

# TOWARDS PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS: A REVIEW ON THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

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## I. Abstract

This literature review focuses on 20 studies analyzing the strategies and outcomes of mentoring programs in a myriad of areas. It is intended to inform the development and methods of the Poverty Stoplight, a self-assessment tool created by Fundación Paraguaya for families to develop practical strategies to overcome poverty with the help of a mentor. The paper is divided into three different axes related to program development: the mentor-mentee relationship, the institutional aspect, and the psychosocial component of mentoring programs. In turn, these are subdivided into program components that summarize the patterns and main elements found across studies. Different definitions of mentorship, program flexibility, institutional implications, attitudinal aspects, reinforcement of social networks, and challenges to program effectiveness are the main components discussed in this review. Identifying these components is key for organizations to have a clearer understanding of the intricacies and complexities of mentoring programs when developing their strategies and structure. This is not an exhaustive review and must not be taken as a definite evaluation of the factors that influence the development of mentoring programs.

**Keywords:** mentoring; mentorship; coaching; program components; program effectiveness; program development.

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## II. Introduction

Mentoring has been used as a tool for catalyzing growth and development in a myriad of settings such as academic environments, family households, and the workplace. In the second half of the 20th century researchers have shown growing interest in understanding and developing effective strategies for mentoring programs to yield positive results. Poverty mentoring in particular has been increasingly applied both by civil society organizations and governments in the search for sustainable solutions to poverty and extreme poverty. Fundación Paraguaya has joined this movement by creating the Poverty Stoplight, an innovative self-assessment tool for families to develop practical strategies to overcome poverty with the help of a mentor. Research has played a key role in the development of this tool and this organization continuously looks for new inputs that would improve the effectiveness of the Stoplight.

Therefore, research and program evaluations are important for better understanding how program strategies can be improved to better respond to

participants' needs, especially when working with at-risk populations. Kram's study, conducted in 1985, was one of the first ones to deconstruct the strategies of a mentoring program and its outcomes applying an empirical approach (Kram, 1985). Since then, researchers have applied countless methodological approaches in order to establish best-practices in this field of work. Literature reviews and meta-analysis have been conducted as an attempt to find the commonalities between successful and unsuccessful mentoring experiences (Eby et. al, 2008; Allen, 2007; Holland, 2009). However, no literature review on the field of poverty mentoring was found. This review adds to this effort by analyzing and comprising the main results of 20 different studies focused on mentoring programs. The goal is to inform the strategies and foundations of the Poverty Stoplight by identifying the main components of effective poverty mentoring programs and the challenges that must be taken into account when developing this type of programs. Starting from the different definitions applied to mentorship across studies, to

the role of interpersonal bonds, social networks, and institutional specificities, this paper draws conclusions on how to better mentor program participants with the purpose of creating long-term solutions to poverty and its multidimensional consequences.

### **III. Methods**

This literature review compares and contrasts different types of mentoring and summarizes the lessons that can be learned from the available studies. This is not an exhaustive literature review but rather an overview of the available evidence with regard to mentoring in a myriad of disciplines. It is also relevant to mention that this is a multidisciplinary field of study that lacks a standardized vocabulary. While some studies use the word mentoring, others refer to this as coaching. Both terms were used when searching for articles throughout the research process. The studies that were included in this review had to (i) evaluate the strategies and components of a mentoring program, (ii) draw conclusions from the analysis of studies focused on mentoring programs, or (iii) review

previous research on mentoring programs. Since the goal of this review was to identify the main components of mentoring programs and why they are relevant, the reviewed materials were divided into components and compared as to determine these components and categorize them. This categorization is presented later in this review.

#### **A. Literature search**

A comprehensive search of articles published from 2001 to 2020 was conducted to identify articles that analyzed mentoring programs and their respective evaluations. The search engines used in this research were Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, Wiley online library, and Science Direct. Results were searched in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French to provide a wider range of options in finding studies. The boolean operators applied included: “mentoring AND poverty,” “mentorship AND poverty,” “coaching AND poverty,” “mentoria AND pobreza,” “mentorat AND pauvreté.”

