

**ADULT MALE PARTICIPATION IN MALE YOUTH MENTORSHIP AS  
INTERVENED BY AGE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

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**Abstract**

This article is part of a wider study that underscored the significance of Kajiado County adult male participation in formal male youth mentorship as dictated upon by their differing ages and cultural background. The study further examined the effectiveness of this participation in enhancing male youth self-esteem and connectedness. Thirteen mentors and fifty two male youth were purposively selected from Kiserian town. The five point Likert-like scale scores for determining the participation of adult male in mentoring male youth were: Strongly agree (SA) = 5; Agree (A) = 4; No opinion (NO) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly disagree (SD) = 1. High participation therefore = (37- 45); moderate participation = (28-36); fair participation = (19-27); low participation = (9-18). Two Focused Group Discussions were conducted. The analysis established only moderately involvement of adult males ( $M=33.84$ ). The variances in this participation nonetheless, were insignificantly interposed by the mentors' age  $F(10,2) = 4.51, p = .195$  and cultural background  $F(10,2) = 3.33, p = .253$ . Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that the creation of awareness on the significance and prospect of men-men mentorship be carried out. Besides, mobilizing and training male adults for mentorship is imperative.

**Keywords:** Adult male, age, cultural background, male youth, mentee, mentor, participation.

**Introduction**

*Conceptualization of Mentorship*

Mentorship is an old practice that seems to be gaining momentum in recent times (Udrescu&Coderie, 2014). Besides, the concept is ever changing in meaning; depending on the setting in which it is being applied, the person practising it; and in each decade (Nsamenang&Tchombe, 2011). These settings include institutions such as school, family, religion and organizations as well. Mentorship however, is a term that is commonly applied to describe the relationship of an inexperienced younger person, referred to as a mentee, apprentice or protégé, and an adept individual called a mentor (Kramer, 1985 & Noe, 1988b).

Besides, Campbell and Campbell (2002) speak of mentorship as a principal way of imparting and acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are vital to well-rounded social development.

Customarily, mentoring is perceived as a dyadic, direct, continuing relationship of an experienced male adult and an apprentice; which promotes the mentee's professional, academic, or particular development (Donaldson, Ensher, & Grant-Vallone, 2000). There is a school of thought however, which maintains that mentorship can be initiated informally or formally, conducted for a short or long time; and set up directly or indirectly (Kasprisin, Boyle, Single, Single, & Muller, 2003; Packard, 2003b). Mentorship may consist of coaching, caring, providing stimulating tasks, supporting visibility and direct funding (O'Leary & Mitchell, 1990). The church as an institution also has its opinion of what mentorship should entail; in view of it being a prized tool for the effective training of its workers. Smith (2008) defines mentorship in the church as an investment in, or emptying of a mentor's life into a mentee; entailing living by example, for the mentee to see and follow. Smith (2008) asserts that the process is operationalized by a show of commitment from both parties: as the mentor leads by example and the mentee accepts constructive feedback. The useful criticism given by the mentor must embrace both reinforcement of the good and admonishment for areas that a protégé needs improvement on.

The current study's results showed 30.8% of adult male respondents defining mentorship as an activity: advice giving, role modelling or support; whereas 7.7% indicated it as a combination of two undertakings. These include advice giving and role modelling. Moreover, 30.8% viewed it as being composed of three activities advice giving, friendship and offering support; guiding, advising and role modelling; friendship, counselling and offering support. Finally, 15.4% perceived mentorship as being made up of five activities, while 15.4% defined it as consisting of all the activities mentioned here. These descriptions suggest that the mentors in the study were largely cognizant of the mentorship concept. Further, from the FGD rejoinders, the male adults defined it as instructing, being a role model through good behaviour; and acquiring skills or a training so as to shape a mentee's personality. This understanding advanced and became clearer during and subsequent to the mentorship experiment. The mentors hence defined mentorship as being an opening to change a mentee's life. It was also seen by the mentors as a thoughtful determination to share their lives, know how and abilities.

