

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF AMBIGUOUS MENTORSHIP TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST AMONG NURSING INSTITUTES IN KARACHI

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## ABSTRACT

Nursing education is dependent on mentorship to influence the students, including their professional growth, emotional stability, and career growth. Nevertheless, in the case of mentorship being obscure with no direction, conviction, and clarity, it could adversely affect the psychological health of student nurses. This review examines mental implications of ambiguous mentorship trends at the nursing institutes in Karachi. With reference to both international and regional body of literature, this paper examines the connection among mentorship ambiguity, psychological stress, institutional transparency and trust-led relationships. The results indicate that unclear mentorship is related to anxiety, low confidence, and burnout of nursing students and lower academic involvement. The discussion of policy-based suggestions and future studies is provided.

**Keywords:** Indistinct mentorship, nursing training, the psychological impact, Karachi, transparency, institutional confidence, burn out, student nurses.

## INTRODUCTION

Issued in education in healthcare, especially during nursing training is efficient mentorship and roles that mentors play is essential in the development of nursing students who are supposed to learn to exclude merely expert competence but also emotional strength when going through their clinical experiences. Mentoring process helps in not just transferring knowledge and skills but also critical support system that promotes confidence, professional identity and psychosocial wellbeing. Absence of aid and guidance may leave students confused, anxious, and low motivated, thus slowing down academic progress and future competent

clinical work. Karachi is the biggest city and most populace of Pakistan where increasing cases (Ali

and Fatima, 2023) of student dissatisfaction are being observed in various nursing institutes that are both government-run as well as privately owned. The initial reports and first-hand accounts indicate that one of the primary causes of such dissatisfaction is unclear mentorship (Castonguay et al., 2023). Most student nurses have cited that they feel there is no systematic guidance, no consistent feedback, few mentors and expectations can also not be met within the clinical practice placements as well as their academic activities. Such failures not only impact negatively on the learning results but also lead to emotional distress, feeling of

isolation as well as lack of confidence towards the institution support systems. In this review, I will attempt to review both critically and critically evaluate the psychological implications of the ambiguity of mentorship in the nursing education framework at Karachi (Chandan and Irfan, 2021). Specifically, it discusses the extent to which psychological side-effects of bad mentorship can be assuaged through institutional transparency, transparent mentor roles and an open communication line. This review has brought together literature based on the synthesis of extant literature and regional experiences to frame the imperativeness of clear-cut mentorship models that would focus on student mental health and foster institutional trust (Dolan, 2020). Finally, the article promotes such solutions as policy reforms and systematic mentorship initiatives in favor of the international best practices to enhance the academic and psychological strength of Karachi nursing students (Dugué, Siros and Roseville, 2021).

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Mentorship in Nursing

Nurse mentoring is a core muscle of the academic and clinical program of nursing education, a link between theory and practice. Conventionally, the term mentorship is used to describe a partnership between a more experienced professional and an individual who is considered less experienced with the aim of helping him or her achieve growth in his or her personality and in the profession (Jokelainen et al., 2011). In the scenario of the nursing education, mentorship is not limited to teaching or supervising. It involves a fully comprehensive support in acquisition of clinical skills, emotional and psychological support as well as role modeling in professional behaviors and attitudes. Good mentorship allows a nursing student to become an effective clinical reasoner, feel assured, and develop professional values (Khan and Shahid, 2022). The mentor plays not only the role of a teacher, but sometimes he or she also plays the roles of motivator, counselor and sometimes advocate of the student. This critical connection is especially pertinent to high-stress clinical settings, in which student nurses can develop the feeling of being overwhelmed by patient care needs and requirements of performance. One of the most successful ways to limit the anxiety levels of a student and foster their resilience and general

satisfaction with their learning journey is a healthy mentor-mentee relationship (Mann, Roach and O'Brien, 2023). The nursing students are also exposed and prone to uncertainty, fear of failure, and intel capital she indication of professional identity without the provision of effective mentorship. Therefore, effective and well-organized mentorship schedules are the keys to raising competent, caring, and confident future nurses.