Certain articles were also added based on cross-references. The bibliographies of each material were

analyzed looking for relevant references for the purpose of this research. When aligned with the focus of this review, they were added to the list of included materials.

### **B. Selection of focus**

Throughout the preliminary research process a list of mentoring contexts was elaborated and filtered through based on the interests of Fundación Paraguaya. A subset of specific mentoring contexts such as poverty mentoring, household mentorship, gender-focused mentoring, etc., were therefore prioritized for a more thorough analysis. This subset guided the research process and determined the topics that were included and excluded from the review.

### **C. Systematic review**

This review comprises research focusing on farming mentoring, academic mentoring, informational mentoring, parental guidance, gender-focused mentoring, training, and well-being mentorship (see Figure 1). These categories were developed based on the

nature of the analyzed programs. Some studies were categorized under more than one of the aforementioned categories. For instance, if a program focused on business training for women, it would be categorized under *training* and *gender-focused mentoring*. After a thorough analysis of the articles included in this review, three main axes were determined regarding the intricacies of mentoring programs: the mentor-mentee relationship, the institutional aspect of a program, and the psychosocial component of mentoring (see Figure 2). Each of these categories are divided into sub-categories representing main program components found across studies: definitions of mentorship, program flexibility, interpersonal relationships, attitudinal aspects, reinforcement of social networks, institutional implications, and challenges to program effectiveness. All the articles included are related to work being done with disadvantaged groups as to align with the target population of the Poverty Stoplight. One literature review and one meta-analysis were also included.

**Figure 1:** Types of mentoring included and their specificities.

<b>Type of mentoring</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Specificities</b>
<b>Farming mentorship</b>	Impact of Farmer Mentorship Project on Farm Efficiency and Income in Rural Ghana (Martey et. al, 2015)	Agricultural value chain mentorship; capacity building; training
<b>Academic mentorship for disadvantaged groups</b>	Using Mentorship to Transition Black Males to Prosperity (Ransaw and Majors, 2016)	Mentoring at the school level; racial inclusion
	The Ocean in the School: Pacific Islander Students Transforming Their University: Pacific Islander Partnerships in Education (PIPE) (Bonus, 2020)	Mentoring at the university level; peer mentorship; collective mentorship; racial inequalities
	Integrating a Mentorship Component in Programming for Care and Support of AIDS-Orphaned and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the Suubi and Bridges Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ssewamala et. al, 2014)	Mentoring for orphans at the school level; psychosocial outcomes
	“It Gave Me Ways to Solve Problems and Ways to Talk to People”: Outcomes From a Combined Group and One-on-One Mentoring Program for Early Adolescent Girls (Deutsh et. al, 2016)	Mentoring at the school level; group mentoring
<b>Informational mentorship</b>	Integrating a Mentorship Component in Programming for Care and Support of AIDS-Orphaned and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the Suubi and Bridges Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ssewamala et. al, 2014)	Mentoring for orphans at the school level; psychosocial outcomes
<b>Parental guidance</b>	Creating opportunities through mentorship, parental involvement, and safe spaces (COMPASS) program: multi-country study protocol to protect girls from violence in humanitarian settings (Falb et. al, 2016)	Parental involvement; health-related mentoring; gender-based violence prevention; household mentoring
	Empowering vulnerable parents through a family	Parenting strategies;

	mentoring program (Ayton and Joss, 2016)	religious-based program; family involvement; goal-focused mentoring
	Families Disrupting the Cycle of Poverty: Coaching with an Intergenerational Lens (Babcock and Ruiz, 2016)	Intergenerational mobility mentoring; psychosocial outcomes; household mentoring
<b><i>Gender-focused mentorship</i></b>	Creating opportunities through mentorship, parental involvement, and safe spaces (COMPASS) program: multi-country study protocol to protect girls from violence in humanitarian settings (Falb et. al, 2016)	Parental involvement; health-related mentoring; gender-based violence prevention
	Mentorship as Catalyst for Improving Human Capital Formation of Women in Nigeria (Fapohunda, 2011)	Business expertise; capacity-building for women
	Empowering Families in Difficult Times: The Women's Economic Stability Initiative (Scheuler et. al, 2014)	Life coaching; vocational training; case management
<b><i>Training</i></b>	Impact of Farmer Mentorship Project on Farm Efficiency and Income in Rural Ghana (Martey et. al, 2015)	Agricultural value chain mentorship; capacity building; training
	Mentorship as Catalyst for Improving Human Capital Formation of Women in Nigeria (Fapohunda, 2011)	Business expertise; capacity-building for women
	'Bang for buck' in microfinance: Wellbeing mentorship or business education? (Gamble, 2018)	Business training; well-being mentoring "sensitization"
	The effectiveness of mentorship programme of Mogale city local municipality for small, medium and micro enterprises (Makhado, 2015)	Business and financial management training
	Efeitos na inclusão social percebidos pelos participantes num programa de mentoria: o caso do PENDULUM (Coelho, 2016)	Employability; mentoring for inclusion
	Empreendedorismo: Análise da política implementada no programa minha casa, minha vida (Borges, 2019)	Business management training

