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## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADULT MALE MENTORSHIP PARTICIPATION IN AUGMENTING MALE YOUTH SELF-ESTEEM AND CONNECTEDNESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study explored the effectiveness of formal mentorship in augmenting male youth mentee self-esteem and connectedness. Diminished self-esteem and unhealthy relations with age mates can lead to erosion of male youth social capital; these can be mitigated through mentorship by adult males. The study conducted in 2017 at Kiserian Town of Kajiado County in Kenya; employed qualitative and quantitative procedures using a quasi-experimental research design with treatment and control groups of 26 mentees each, from different age and tribal cohorts. A pretest and posttest questionnaire was administered, each immediately followed by a Focused Group Discussion. The items for assessing connectedness had a five point Likert type scale with Strongly agree (SA) = 5; Agree (A) = 4; No opinion (NO) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly disagree (SD) = 1. High connectedness fell in the range of 33 – 40 points; 25 – 32 points indicated moderate connectedness; fair connectedness (17 -24); and low connectedness (8 - 16). The Rosenberg's Self- Esteem Scale was employed in the measurement of the mentees' self-esteem. ANCOVA analysis indicated that the speed mentoring improved*

mentees' self-esteem considerably by 7.89 points ( $F(1,49)=94.851, p=.001$ ). Further, male youth connectedness also increased by 8.81 points ( $F(1,49)=181.878, p=.001$ ). The researcher therefore drew the conclusion that the participation of male adults in formal mentoring definitely increased male youth self-esteem and connectedness. On the strength of these findings, a recommendation was made to the Kajiado County government to create opportunities for male mentors to formally mentor male youth.

**KEYWORDS:** Connectedness, effectiveness, augmenting, male youth, mentorship, self-esteem.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Male and female psychosocial welfare consists of feelings of connectedness and belongingness. It also includes having a sense of independence as well as competence all of which results in self-pride (Kennon, 2010). Psychosocial concerns can have negative emotional impact on all individuals irrespective of gender (International Bank for Reconstruction & Development and the World Bank, 2006). Young men nonetheless, appear to be more at risk than their female counterparts (Kraemer, 2000; Izugbara & Undie, 2008). According to Burnett & Spelman (2011) this proneness as confirmed through a study conducted in Australia among young males, was indicated through increased hopelessness, declining happiness, increased anxiety and feelings of despondency. Moreover, young men in Australia are known to live shorter lives with more likelihood of sickness as compared to young women (Wilson, Cordier & Whatley, 2013).

Psychosocial distresses may result from lack of aspects that usually encourage male youth psychosocial health. Kennon (2010) argues that changes in sex roles, a male youth's identity within the family, at work and in the social order are some of the contributing factors to this uneasiness in the modern day. According to Kraemer (2000) these concerns can lead to male youth social capital erosion. Anderson, Bromley and Given (2005) define this as the decrease of prospective ability and reduced throughput in all facets of a young man's life in education, work-oriented preparation; long life and suitable social responsibilities. Quite a few threats can push young men to engage in disruptive activities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013); increasing the possibility of participation of male youth in risky behaviours (O'Neil, 2008). Having a negative attitude towards life which affects the way a young man relates to those around him and growing in a deprived environment are just but a few of the aspects which take away rather than add to his psychosocial well-being. Kennon (2010) suggests that gratification and pride can be derived from the fulfillment of psychosocial desires; which can be done productively or unproductively. Meeting these needs through unacceptable means can however harm rather than help male youth; by exposing them to risky behaviour; resulting in low self-esteem and lack of connectedness.

### 1.1 Mentoring for Psychosocial Well-Being

Young men need certain factors in their lives to protect them from engaging in unhelpful behaviour. These factors when present can influence a young man to make constructive choices that result in strong interpersonal relationships, connection with culture, autonomy and high self-esteem (O'Neil, 2008). These protecting dynamics are achievable when a young man is mentored by an older more experienced male. According to The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013) this is made possible due to the latent influence that mentorship has to establish robust mutual bonds in a community; which can lead to enhanced male youth psychosocial wellbeing. Lösel and Farrington (2012) are of the opinion that, association with male role models can be one of the best protective factors for male youth who are prone to risky behaviour. These adults can assist young males in gaining self-awareness, learning of new skills, cultivating needed aptitudes, and growing in all spheres of life. According to America's Promise-Alliance For Youth (2000) linking young men to male mentors for social support can decrease negative outcomes by increasing their self-esteem and connectedness with their peers.