### Defining Ambiguity in Mentorship

Mentorship ambiguity can be understood as a lack of clarity of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of mentors and mentees. This ambiguity can be a very serious blow to mentorship relationship. Ambiguous mentorship in the sphere of nursing education can take place in the form of unstable or peripheral feedback, low levels of mentor interactions, unspecified educational and clinical performance expectations, and the lack of structured orientation (Makhosi-Ansari, Makhoul and Shyster, 2021). This may make the students feel desolated, lost or even demoralized, more so, at times when they are undergoing sharp learning experiences within the clinical environments. Any uncertainty on what is expected of a student in nursing leads to confusion, especially when one has different mentors or departments to rely on, all of which do not provide the same direction (Passavant et al., 2021). This aspect is increasing levels of stress. Moreover, lack of clarity may interfere with building of trust between the students and faculty, key to free communication and learning. Students are unlikely to turn to their mentor or raise any issue in case they feel that the mentor is not interested or approachable. In the long run, the psychological stress arising due to poor mentorship can lead to low-motivation, low achievement, and even quitting school. To resolve ambiguity, it is necessary that institutions set up clear plans of actions, organized mentorship procedures and mentor training sessions so that each of the students can be given standard and quality care during the progression of education (Jokelainen et al., 2011).

### Trust and Transparency

Mentorship within nursing institutes should be based on trust and transparency as it enhances a healthy learning environment. Trust can help the students to the feeling of security, appreciated Ness, and degradedness and, consequently, open communication, academic orientation as well as

emotional stability. Students are more inclined to ask questions, request explanations and accept critical comments, once they trust their teachers and their schools. On the other hand, the absence of trust that in many cases is caused by unpredictable feedback, favoritism perceived or even undisclosed evaluation criteria may result in disengagement as well as psychological harms. Transparency is also significant in showing and sustaining this trust (Passavant et al., 2021). Transparent mentorship implies that the roles, objectives, ways of assessment, and systems of support are communicated clearly. It also includes opening up institution policy to the students and institution decision-making processes (Khan and Shahid, 2022). Transparency is vital in the institutes of Karachi, where one can find a hierarchical system, as well as the constraints of student voice due to cultural norms. Those students have a better chance of meeting academic and clinical challenges as they are in a position to know what to expect and they are confident of the justice of the system. Therefore, the development of an open mentor culture with clear rules and boundaries, exposed communication, and responsibility will not only improve the learning process but also has a positive influence on the psychological well-being and the sense of institutional connection (Perumal and Singh, 2022).

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF AMBIGUOUS MENTORSHIP

### Anxiety and Stress

Students studying nursing and who get ambiguous or rather conflicting directions tend to create more anxiety and stresses. They can also always be afraid to do something wrong or fail academically because teachers do not explain what is expected of them in a properly developed way, or do not provide their students with feedback on a regular basis. Indeed, clinical evaluations specially make us worry more when the students are confused as to how they may be evaluated. This stress has the ability to affect concentration, decision and general learning in an adverse way. Also, the students can develop excessive self-criticism and suffer emotionally (Castonguay et al., 2023). The absence of psychological safety in the learning environment may also negatively affect their academic outcomes and diminish the willingness to become a nursing professional.

### *Burnout and Emotional Fatigue*

The absence of dependable mentorship can significantly contribute to burnout among nursing students, especially during clinical placements. These placements require emotional labor, empathy, and adaptability—traits that can become exhausting without consistent support. When students feel isolated or unsupported by their mentors, they may struggle to cope with the emotional challenges of patient care (Mann, Roach and O'Brien, 2023). Over time, this can result in emotional fatigue, characterized by feelings of exhaustion, detachment, and lack of motivation. Students experiencing burnout often find it difficult to stay engaged or committed to their studies, which may lead to long-term academic and psychological consequences if left unaddressed.

### Decreased Self-Efficacy

When mentorship lacks clarity and consistency, nursing students begin to question their abilities and academic potential. This erosion of self-efficacy undermines their confidence in both clinical skills and theoretical knowledge. Students may hesitate to participate in clinical procedures, avoid asking questions, or fear taking initiative—all due to a lack of reassurance and constructive feedback from mentors (Mann, Roach and O'Brien, 2023). As confidence declines, so does academic performance, creating a cycle of self-doubt and underachievement. Developing self-efficacy requires affirming guidance, encouragement, and timely correction—components that are often missing in ambiguous mentorship structures, particularly in under-resourced educational settings like those found in Karachi (Makhosi-Ansari, Makhoul and Shyster, 2021).

### Withdrawal and Dropouts

In the most severe cases, prolonged exposure to poor mentorship can result in students emotionally withdrawing from their educational journey. Feelings of helplessness, isolation, and frustration may compel students to disengage from academic responsibilities or clinical training. Over time, this disconnection can escalate into decisions to drop out of nursing programs altogether. Institutional disillusionment, where students lose faith in the

fairness and support of their education system, often plays a significant role in such outcomes. High dropout rates not only affect the individual's career path but also impact the healthcare system's ability to maintain a steady pipeline of qualified nurses (Chandan and Irfan, 2021).