	BladeRunners et Café Picasso : Évaluation par étude de cas de deux programmes de formation des jeunes défavorisés en milieu de travail (Currie et. al., 2001)	Capacity-building and employability
	The returns to microenterprise support among the ultrapoor: a field experiment in postwar Uganda (Blattman, 2015)	Financial management training
	Empowering Families in Difficult Times: The Women's Economic Stability Initiative (Scheuler et. al, 2014)	Vocational training; capacity-building
	Mentoring Relationships From the Perspective of the Mentor (Allen, 2007)	Career-development; literature review
	Implementing Coaching and Support in Graduation Programmes: a case study of the Terintambwe programme in Burundi (Roelen et. al, 2019)	Coaching and graduation; household mentoring
<b>Well-being mentorship</b>	'Bang for buck' in microfinance: Wellbeing mentorship or business education? (Gamble, 2018)	Business training; well-being mentoring "sensitization"
	Families Disrupting the Cycle of Poverty: Coaching with an Intergenerational Lens (Babcock and Ruiz, 2016)	Intergenerational mobility mentoring; psychosocial outcomes
	Integrating a Mentorship Component in Programming for Care and Support of AIDS-Orphaned and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the Suubi and Bridges Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ssewamala et. al, 2014)	Mentoring for orphans at the school level; psychosocial outcomes

**Figure 2:** Identified axes and program components.

<b>The Mentor-Mentee Relationship</b>	<b>The Institutional Aspect</b>	<b>The Psychosocial Component</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Program flexibility</li> <li>•Interpersonal relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Definitions of mentorship</li> <li>•Program flexibility</li> <li>•Institutional implications</li> <li>•Challenges to program effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Attitudinal aspects</li> <li>•Reinforcement of social networks</li> </ul>

#### **IV. Limitations**

The scope of this literature review is limited mainly by time constraints. It was developed under a summer internship program throughout a 2-month period of time. The short timeline did not allow for a thorough and comprehensive literature review to be developed<sup>2</sup>. Rather, an overview of main program components was constructed based on the patterns found across studies.

Additionally, since 20 studies from different disciplines were included, no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding how relevant certain program components are or how effective specific strategies are.

#### **V. Results**

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, “poverty AND mentoring” brings up 156,000 results on Google Scholar alone.

#### **A. Definitions of mentorship**

Mentoring does not have a set definition programs can use when developing their philosophy and strategies. Many times programs develop their own concept of mentorship or they follow national or international definitions set by different institutions. The definition organizations apply reflects on how they view mentors and mentees, as well as the perspective they have on this relationship. Elements such as the power differentials between mentors and mentees, or hierarchical considerations between these two, can be reflected on how an organization defines the role of a mentee and that of the mentor. Therefore, this definition works as a framework and a guide that projects the intentionality,

vision, and schools of thought an organization follows.

When analyzing the studies included in this review, four definitions were found in four different studies. These will be deconstructed and compared under this section as to understand how program definitions of mentorship reflect the image and philosophy of institutions.

