a sense of pleasure implementing this task, feel dignified in the success of their mentees and undertake mentoring earnestly. They sometimes even surrender their personal time in guiding and helping their mentees. Hence the charitable act of mentoring plays an important role in the constructive development of dental students.

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