## 1.2 Self-Esteem and Connectedness

Cast and Burke (2002) describe self-esteem as a young man's positive appraisal of himself. It is characterized by self-confidence, self-acceptance and feelings of self-respect (Merriam-Webster, 2016). According to Holt, Bremner, Sutherland, Vliek, Passer and Smith (2012) self-esteem can also be termed as the degree to which a male youth perceives himself as productive and accepted by people who matter to him; and can be used as a pointer to his accomplishments as well. A male youth's self-esteem is likely to increase if he sees himself as a success. This kind of esteem promotes a healthy sense of self-importance, assurance, dignity and cushions a young man against risky behaviour (Brown, 2010). High self-esteem is anchored in a correct assessment of one's personal assets and flaws (Kernis & Lake, 2010). A correct male youth valuation of self is realizable in a strong mentoring connection.

Heitt (2009) opines that increased self-esteem results in a male youth's increased health arising from four different aspects: perceptions of being accepted by others; getting helpful valuation from others; comparing himself to others and to his ideal self objectively; and being confident of his capacity to make a difference in the world. The four aspects are made possible through deliberate mentoring. The perception which is held by a young man about himself is of paramount importance in the achievement of his well-being, satisfaction and self-regulation (Diener & Seligman, 2000). If this perception is positive, a young man will be more satisfied with his life, experience less challenges and be less disposed to emotional difficulties like apprehension and despair (Brown, 1998).

According to Myers (2000) having an effective mentoring relationship forms a strong basis for male youth well-being. Cummin (1996) suggest that when this base is coupled with male youth perception of being surrounded by helpful social relations it can immensely build his self-esteem, increase coping strategies, ensure psychosocial well-being and decrease emotional concerns. Additional, having good friends is an enhancer of mental health and is the sturdiest indicator of a person's life gratification in the domains of Life Satisfaction Scale (Cummin, 1996). Connection with genuine, caring male adults can greatly influence how a young man feels about himself (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Moreover, Ryff (1995) observed that deep, understanding and encouraging relationships which are concerned with a male youth's well-being would most definitely enhance his self-esteem.

Self-esteem and connectedness are related; in fact they cannot be separated in a young man's life. This is because the two are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship. Having self-esteem, gives a young man the needed confidence to establish healthy relationships with his peers. On the other hand, having good friends increases the chances of positive self-evaluation and thus building a male youth's self-esteem. In the review of conventional theories of positive psychological health, Ryff (1995) conducted extensive research to develop a six criteria scale of psychological well-being. Self-acceptance and constructive relations were two among the criteria proposed in this scale. Self-acceptance comprised: positive self-evaluation, acceptance of the different aspects of self; coupled with the capacity to acknowledge one's strong and weak points in an objective way. Young men require healthy relations in order to feel in control of their lives and the environment (self-esteem) as they endeavour to achieve life goals (Seligman, 2011).

Increased self-esteem and having healthy relationships can shield young men from behaving in ways which could affect their lives adversely (King, Vidourek, Davis & McClellan, 2002). These behaviours comprise decreased self-esteem, hopelessness, purposelessness and despair (The World Bank, 2008). Besides, Anderson et al. (2005) propose that decreased self-esteem in young men is connected to risky behaviour which in turn reduces male youth social capital (possible ability and output in their learning, career-oriented preparation; long life and playing suitable roles in society successfully). King et al. (2002) observed substantial differences in participants' self-esteem and positive relationships after mentorship compared to a group which had not been mentored. Liang, Lund, Mousseau, and Spencer (2016) too suggest that healthy mentorship connections

can boost male youth self-esteem; especially for those who are inclined to emotional stress and low self esteem.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