1. Mentorship as Catalyst for Improving Human Capital Formation of Women in Nigeria (Fapohunda, 2011)

- a. *Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The receiver of mentorship was traditionally referred to as a protégé or apprentice but with the institutionalization of mentoring the more neutral word "mentee" was invented and is widely used today. A mentorship is a*

*supportive relationship established between two individuals where knowledge, skills, and experience are shared.*

2. The Effects on Social Inclusion of a Mentoring Program from the Participants' Perceptions: the Case of Pendulum [authors' translation] (Coelho, 2016)

- a. *The goal of the project was to "apply a mentorship model as a strategy to facilitate the social inclusion and employability of vulnerable groups, such as gypsy communities, foreigners, youth, women, unemployed individuals, and aggressors" [authors' translation].*

3. Using Mentorship to Transition Black Males to Prosperity (Ransaw and Majors, 2016)

- a. *This term has evolved over the years, but the National Mentorship Partnership defines it as "a structure and trusting relationship*

*that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee”.*

4. The effectiveness of mentorship programme of Mogale city local municipality for small, medium and micro enterprises (Makhado, 2015)

- a. *Mentorship is a close, non-competitive, deeply personal relationship that evolves over time between two people. This relationship is formed and develops because both participants feel enriched through their association. The mentor is “a wise, experienced and trusted counsellor engaged in the active guidance and maturation of younger individuals” (Osborn,*

*Waeckerle & Perina, 1999:285).*

Fapohunda’s (2011) definition and the use of the terms “less experienced or less knowledgeable” for describing mentees reflect an emphasis on the role of mentors as superior to mentees. However, the fact that it mentions that “A mentorship is a supportive relationship established between two individuals where knowledge, skills, and experience are shared” seems to contradict such connotation, since sharing implies an exchange. It is also important to consider the word usage of *protege* and *mentee*, since the first one puts the mentor in a position of protector and the second one only implies that the individual is *being mentored*. This rationale has been applied throughout this paper, avoiding the use of the word *protege*.

In Coelho’s (2016) case, the definition is framed around the goals of the program. It is presented as a strategy that will potentially lead to social inclusion and employability for different groups of people. Mentoring does become a tool through which a program can

achieve its goals, and it is therefore defined under the specific model and objectives applied by the program.

Ransaw and Major (2016), on the other hand, follow the definition of a national institution. This definition presents mentors as sources of support for mentees, and guides in the mentoring process. They are seen as individuals who intend to do good and collaborate in the growth process of mentees. Thus, mentees are presented solely as recipients and are put in a rather passive role in the mentoring relationship.

Makhado (2015) uses a previously developed definition in which the focus is set on the relationship between mentor and mentee. This relationship is described as profound and personal, implying a deep involvement of both parts. The definition also assumes that both mentor and mentee are enriched throughout the mentoring process. Fapohunda's (2011) notion of mentors as "knowledgeable" is also present under this concept, expressing that mentors are "wise." However, in Fapohunda's (2011) case the use of the word "more" and "less" has a connotation of hierarchical power that the

word "wise" lacks. When saying that a mentor is "wise" this is an inherent value to the individual and it does not necessarily imply that the mentee is not wise as well. Trust also plays a key role since mentors are described as "trusted counselors" that guide mentees throughout the process.

While some organizations and authors included in this review describe mentorship under the lines of the mentor-mentee relationship, others define it as a tool aimed at specific program goals such as social inclusion in Coelho's (2016) case. Institutions might choose to develop their own definitions based on their specific philosophies and perspectives, or they might apply concepts developed by other institutions or organizations. The terms used in defining mentoring portray the elements an organization considers relevant in the process as well as how it views the role of mentors and mentees. Definitions are based on what organizations *expect* a mentoring process to be, such as in Ransaw's and Major's (2016) case in which mentors are expected to be caring and supportive, traits that are not

necessarily tied to the professional profile of mentors but to their personal identity.

Defining mentorship is not an easy task for organizations. In the process of doing so, several questions will arise, such as how the institution views mentors and mentees and if this is reflected on the work they do or expect to do. When asking these questions it is important to keep in mind what would be the most accurate perspective depending on the area they work on (such as poverty, education, health, etc) and the communities they interact with both on the mentors' and mentees' sides.