*Participation of Adult Males in Mentorship*

According to Garringer (2014) mentorship can be conducted under many circumstances, and for various reasons; in all human settings and backgrounds. Adult males can avail themselves as role models in their communities; inside and outside their own families. This is because they are able to form or even access communal linkages that they then use to realize their goals within and without communities. Due to this skill, they are capable of and should be willing to mentor others in the community who are younger or less experienced than they are (Jacobsen, 1991). Forming mentorship relationships in a community comes with many benefits. According to Whitney, Hendricker and Offutt (2011) for example, pairing a male youth with an older more experienced male is known to significantly reduce their chances of experiencing depression or engaging in alcohol abuse; as compared to those who don't have a mentor and the ones who are mentored by their peers.

Havilland (1997) suggests that male adults, whether blood relatives or not, can set good examples and successfully play the role of mentors to male youth in their populations; assisting them to learn and practise being socially responsible. Mentorship relationships occurring between close family or community members can readily account for nearly two thirds (69%) of all known mentoring of male youth in America (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). These relationships have the potential of facilitating male youth to deal with psychosocial issues and live productive lives. It must be noted however, that when evidence from a national longitudinal study carried out in America was examined, by and large strong evidence was lacking in showing significant merits accrued from this naturally occurring mentorship for a male youth. The same study indicated that deliberate mentorship through formal programs showed more concrete impact in aiding male youth to cope better with stressful life situations and navigate through environmental risk. It is therefore safe to conclude from the findings of the study that for mentorship to be effective, it needs to be formal, with deliberate efforts made to incorporate the training of mentors; and integrating follow up as compulsory component of the mentorship process.

Strassmann (2011) established that the Dagon of Mali, like most other African cultures, provide male youth psychosocial support by way of nucleus and extended family members as well as through the entire community. World Bank (2007) indeed asserts that in order for a community to adequately protect its male youth, the responsibility of raising them

becomes an absolute essential. When you pair up male youth with understanding, supportive adult males for mentorship, it reduces their psychosocial challenges by increasing the coping

resources and life skills (Holland, 2005). When male adults other than their own parents act as mentors by providing fundamental information, support, competencies, exposure to acceptable social norms, a sense of efficacy and significance; male youth become helped to self-actualized (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005).

The Kajiado County, Maasai male youth ordinarily would be raised in a basic Maasai settlement known *asenkang*; and also referred to as a *kraal* or *boma*. These settlements or villages are made up of several households living together. By extension therefore, married elders who live with their families are somewhat available to mentor the Maasai male youth (Finke, 2003). The proximity made possible by a number of families being clustered together in a village can enhance the availability of male mentors from nucleus and extended families. These mentors customarily are expected to serve not only their blood relatives but all other male youth in these closely knit communities. This kind of setting though, where there is closeness between members of a small group of people, can pose the challenge of conducting formal mentorship; owing to meddling which may emanate from family members. This intrusion may result in loss of trust in a formal mentoring relationship (Garringer, 2014). The Aborigines too uphold the practice of mentorship; viewing it as journey unique to each individual (Snively, 1990). This process is an interactive activity that focuses more on the relationship than task or goal achievement (Sawyer, 1991). Elders are expected to mentor effectively by acknowledging and being sincerely interested in a learner's experience in its entirety; so as to achieve the old-styled natural idyllic insight drawn from kindness and veneration (Taylors, 1992). These traditional mentors usually employ nondirective methods of mentoring. Their way may sometimes consist of telling stories, which may seem irrelevant to the area the mentee has sought advice on but in essence deeply related; the meaning of which is unravelled through reflection and careful contemplation (Barbara & Fjola, 1994). On the other hand, mentorship among the Agikuyu of Kenya used to be a communal obligation carried out by members of the nucleus family, the clan and community as a whole (Kenyatta, 2015; Leakey, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to The World Bank (2008) Kenyan young men are prone to risk factors such as purposelessness coupled with drug and substance abuse. Myers (2000) suggests that this

vulnerability is bound to result in low self-esteem and poor connectedness. Inadvertently, male youth experience erosion of social capital (Kraemer, 2000). There is a general feeling in the nation that this state of affairs results from the lack of mentorship from adult males in the

society. Apart from it being difficult to recruit mentors especially in urban areas, involving biological fathers can also prove to be an uphill task (Miller, 2015; Boyd & Bee, 2008). Fathers being too busy, the rise of female-headed households and detachment from extended family and community members may compound the challenges faced by male youth (Perry, 2014; Schwimmer, 2003 & Strassmann, 2011). These are the very issues being experienced by male youth in Kiserian urban centre. This is what necessitated the current study, part of which was to establish adult male participation in male youth mentorship as interposed by mentors' age and cultural background.