From observation, low self-esteem and inadequate connectedness is a common problem among male youth in Kenya. Self-esteem and connectedness issues amongst young men can precede or proceed from risk factors; and may lead erosion of male youth social capital (reduced male youth prospective ability and diminished productivity in all important areas of life; including social roles. It has been hypothesized that this problem may be resulting from lack of male mentors. According to Boyd and Bee (2008) participation of fathers in mentorship can critically contribute to a young man's psychosocial well-being. This involvement and that of other male members of society has been adversely affected by many factors that interfere with mentorship through natural relationships (Perry, 2014; Schwimmer, 2003 & Strassmann, 2011). Even when present, mentorship through natural relationships has often been proven inadequate in mitigating male youth self esteem and connectedness concerns in comparison to formal mentoring (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). It was with this fact in mind that the researcher sought to establish the effectiveness of adult male formal mentorship in enhancing male youth self-esteem and connectedness in Kajiado County.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The current study conducted at Kiserian urban centre in Kajiado County Kenya was meant to verify the significance of Kajiado County adult male involvement in formal male youth mentoring. In addition, the research was done in order to confirm the efficacy of this adult males' mentorship contribution in augmenting male youth self-esteem and connectedness. The study design employed a quasi-experiment research design composed of mentees' control and treatment groups. The study established that mentorship of male youth through natural relationships was either absent or inadequate in mitigating male youth self-esteem and relatedness issues. On the other hand, it was evident that the involvement of adult male in formal mentorship augmented male youth self-esteem and connectedness.

## **2. METHODS**

This article is drawn from a larger study that called attention to the importance of Kajiado County adult male involvement in formal male youth mentoring. In addition, the research confirmed the efficacy of this adult males' contribution in augmenting male youth self-esteem and connectedness.

### **2.1 Study Design**

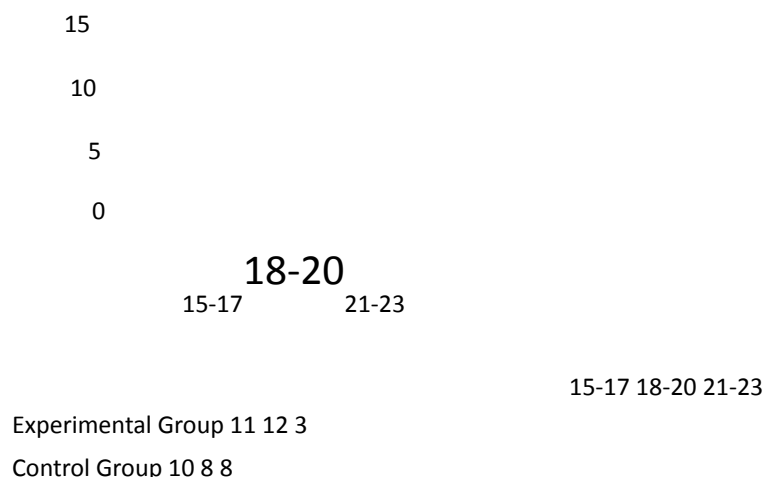
The study design was a quasi-experiment composed of a control and treatment group. This was necessitated by a need to establish the value of the treatment given to the mentees (Bernard, 2013). The participants were sampled from the target group from the town of Kiserian; after which the pretesting was done, mentorship intervention provided followed by post - testing of the male youth (Flick, 2011). Quasi-experiments are usually an assessment of a treatment effect which uses purposive rather than random ways of assigning participants to a treatment group and control group (Bernard, 2013). This precaution is taken in order to avoid the possibility of having a treatment group that differs from the control groups right from the beginning. The selection is consequently conducted in a way that ensures that the two groups are similar in order to avoid covert variances.

### **2. 2 Participants**

The researcher purposively picked fifty (52) male youth participants in Kiserian urban area of Kajiado County

for the study. These were potential available and willing out of school mentees aged 15 and 23 years. Twenty (26) were selected for the treatment group while the rest provided the needed control. The study instruments

established male youth demographic information in terms of their level of education, age and ethnic/ cultural context.



**Figure 1: Comparison of Male Youth age Cohorts**

The mentees in the intervention group were paired and each pair assigned to one mentor out of the available twenty (13) for mentorship. The pairing and matching was done using mentors’ strengths and mentees’ preferences for certain mentor strengths.

In as far as educational level was concerned, the treatment group was composed of two participants (7.7%) who were not schooled, seven (26.9%) from primary school, twelve (46.2%) with a secondary school education as compared to five (19.2%) college grandaunts. The control group contained seven (26.9%), primary school dropouts, sixteen (61.5%) from secondary school and three (11.5%) college grandaunts.