### **B. Program flexibility**

The structuring process of a mentoring program is key to develop effective strategies that would yield tangible results in the lives of mentees. Different institutions apply either standardized or individualized frameworks when mentoring participants. The flexibility provided through the latter allows mentors to tailor a program around participants' needs, creating a space for innovation, improvisation, and change (Ayston and Joss, 2016; Bonus, 2020; Falb et. al, 2016). Standardization, on the other

side, constrains mentors by binding them to follow an already established structure in which participants' suggestions cannot be fully adopted. When mentees are not able to participate in the development of the program as it is being applied, developing a sense of empowerment and self-satisfaction might become even more challenging. This program strategy also makes hierarchical differentiation in the mentor-mentee relationship more prominent and discernible since the mentor can be seen as a figure of authority rather than as an equal. When mentors and mentees can collaborate and cooperate throughout the program, needs can be better responded to and the interpersonal bond between them is also enhanced. Mentoring programs must be seen, therefore, as "a site of process rather than thinking of it as a finished product" (Bonus, 2020).

Both institutions and mentors must accommodate needs and be able to adjust the program as it is being developed. Ayston and Joss (2016) reported on the evaluation of the Creating Opportunities and Casting Hope (COACH) program. This is a family mentoring program for

vulnerable parents aimed at addressing generational poverty by focusing on housing, employment opportunities, health, finances and social support (Ayston and Joss, 2). Mentors work as a support for parents to identify their main needs and work towards improving their life conditions. COACH applies a goal-focused mentoring approach, having participants identify two or three goals from a list of 10 and allowing them to create strategies with their mentor to achieve them (ibid, 3). In the study, the authors establish program flexibility as a crucial factor in the effectiveness of the program. The development of the program is based on the path each parent decides to take: “The focus of support and guidance offered by the COACH mentors was dependent on the parent. As parents articulated their chosen life goals, the COACH staff attempted to match the parent and mentor by life experience and skills” (ibid, 4). Therefore, not only participants were able to determine and structure the priorities in the mentoring process but also their input was used as a foundation for matching them with a mentor.

Since participants face different challenges and experiences, flexibility is effective because it provides the space for addressing participants’ needs on an individual basis. Ayston and Joss (2016, 7) referred to this program component writing that: “This flexibility is one of the strengths of the COACH program, as the mentors are able to adapt to the needs and concerns of the family as opposed to being dictated by a set mentoring curriculum or course” . Under this approach, the intricacies and specificities of the lives of participants can be adopted by the program as the foundation for creating adequate strategies in the mentoring process.

Flexibility, however, is limited by the resources and philosophy established by the organization. Babcock and Ruiz (2016) write about the Adult-Focused Mobility Mentoring program, through which participants work with a mobility mentor to plan the steps towards economic independence. Similarly to the COACH program, self-assessment plays a key role in the Mobility Mentoring process. Participants identify meaningful goals across a myriad of domains and

work with mentors to develop feasible strategies to accomplish them. There are four main components to this program: self-assessment, goalsetting and outcomes measurement, coaching, and incentives. The program “provides a roadmap for self-assessment with concrete benchmarks” (ibid, 25). In their research, these authors also report on the outcomes and development of the Family-Focused Mobility Mentoring, which follows the same line of work of the AFDM program. When discussing this program, Babcock and Ruiz (ibid, 22) write that it is founded on the assumption that every member of the family is looking to “live in a safe, nurturing, predictable, and organized environment with the love and support of the family”. Therefore, while the program is flexible in that mentees are able to develop their own program structure through a goals-setting approach, the philosophy and basis of the program are still established by the organization. The resources and services that the institution is able to provide are also key elements in how the program is structured. Thus, through program flexibility participants are offered a range

of services founded on an already established philosophy they can factor in when creating strategies and determining the goals they would like to work on with their mentors.

Relationship-building also creates an opportunity for mentors to innovate and create new ways of collaborating in the growth process of their mentees. Coelho (2016) conducted research on the Models of Mentoring for Inclusion and Employment (MOMIE) and the Mentoring for Excluded Groups and Networks (MEGN) programs, both multicountry programs focusing on social inclusion of disadvantaged populations and their employability. In the study, Coelho writes on the importance of interpersonal bonds between mentors and mentees and how these can lead to new ways of growing together outside the professional sphere. The potential of this type of bonds will be further explored in the next section.