### **Significance of the Study**

Male youth low self-esteem and poor connectedness may be the outcome of lack mentorship by adult males. This lack of mentorship on the other hand may result from unavailability of male adults out of being too busy or due to lack of awareness and preparedness. This study is carried out at a time when the national conversation on erosion of male youth social capital and it being blamed on the of lack of adult male participation in mentorship is rife in Kenya. The outcomes of the study can therefore come in handy in providing solutions to the male youth malady. These results can find their use with individuals, institutions of learning, as well as various governmental and non-governmental agencies who are interested in male youth affairs.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study on which this article is drawn intended to establish if adult male involvement in deliberate mentorship can augment male youth self-esteem and connectedness. The specific objective on which this article is based was therefore to: Investigate whether age and cultural background of adult males interfere in their male youth mentorship participation.

### **Hypothesis**

Ho: Age and cultural background of adult males do not significantly intervene in their male youth mentorship participation.

## **METHOD**

The pre-test/post-test research design used for the study was composed of both a

control group and treatment group. This was done in a bid to determine the efficacy of the mentoring mediation (Bernard, 2013). The quasi-experiment necessitated a sampling of respondents from the targeted population in Kiserian town. After the respondents were picked, pretesting commenced; followed by mentorship treatment and post-testing of the mentees (Flick, 2011). Quasi-experimental studies are often an effect valuation that allots

members to a treatment group and control group using purposive rather than random methods (Bernard, 2013). This measure is taken to circumvent the risk of the treatment and control groups differing from the onset. The researcher therefore purposively selected and matched the treatment group to a similar control group in order to avoid any latent differences.

*Participants*

The study's 13 mentors (adult males) were picked by way of a multi – level sampling. To begin with, Kajiado County was selected from the 47 counties which make up Kenya. Secondly, out of the five (5) constituencies in the County Kajiado West and Kajiado North were chosen. Lastly, Kiserian town which was the selected study location was hand-picked. This town is located at the boundary of Kajiado West and Kajiado North Constituency; with a tarmac road running right through it; with each half of the town falling in either one of the Constituencies. The study respondents were then sampled as widely as possible within Kiserian town.

Table 1 Adult Males' Age and Cultural Background

<i>Cultural background</i>	Age	Total	24 - 35	36-45	46-55	56 and above
<i>Maasai</i>	2	0	15%			
<i>Kikuyu</i>	1	0	1	1	23%	
<i>Luhya</i>	2	15%				
<i>Kisii</i>	0	2	0	1	23%	
<i>Meru</i>	0	1	0	9%		
<i>Kamba</i>	1	1	15%			
<i>Total</i>	39%	23%	23%	15%		

The number of mentors varied depending on the cultural background. The group comprised three (3) Kisii (23%), three (3) Kikuyu (23%), two (2) Maasai (15%), two (2) Luhya (15%), two (2) Kamba (15%), and one (1) Meru (9%) respondents. The population in Kiserian is quite youthful across the ethnic groupings. From the inception, the researcher ensured that the adult male participants were drawn from all the major ethnic groups represented in the County. Besides, age categories were also taken into account. In the County, a massive inflow of other cultural groups who have intermarried and largely reside here has relatively

### ***Procedure***

Effective mentoring is known to increase self-esteem significantly. This level of mentorship conversely, is dependent on the substance the mentor is made up of (Whitney et al., 2011). Quality mentorship can in one way be ensured by selecting potential mentors carefully. In order to achieve high quality mentorship, the researcher composed a checklist of twelve (12) characteristics to be used in the recruitment of male adults for the study. The positive attributes that a mentor should possess was drawn from existing literature. It is through these selection criteria that the recruitment of potential mentors of 25 years of age and above was done. The adult males picked for the study had a minimum of four of the listed qualities. The researcher picked 13 mentors spread across Kiserian town.