A comparison of the mentees’ age cohorts in the experimental and control groups was made as shown on Figure 1. The 15-17 age category was made up of eleven (42.3%) in the treatment and ten (38.5%) in the control group. The participants of ages between 18 and 20 years were twelve (46.2%) in the experiment group while in the control group they were eight (30.8%); whereas 21-23year olds were three (11.5%) and eight (30.8%) in the treatment group and control group respectively.

**Table I: Mentees Ethnicity**

Ethnic Background	Experiment		Control Group	
	f	Percentage (%)	f	Percentage (%)
Maasai	4	15.4	19.2	15.4
Kikuyu	4	15.4	19.2	15.4
Luhya	6	23.1	7.7	7.7
Kisii	2	7.7	15.4	15.4
Meru	2	7.7	7.7	7.7
Luo	3	11.5	11.5	11.5
Kamba	4	15.4	11.5	11.5
Kalenjin	0	0	2	7.7

Swahili 1 0 3.8 0  
Total 26 26 100.0 100.0

The cultural backgrounds on Table I are suggestive of the urbanite nature of Kiserian town. There were 9 cultural clusters epitomized in the mentees' sample. The experiment group, consisted of 6 Luhya mentees (23.1%) which was the largest representation with the Maasai, Kikuyu and Kamba with four (4) participants each following closely. The Luo participants were three (3), while two (2) were Meru and Kisii and Swahili mentees being one each. Meanwhile, the control group contained; Five (5) Maasai and Kikuyu mentees each, four (4) Kisii, three (3) Luo and Kamba each; while the Meru, Luhya and Kalenjin were two each.

### **2.3 Procedure**

Speed mentoring is a concept which works. According to Cook, Bahn and Menaker (2010) It is a short-term affordable inventive technique utilized in the facilitation of mentoring relations with the mentor and mentee meeting for a short time; a few times for brief mentorship. The study espoused speed mentorship for the mentorship intervention by having two 40 minute sessions. The researchers own SAVE mentorship model (Figure 2) was employed as the procedure in the study.

Self-awareness is the main component and the thrust of the model. As Smith and Brad (2016) suggest, supportive mentoring starts and is sustained by a good dose of self-awareness. Self-awareness is central to the model and therefore encouraged during the course of the intervention for both the male adults and male youth as well. Secondly was the selection and matching of the participants. As was to be expected, awareness was made on purpose of the study before pre-testing was conducted. Thirdly came needs assessment for the male adults; coupled with their preparation and empowerment before the mentoring process commenced. Pretesting to determine the male youth's perception of mentoring plus the levels of self-esteem and connectedness was carried out. An FGD was conducted soon after to help in gleaning the facts left behind by the pretesting instrument before the process of mentorship was started. Fourthly was the verification by way of monitoring; to ensure that implementation was on course, making the necessary adjustments and buck stopping where required. Lastly, came the evaluation of the effectiveness through post testing through a questionnaire and FGD before ending the process. Provisions for follow up were made due to the interest shown by the participants in the continuation of the mentorship.

### **2.4 Study Instruments**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative means of gathering data from the mentees. According to McMillan (2008) this approach permits data triangulation, which in research enhances confidence in the results; compensating for the prejudices or gaps created by the utilization of one method.

The tools employed in gathering data from the mentees included two questionnaires (pretest and posttest), two Focus Group Discussion Guides, SAVE Mentorship Model and criteria for selecting mentors. The questionnaires contained items for participants' demographic data, statements for determining male youth's conception of mentorship, items for assessment of connectedness and Rosenberg's Self- Esteem Scale. The instruments allowed the respondents to specify their answers by ticking the correct box. The opinions indicated on the measure consisted of: strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. Scores closer to five (5) showed the respondents agreement to the statement or question. In comparison, scores declining in the direction of one (1) were indicative of participants' disagreement with the statement.

The study also employed two FGDs; one which was conducted after pretesting and the other subsequent to post testing.

*Figure 2: Own Save Mentorship Model*

### **3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This section presents the findings of the study. It composes of the male youth conceptualization of mentoring. The section also specifies the significance of formal mentorship by adult males on male youth self-esteem and connectedness.