### **C. Interpersonal relationships**

Interpersonal relationships have a crucial role in the development of a mentoring program. Not only the one built between a mentor and a mentee but also

their respective relationships with individuals external to that bond, such as the organization per se or the family of the participant. This is one of the key components found across studies: the interpersonal bonds created throughout the mentoring process and how these influence program outcomes. While mentors and their psychosocial skills have a central role in how the mentoring relationship will develop, mentee attitudes and willingness are essential to program success. Mentors work as support agents who must be willing to learn from mentees and get to know them. Mentees, on the other hand, must be open to learning, participating, and listening to suggestions. Both mentors and mentees, when interacting, engage in a process in which reciprocity, mutuality, and open communication are crucial for them to achieve their goals, whatever these are (Kram, 1985; Eby et. al, 2013; Ssewamala et. al, 2014). The subjective nature of this component means its intricacies and complexities must be continuously evaluated and taken into account when developing a program. In other words, the quality of the relationships developed

throughout this process as well as the quality of already established bonds may affect positively or negatively the results of mentorship programs.

### **1. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee**

Mentors might not only become a source of support within the professional sphere that ties them to their mentees, but also they work as emotional support for participants, helping them cope with daily struggle and the challenges rooted in economic progress. Currie et. al (2001) reported on the results and strategies applied by the Blade Runners and Café Picasso programs. The first one is a mentoring program aimed at training and creating employment opportunities for youth in street situations. The organization pays a wage subsidy to companies in the construction sector in Canada for these to hire program participants. The latter focuses on training at-risk youth in the food sector. The organization is a restaurant in which both a cuisine and a dining training program take place. Café Picasso also has a mentoring component: mentors work as

guides throughout the training process and try to ensure participants' employability.

When discussing these programs, the authors found that mentors developed strong emotional connections with their mentees (ibid, 56). They cite an instance in which a Blade Runner participant disappeared for three days after pay day. The mentor went looking for him, found him, communicated with the supervisor, and made sure the mentee went back to work (ibid). This level of involvement was also present in the COACH program, discussed by Ayton and Joss (2016). Such engagement shows the commitment of mentors in their relationship with mentees, not only following the tasks listed on their job descriptions but also creating new paths for helping their mentees evolve in a holistic manner. However, the question as to what level of involvement is healthy and optimal for both mentor and mentee individually remains unanswered. It is clear that mentees are greatly benefitted by having mentors get personally involved in the mentoring experience, yet there is a lack of research on the perspective of the

mentor in this regard. The level of support received by mentees is also a determinant of how involved mentors can be with their mentees and will be further discussed in section F.

As the emotional tie is developed, trust and communication are enhanced in the mentee-mentor relationship. In an interdisciplinary meta-analysis, Eby et. al (2013, 459) cite that as the emotional bond between mentor and mentee strengthens, "self-disclosure increases and trust is built, which leads the protégé to report higher relationship quality." Here, interaction frequency comes into place as an important element in the development of this trust. The more frequent and regular interactions are, the more space for relationship-building there is (ibid, 455). This consistency in interaction leads mentees to feel well-supported, as they can perceive the mentor's commitment and engagement to their mentoring process. Interaction frequency and the construction of a trusting relationship allows for both mentor and mentee to get to know each other, feel comfortable with one another, and establish better lines of

communication. However, compatibility from an attitudinal and psychosocial perspective might determine if the relationship will evolve or if the process would be hampered by differences and disagreements between mentors and mentees.

The matching process of a mentoring program determines the potential for success for each pair or group of mentors and mentees. Eby et. al (2013, 449) report that deep-level similarities between mentors and mentees are strongly correlated with a sense of psychosocial support and relationship quality. Allen (2007, 133), who conducted a literature review on formal mentoring, also found that mentors were able to provide more support to mentees they perceived as similar to themselves. This could be connected to the fact that similarities in this type of relationships enable individuals to be further involved in the relationship and therefore can collaborate and cooperate through good communication and a sense of comfort when interacting with each other. Thus, when matching individuals, organizations must be mindful of the significance of

having mentors and mentees get along as they work on improving the life conditions of the latter. The goal must be to connect individuals who would be able to create a bond that facilitates rather than hinders the mentoring process.