### THE SITUATION IN KARACHI'S NURSING INSTITUTES

Karachi, Pakistan's largest metropolitan city, is home to more than 50 nursing institutions, comprising both public and private sectors. While these institutes are essential for producing qualified healthcare professionals, many face persistent structural and administrative challenges. Among the most pressing issues are faculty shortages, overburdened mentors, and inconsistent implementation of academic and clinical training policies. These systemic problems contribute to a

compromised learning environment, especially in the area of mentorship. Research and student testimonials reveal that nursing students frequently encounter difficulties such as insufficient support during clinical placements, vague role definitions (Chandan and Irfan, 2021), and a lack of accessible and dedicated mentors. Additionally, a culture of hierarchy and rigid authority often discourages students from voicing concerns or seeking clarification, further isolating them in an already high-stress educational environment. These challenges undermine the development of trust and transparency, which are essential for effective learning and psychological well-being. To address these issues, it is vital to introduce standardized mentorship frameworks, allocate more resources to faculty development, and create open communication channels for students to express concerns safely and constructively.

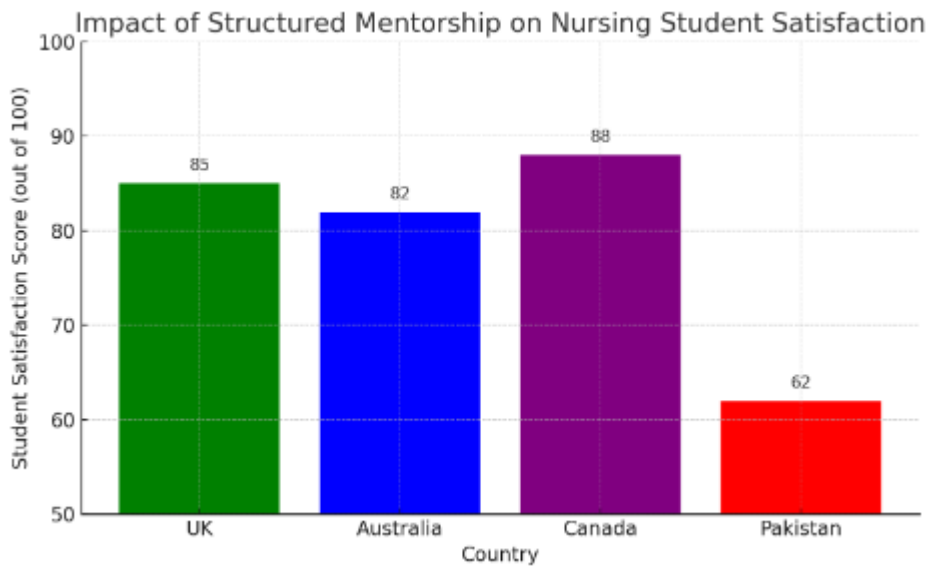
#### Common Mentorship Challenges Reported by Nursing Students in Karachi

Challenge	Description	Source
Lack of Clinical Support	Students feel unassisted during hands-on training and rotations	(Dugué, Siros & Roseville, 2021)
Role Confusion	Unclear expectations from mentors and clinical supervisors	(Khan & Shahid, 2022)
Mentor Unavailability	Limited time and access to assigned mentors	(epidemic?, Ng & Castle, 2020)
Hierarchical Pressure	Fear of speaking up due to strict institutional culture	(Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020)
Inconsistent Feedback	Irregular or vague performance evaluations	(Mann, Roach & O'Brien, 2023)
Emotional Disengagement	Lack of psychological support leads to demotivation	(Khan & Shahid, 2022)

### COMPARATIVE REVIEW: GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Globally, nursing education has increasingly emphasized the importance of structured and transparent mentorship systems. Countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada have implemented comprehensive mentorship frameworks that demonstrate positive outcomes for both students and institutions. These systems typically include standardized mentor training programs, transparent and consistent evaluation

criteria, and mechanisms for gathering and acting on regular student feedback. In the UK, for example (Castonguay et al., 2023), the National Health Service (NHS) mandates mentor preparation courses to ensure quality supervision. Australian universities integrate mentorship as part of academic policy, ensuring mentors are evaluated based on their effectiveness. In Canada, mentorship includes peer-support models alongside faculty supervision, enhancing student integration and emotional support.



