


Chapter 5


Nursing Students’ Perspectives on Mentoring and Support Services at a Namibian Higher Education Institution

Daniel Opotamutale Ashipala

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8913-056X>


University of Namibia, Namibia

Gilbert Likando

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7539-2086>

University of Namibia, Namibia

Gabriel Mungeli

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4909-0995>

University of Namibia, Namibia

ABSTRACT

This chapter conceptualizes mentoring as a vital staff and student development method, leveraging the internal resources of the University of Namibia (UNAM) to generate substantial returns on investments in both time and financial resources. Within higher education institutions (HEIs), mentoring serves as a critical academic, welfare, and support service, addressing the diverse challenges nursing students face—academic, social, spiritual, mental, and physical. This study explored the

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perspectives of nursing students at UNAM, a subject that has received limited attention in academic research. The mentoring framework was employed to examine these perspectives, utilizing qualitative data collection and analysis. The findings indicate that while nursing students generally regard mentoring as beneficial, notable deficiencies in the implementation process were identified. It is recommended that UNAM develop a structured monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of its mentoring policy, alongside enhanced collaboration between stakeholders responsible for student mentoring during clinical placements.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has emerged as an essential practice in institutions (HEIs), particularly within professional disciplines such as nursing. It is increasingly recognized as a key element in the personal and academic development of students (Cleland & Durning, 2022). Provident (2005) described mentoring as an intensive, dyadic relationship in which the mentor facilitates the professional and personal growth of the protégé by offering guidance, support, and expertise. Similarly, Lloyd and Bristol (2006) characterized mentoring as a form of socialization and a supportive strategy within teaching and learning frameworks, especially for novice practitioners. Nursing students, like other cohorts within HEIs, experience considerable challenges and stressors within their academic, psychosocial, and healthcare environments (Seshabela, Havenga, & Swardt, 2020).

Foolchand and Martiz (2020) observed that mentoring is often narrowly interpreted as staff-led support, which limits its potential effectiveness. They argue that mentoring should also encompass peer-to-peer guidance, where senior students provide academic and social support to their junior counterparts. In HEIs, senior nursing students can play a critical role in helping new students navigate academic challenges and develop essential skills. This broader conceptualization of mentoring recognizes the value of peer involvement in fostering personal and academic growth.

BACKGROUND

In HEIs, mentoring is recognized as an essential component of student support, particularly within the nursing discipline. However, Mlaba and Emmamally (2019) observed significant challenges in the mentoring of student nurses that require attention. For instance, in nursing education, insufficient practical opportunities arise due to the short duration of clinical placements, coupled with time and resource constraints, and an overwhelming number of students assigned to mentors. These

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