#### **3. 1. Mentees' Conception of Mentoring**

The perception of mentoring conveys various connotations reliant upon the situations in which it is put to use (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Mentorship nonetheless, may normally denote a bond between an inexperienced male youth (mentee), and a skillful male adult referred to as a mentor (Kramer, 1985 & Noe, 1988b). O'Leary and Mitchell (1990) propose mentorship to involve a bunch of actions or an activity dependent upon the context, the mentor's flair; and more prominently the male youths' desires. The mentorship undertakings could comprise instruction, shielding, giving stimulating tasks, encouraging prominence and direct funding (O'Leary & Mitchell, 1990).

A mentee's comprehension of mentoring is tied to the impact of their reaction to it. For this reason, the researcher tried to find out how both male adults and male youth conceptualized mentorship. As the results confirm, the study respondents were familiar with the concept.

When the male youth in the treatment group were asked to share their perception of mentoring, 26.8% described it using one word; that is friendship, guidance or counselling. The remaining 73.2% viewed it as being a blend of various activities. Correspondingly, 26.9% of the control group members, perceived it as being one activity while the rest deemed it as a combination of diverse activities.

The 15 – 17-year-old mentees described mentoring as a mixture of advice giving, counselling and guidance; but also being a role model and a friend, as well as offering support. Their pick on the singular words to describe mentorship for the 18-20 year olds though, favoured advising, guiding, supporting, counselling or being friends. In comparison though, those in the 21 -23 age bracket defined mentorship as an all-inclusive process made up of different aspects as itemized in the questionnaire. The college level mentees' choice of the

“all above” option in the questionnaire paid credence to this fact. This also went to establish that age and level

of education do influence one’s conceptualization of mentorship and the need of its consumption by young men. The FGD gave the mentees an opportunity to further air their thoughts on what mentorship entailed:

**Excerpt 1:** Male youth FGD reactions after the administration of the pre-test tool on their conceptualization of mentorship.

**Researcher:** What do you understand by mentoring?

**Mentees’ responses:**

- It is being assisted by an older man.
- It means to be inspired.

**3.2 Mentorship Effectiveness in Augmenting Mentee Self-Esteem and Connectedness** According to Dubois and Silverthorn (2015) mentorship using naturally occurring relations play an inadequate role in improving the psychosocial wellbeing of young men. Conversely, formal mentorship was found to work (Australian Institute of Family, 2013). This useful activity can give male mentees the much needed social support, role models, and skills development for social capital advancement (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2015). High self-esteem and connectedness epitomize shielding influences suitable for countering risky behaviour (King et al., 2002; O’Neil, 2008). These two imperative factors can be acquired by male youth through mentorship.

Whitney, Hendricker, and Offutt (2011) suggest that the development of high esteem and connectedness in at risk young men is achievable through effective participation of adult males in mentorship. This kind of adult male involvement calls for high self-efficacy and a good measure of involvement with youth (Raposa, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2016). Normally, the two crucial qualities in adult male will enable the kind of mentorship proven to be a critical tool in positive youth development (Erdem DuBois, Larose, Wit, & Lipman, 2016).

Holt et al. (2012) opine that high self-esteem can be indicative of a young man’s success in life as a measure of his productivity and acceptance by significant others. The Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale employed to measure male youth self-esteem has scores ranging between 0 and 30. Point between 15 and 25 are considered normal scores while those below 15 points are suggestive of low self-esteem. Anything above 25 points suggests high self-esteem. Post-test scores showed an improvement of mentees’ self-esteem from 16.81 to 24.70 (an increase of 7.89 points). The results on Table II infer a significant variance of  $F(1,49) = 94.851$ ,  $p=.001$ ; in the mentees’ self-esteem after the mentorship intervention.