The recruitment of mentors was carried out by the researcher with the help of proxy. A checklist of 12 requisite qualities for effective mentoring was provided to the male adult respondents. Each potential mentor was then expected to self-evaluate and pick out only four of what they consider as their best qualities for mentorship. The qualities of flexibility and availability were considered a must and indeed had been used for the recruitment of the subjects. The mentors were consequently required to pick four other qualities outside of these two. The purpose of the research was generally made known during recruitment, with a tentative location and date agreed on. A list of the mobile phone numbers of the respondents was then compiled to make later communication easier.

There were several activities that were carried out in the initial meeting. The male youth and adult males were put together. A detailed explanation of what the study was about and the researcher's expectations of the participants were laid down. The research respondents were then given the choice of remaining or opting out of the experiment. The male adult respondents who elected to stay then first filled the questionnaire meant for mentors. The third activity was the picking of necessary qualities that the mentors estimated they had which would aid them in mentoring, as described earlier. Each mentor was required to put his name on the piece of paper containing his qualities; to enable matching them with the needs of the mentees. Needs assessment specific to the training to be conducted in the next session was carried out from the already filled questionnaire for the purposes of preparing for the mentors' training ahead.

### ***Questionnaire***

A questionnaire can allow a study's respondents to air their views freely (Fowler, 2009). The questionnaire prepared for adult males contained 18 items; the three (3) first ones for

collecting background data while the next 5 would help in painting a picture of their knowledge on the meaning of mentorship. The remaining (9 items) assisted in shedding light on mentors' involvement in the mentorship of male youth within the community. The last item on the questionnaire was nevertheless, analysed on its own in order to help gauge mentors' desire to get involved in formal male youth mentorship in the future. The scores on the mentors' participation which contained 9 items were as follows:

- High participation=37-45;
- Moderate participation=28-36;
- Fair participation=19-27;
- Low participation=9-18.

## **RESULTS**

### *Means and Standard Deviations on Age and Cultural Differences*

Having gathered data, analysis was done; beginning with the calculation of means and standard deviations. The one-way-analysis of variance (ANOVA) to measure age and cultural variances in the participation of adult male in male youth mentorship was then done. This meant to test the first hypothesis stating that age and cultural background of adult males do not significantly intervene in their male youth mentorship participation. These means and standard deviations on age and cultural background can be seen on Tables 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2 Age Differences in Adult Male Participation

Age Category	N	M	SD
24 - 35	5	34.40	7.60
36 - 45	3	30.66	4.16
46 - 55	3	36.66	4.62
56 & Above	2	33.00	11.31
Total	13	33.84	6.41

Results on Table 2 show participation of adult males in mentorship as being moderate ( $M=33.84$ ). Moreover, these results are indicative of age variances in this participation. The highest means was scored by adult males of between 46 and 55 years old (36.66 out of a possible 45). The of the age bracket of 24-35 years old were next with a mean of 34.40

points. Male adults aged 56 years and above scored a mean of 33.00 while those aged 36-45 years had one of 30.66 points and the lowermost. Further analysis point more towards the level of education than age as a factor accounting for these differences. A previous experience with mentorship may have influenced their involvement with youth in the community as well. Those who had been mentored scored a mean of 34.00 which was more than those with no prior encounter with mentorship (33.67). One-way analyses of variance on participation scores of mentors indicate insignificant age variances;  $F(10,2) = 4.51, p = .195$ . The first part of the  $H_{01}$  stating that the age of adult males does not significantly intervene in their male youth mentorship participation, was established at  $\alpha = .05$  significance level.