Mutuality and reciprocity have also been identified as important elements in the development of a mentoring program. Both elements are closely tied to the sense of satisfaction the mentor and the mentee feel throughout the relationship (Ssewamala et. al, 13). When both perceive there is room for growing together and learning by interacting with each other—meaning there is compatibility between them—the possibilities of creating a reciprocal relationship of mutual support and understanding increase. Eby et. al (2013, 459) found that interaction frequency, instrumental support, psychosocial support, and relationship quality build the foundations for developing reciprocity between a mentor and a mentee. Several studies have also used participants' sense of satisfaction and mutuality as signs of effectiveness in mentoring programs. When mentees express willingness to

mentor others after having gone through a mentoring process, this is considered as a sign of success (Allen, 126). This shows the long-term results of mentoring processes and relationships.

Additionally, when participants are able to relate to their mentors it might be easier for them to connect and feel comfortable to share. This means that when mentors are people from their own community or share similar life experiences with their mentees, a foundation is already established for them to start the process departing from a common ground knowing there is a certain familiarity between them. Bonus (2020) writes on the outcomes, strategies and history of the Pacific Islander Partnerships in Education (PIPE) program. This is a university-level collective mentoring program for Pacific Islander students. It mostly focuses on helping students from this racial and ethnic group strive through the challenges presented by racial inequalities and racism at their university. It provides them with a support structure in which students mentor students and are guided by a professor. The author writes that the fact that

mentees can relate to their mentors and share a cultural background contributes to the establishment of a good dynamic between them. Living through similar systems of inequality and sharing common struggles creates a sense of understanding that most likely could not be developed if this component were missing.

## **2. Exogenous relationships to the mentoring process**

While the interpersonal bonds between mentors and mentees are central to how programs will develop, the relationships both mentors and mentees have outside this bond affect the extent to which they can get involved in the mentoring process. Babcock and Ruiz (2016), when describing the model applied in the Mobility Mentoring program, mention three main axes when framing the mentoring process: the outcomes level, the inner self, and the family level. The latter “consists of interpersonal communication, alignment, and relationships” (ibid, 6). They present these program dimensions as targets for interventions that must be addressed

concurrently in order to achieve a holistic outcome at the individual, family, and community level. When referring to interpersonal relationships, family bonds, according to the authors, are key for participants to be motivated: “The bonds between family members create some of the strongest motivation for individuals...the deep biological and social bonds between family members create an impetus for individuals to do things they simply wouldn’t do otherwise” (ibid, 14).

At the same time, Coelho (2016, 55) writes that when programs are successful participants see improvements in their family dynamics. In turn, they are better prepared for ameliorating their life conditions as their families support them in the process and their relationships are improved. Considering Babcock and Ruiz’s perspective as well as Coelho’s input, there is a difference in how programs view family bonds with regard to the mentoring process. The first sees family relationships as endogenous to the process since they specify that there must be interventions taking place at the family level. The latter, on the other hand, portrays mentoring

effects on family dynamics as “collateral,” as the author writes, to the development of the program. This means that family dynamics are not being intervened by the program and, therefore, will develop positively or negatively depending on the same lines of communication and conflict resolution techniques of the culture of each participant’s family. Thus, the philosophy of a mentoring program defines the extent to which the environment the participant lives in is touched upon and the impact level of each mentoring process.

The frameworks applied by the organization and the theoretical approach of a mentoring program are then key to how interpersonal relationships are factored into the mentoring process. As this pertains to the institutional aspect of program development, this topic will be further discussed in section F.

#### **D. Attitudinal aspects**

While studies mainly focus on how program components and strategies are relevant to the outcomes of mentoring processes, Eby et. al (2008) found that results might depend on mentee attitudes.

“Interestingly, our results suggest that mentoring is more strongly related to protégé attitudes than to behavior, health, and career outcomes. It may be that attitudes are more amenable to change than are outcomes that are more contextually-dependent or more influenced by stable person variables” (ibid, 7). They mention that mentees are constantly influenced by peer pressure, their personal stories, parental role modeling, and other factors that a mentoring relationship might not be able to address or have substantial impact on (ibid). If mentees present attitudes that make the mentoring process difficult, the outcomes of the program will be unavoidably affected and might lead to unsuccessful outcomes.