**Table II: Male Youth Self-esteem Enhancement through Formal Mentorship**  
**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	748.281 <sup>a</sup>	374	1.998	.661	.710	
PRETEST	1.954	1	1.954	94.851	.001	.659
Group	743.786	1	743.786	94.851	.001	.659
Error	384.239	49	7.842			
Total	23855.000	52				
Corrected Total	1132.519	51				

a. R Squared = .661 (Adjusted R Squared = .647)

These findings agree with previous study outcomes (Liang et al., 2016; King et al., 2002; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2015; Raposa et al., 2016; Erdem et al., 2016; Gary, 2011; Brown, Thurman, Rice, Boris, Ntaganira, Nyirazinyoye, De Dieu, & Snider, 2009) that postulate mentorship as a vital intervention in improving male youth self-esteem.

Connectedness refers to the understanding that young men have of what friendship entails, coupled with essential facets which strong relations with peers are composed of. Connectedness was measured using nine (9) items; eight (8) of which intended for establishing the concept of friendship concept and male youth’s capacity to get involved in strong relations with their age mates. The maximum score would be 32 and the minimum 8 points. The scores ranged as shown below:

- 33 – 40: High Connectedness
- 25 – 32: Moderate Connectedness
- 17- 24: Fair Connectedness
- 8- 16: Low Connectedness

Before the treatment the mentees’ connectedness mean stood at 29.3 but improved to 38.12 after the treatment; an increment of 8.81 points. This difference as illustrated on Table III was significant  $F(1,49) = 181.878, p=.001$ ). These outcomes compare favourably with results of existing research affirming mentorship as an effective way of increasing male youth connectedness (King et al., 2002; Whitney et al., 2011; Seligman, 2011). FGDs conducted after the treatment point to the likely benefits for male youth as the excerpts indicate.

**Table III: Male Youth Connectedness Enhancement through Formal Mentorship  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1498.411 <sup>a</sup>	2	749.205	114.135	.000	.823
Intercept	302.425	1	302.425	46.072	.000	.485
PRETEST	65.161	1	65.161	9.927	.003	.168
Group	1193.891	1	1193.891	181.878	.001	.788
Error	321.647	49	6.564			
Total	57987.000	52				
Corrected Total	1820.058	51				

a. R Squared = .823 (Adjusted R Squared = .816)

**Excerpt 2:** Mentees’ benefits were accrued from mentorship.

**Researcher:** How have you been helped through mentorship?

**Male youth replies:**

- Knowledge on how to deal friends.
- Tips on making friends.
- How to make myself heard by my friends.
- Understanding the significance of trust.
- Learning the importance of being honest with my friends.

Even with the many benefits accrued through mentorship, there were some challenges that mentees experienced in the process. These challenges are captured in excerpt 3.

**Excerpt 3:** Difficulties experienced by mentees in mentorship.

**Researcher:** What difficulties did you experience during mentorship?

**Mentees' post-test FGD reactions:**

- Finding it hard to share my feelings openly with the mentor in the presence of another mentee.

The mentees felt that the mentorship process could be improved and they went further to make the suggestions captured in excerpt 4.

**Excerpt 4:** Recommendations made by male youth.

**Researcher:** How can mentorship be improved?

**Mentees' responses**

- Providing entertainment.
- Having regular meetings.
- Providing food.

The mentees were also given an opportunity for other comments that could have been left out. These were captured in excerpt 5.

**Excerpt 5:** Other comments.

**Researcher:** Any other comments?

**Mentees' post-test FGD:**

- We are grateful.
- We feel that mentorship is imperative.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

First, the study makes recommendation that Kajiado County Government creates awareness on men-men mentorship. Secondly, the County Government should craft ways of mobilizing and training of male mentors for deliberate mentorship of male youth. Lastly, it should avail opportunity for male youth in the County to be mentored by the trained mentors.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The study established that male youth generally understood what mentorship was all about. Twenty six percent from the intervention group and twenty seven percent in the control group perceived it as being made up of only one activity while seventy four percent defined it using more than one verb. This percentage in the treatment group dropped considerably to 7.6% after the treatment; meaning that the mentees had gained new

insight into the mentorship concept.

The study established that deliberate mentoring was effective in augmenting mentee self-esteem and connectedness. Self-esteem grew from 16.81 to 24.70 points as connectedness rose to 38.12 from 29.31 after

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the speed mentorship intervention. These variations were significant as confirmed through analysis. The mentees accrued other benefits from mentoring as well: how to interact with their age mates, making friends and maintaining them, self-expression as well as the importance of trust and honesty in relationships.

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