**Figure 1: Impact of Structured Mentorship on Nursing Student Satisfaction (Khan & Shahid, 2022)**

Research from these countries consistently shows that well-structured mentorship leads to improved student satisfaction, greater academic performance, reduced stress levels, and stronger professional identity. Compared to the situation in Karachi, where mentorship

often lacks clarity and consistency, global best practices offer valuable lessons in reforming mentorship systems. The integration of these elements not only enhances academic outcomes but also plays a significant role in supporting students' mental health and career readiness (Castonguay et al., 2023).

Country	Key Practices	Impact	Source
UK	Mandatory mentor training, NHS-supported frameworks	Higher student confidence, standardized feedback	(Ali & Fatima, 2023)
Australia	Policy-backed mentorship, mentor evaluations	Reduced anxiety, improved academic engagement	(Bonati, Campi & Segre, 2022)
Canada	Peer + faculty mentoring, open feedback culture	Stronger social integration, better mental health	(Castonguay et al., 2023)

**Table 1: Key Elements of Global Best Practice Mentorship Models**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively address the challenges posed by ambiguous mentorship within Karachi's nursing institutes, a comprehensive and systematic reform strategy is required. First and foremost, it is essential to develop formal mentorship training programs for faculty members. These programs should focus on communication skills, student engagement techniques, and the psychological aspects of mentoring in high-pressure environments. Secondly, institutes must

implement transparent evaluation rubrics and clinical checklists that clearly define performance expectations. This will ensure fairness and consistency across student assessments and reduce anxiety related to subjective grading. Establishing a well-structured grievance redressal mechanism is also crucial. Students should have access to safe, confidential platforms where they can report issues without fear of retaliation. This fosters trust and accountability within the institution. Additionally (Khan & Shahid, 2022), promoting peer mentorship alongside traditional faculty

mentorship can enhance accessibility and create a supportive community among students, especially in under-resourced settings. Finally, nursing institutes should conduct regular assessments of students' psychological well-being. These assessments will help institutions identify stressors early and intervene with appropriate support services such as counselling or academic assistance. By implementing these recommendations, Karachi's nursing institutions can create a more transparent, supportive, and mentally healthy learning environment that empowers students to thrive both academically and professionally (Passavant et al., 2021).

### RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the growing awareness of the psychological impact of mentorship practices in nursing education, there remains a notable lack of empirical research specifically focused on the experiences of nursing students in Karachi. Much of the existing literature is either generalized (Jokelainen et al., 2011) to broader educational contexts or based on international case studies that may not accurately reflect the local socio-cultural and institutional realities. To build an evidence-based understanding, future research should adopt qualitative and quantitative methods—such as structured surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions—to capture the lived experiences of nursing students navigating ambiguous mentorship systems (Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020). Comparative studies between public and private nursing institutions are also essential to identify disparities in mentorship quality, access to resources, and psychological outcomes. Such research would help uncover systemic differences and guide targeted interventions. Additionally, the intersectionality of gender, culture, and language must be explored, as these factors can significantly influence communication patterns, mentorship accessibility, and student comfort in expressing concerns. Investigating these dimensions will provide a more nuanced understanding of mentorship dynamics in Karachi's diverse educational landscape. Addressing these research gaps will not only contribute to academic literature but also support evidence-based reforms aimed at improving student well-being and educational quality in nursing institutes.

### CONCLUSION

Ambiguous mentorship poses a significant threat to the psychological well-being and academic success of nursing students. When mentorship lacks clarity, consistency, and emotional support, students are more likely to experience heightened levels of anxiety, emotional fatigue, and a loss of trust in institutional processes. These negative outcomes not only hinder individual student development but also compromise the overall quality of nursing education. To mitigate these challenges, transparency and trust-building must be prioritized as core principles in the design and implementation of mentorship programs. Clear communication, consistent evaluation, accessible support systems, and mentor accountability are essential to creating a positive learning environment. In the context of Karachi's nursing institutes, where mentorship practices often remain informal and inconsistent, urgent reforms are needed. Institutions must adopt structured, student-centered mentorship frameworks that prioritize psychological safety, fairness, and professional growth. By doing so, nursing schools can cultivate a more supportive and resilient academic culture—one that empowers students, enhances their clinical readiness, and contributes to a stronger healthcare workforce for the region.

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