*The intervention of cultural background in adult male participation*

Kajiado County male adults moderately (33.84) participated in male youth mentorship. Outcomes on Table 3 display Maasai male adults ( $M=42$ ) as being highly involved in male youth affairs. These results only endorse the opinion that the Maasai community nurtures its male youth collectively with elders being assisting in guiding and advising the young (Ernestina, 2001). The Kikuyu ( $M=36.00$ ), Meru ( $M=34.00$ ), Kamba ( $M=34.00$ ), and Kisii ( $M=30.33$ ) adult males are reasonably available for this kind of mentorship. Male adults from the Luhya cultural group took part in male youth mentorship only fairly.

Table 3. Summary of Cultural Means in Adult Male Participation

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethnic/Background			
Maasai	2	42.00	4.243
Kikuyu	3	36.00	4.359
Luhya	2	27.50	.707
Kisii	3	30.33	4.726
Meru	1	34.00	-
Kamba	2	34.00	11.314

The variances in adult male involvement were nevertheless insignificant. The calculated outcomes of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the adult male participation as per cultural background are suggestive of insignificant variances;  $F(10,2) = 3.33, p=.253$ . The second part of  $H_{01}$  stating that the cultural background of adult males do not significantly

intervene in their male youth mentorship participation, was accepted at  $\alpha = .05$  significance level.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

From this study, it is obvious that mentorship is not a new concept in the community. While certain study participants indicated their involvement in mentorship as per the questionnaire, FGD responses suggested otherwise. The male adults were united in their opinion of the unavailability of formal mentorship in the community. They further asserted that the older men were also generally unavailable to offer even informal mentorship in terms of role modelling, guiding and supporting. The outcomes of the study as analysed from the questionnaire however indicate moderate participation of adult male in the mentorship of male youth across the different age categories. These results confirm the impression that there appears to be a worldwide deficiency of adult male role models (Richardson Jr., 2012). The outcome was further affirmed in the FGDs where both the adult males and male youth respondents were in agreement that there was a general scarcity of male mentors in Kajiado County. The mentors of ages between 46 and 55 years were found to be more active in informally mentoring male youth than the other groups. By contrast, 36-45 year old mentors had the lowest mean in involvement. The mentorage differences in mentorship participation were nonetheless found to be insignificant.

The variances in the involvement of adult male in mentoring male youth may have resulted more from the level of education than age. Mentors who schooled only up to secondary school level had the highest mean of 39.00; while those with a primary school education followed closely with a mean of 33.70. Mentors with college education scored a mean of 30.66 while those who were educated up to university level had the lowest mean of 30.33. The group of mentors aged 46 to 55 years which happened to be the most involved in male

youth mentorship was made up of two primary school and one secondary school respondents. On the other hand, the group of 36-45 year olds consisting of college graduates scored the lowest mean. This result points more to the mentors' level of education than age as the intervention on how male adults related with male youth. Besides, analysis also demonstrated no statistical significance in the male adult cultural background differences in mentorship participation. The hypothesis that age and cultural background of adult males do not significantly intervene in their male youth mentorship participation was hence established at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Male adult low in interaction with male youth quoted lack of prior experience with mentorship and ignorance of its importance as their reasons for not getting involved with youth in the community. Even though some study participants indicated in the questionnaires that they had participated in mentorship previously, the mentors' FGD notion that mentorship was largely unavailable in the community went undisputed.

In the mentors' FDG conducted after the mentorship experiment, the challenges cited included language barrier, low attention span of mentees and diversion from the main issues being handled in the session. The mentors nevertheless said that they felt better equipped for mentorship from the study because they had gained certain skills. Besides, the feedback received from the mentees to the effect that they felt helped had given them confidence that they are useful and are capable of mentoring male youth.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

From the study, all the adult males were willing to mentor male youth. When asked why they did not participate more in mentoring male youth in the community, adult males cited lack of awareness on the importance of mentorship, lack of formalized opportunity and lack of skills as some of the reasons. The researcher therefore endorses creation of awareness on the meaning and possibility of men-men mentorship. Besides, in order to counter lack of skills in mentoring, commendations are made that the Kajiado County government puts in place programs for mobilization and training of male adults for the mentorship of male youth.

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**JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC RESEARCH FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY**  
**Impact Factor 4.483, ISSN: 2320-5083, Volume 5, Issue 11, December 2017**

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