When analyzing the Café Picasso program, Currie et. al (2001) mention that when interaction frequency is low, the impact of participant attitudes becomes even more influential in the mentoring process. For the authors, the Blade Runners program has a high frequency rate, meeting several times a week, and Café Picasso has a (comparatively) low meeting frequency rate with participants

and mentors meeting once a week. Mentors and mentees used this space to talk about their progress and adjust their strategies. This means they are not able to get to know each other deeply and mentors cannot address participant issues in such a consistent manner as in programs with higher interaction frequency. The attitudinal aspect of mentoring relationships is one that presents a challenge for organizations since it is a component that cannot be completely addressed as there are several layers mentors do not have access to in participants’ lives.

#### **E. Reinforcement of social networks**

The environment mentees live in and the social capital they own play a key role in how much access to resources and opportunities they may have outside the network provided by the program (Blattman, 2015; Ssewala, 2014; Gamble, 2018; Babcock and Ruiz, 2016; Scheduler et. al., 2014). From the family level to the community level, organizations work on different aspects of network-building for participants. These not only offer tangible

opportunities but also create an important source of support for them. The quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee, as discussed above, affects the level of involvement a mentor can have in intervening or not in a participant's social network, although this is also dependent on the nature of the program. If a program engages solely with individuals, or if it addresses the family as a whole or even the community, a mentor's capacity to work on helping a participant build or reinforce their social network varies.

Family relationships are seen as central and highly influential to program development since they are closely connected to how the participant feels and engages with the mentoring process. Reinforcing this social network could catalyze improvements in the mentoring relationship and lead to program effectiveness if the other components are also well-developed. Ssewala et al. (2014, 11) write that it is important to help build stronger communication skills between family members and the participant. Gamble (2018) reports on the outcomes of a micro-finance program for women that combines well-being mentoring and

business training. In well-being mentoring mentor and mentee talk about and address family relations throughout the process (ibid, 7). This was positively associated with program retention. This approach is also applied by the Mobility Mentoring program Babcock and Ruiz (2016) refer to. When acknowledging the role of family relations in the life of mentees and in the development of the mentoring program, organizations are able to develop more effective strategies towards the creation of long-term sustainable outcomes in participants' life conditions.

The community level is also key in terms of social network reinforcement as a program component. Gamble (2018) mentions that community development is one of the strategies applied by the microfinance mentoring program. They recruit mentors from the community who participants can relate to and have a certain social capital in the community. Additionally, Scheuler et. al (2014) write about the Women's Economic Stability Initiative, a program for single women with children that offers vocational training/educational attainment, financial

assistance for reliable childcare, transportation, housing, and life coaching applying an empowerment approach. When referring to the work mentors and mentees do on improving family relationships for the latter, they write that “[h]aving a stronger support network outside initiative staff may have helped some women move on to employment in their new fields rather than choosing to go on in school” (ibid, 1). Therefore, involving family members in the process of addressing a family as a whole has tangible benefits to the development of the program.

Developing social capital is important for participants and mentors to have a sense of inclusion and involvement. Both Gamble (2018) and Bonus (2020) write that building social networks and incentivizing participation in the community could potentially lead participants to feel included and that they belong. Similarly, Ssewamala et. al (2014) mention that by developing bonds participants can create a support system. This could represent an opportunity for finding support in a safe space where

individuals are going through similar processes.

Although there is not much research on mentors’ perspectives on the mentoring process (Allen, 2007) there is a certain level of understanding on their need for support throughout this process. Currie et. al (2001) write that the COACH program offers mentors the opportunity to meet at an annual conference every year in which they connect, share their work experiences, and plan program activities (61). The organization expects mentors to develop bonds and build a network through this experience, providing spaces for networking. This allows them to exchange knowledge and hear about the positives and the struggles of mentoring an individual. Mentors have the opportunity to feel supported by a structure of individuals who share an experience with them, which can cause them to feel related to others and understood.

#### **F. Institutional implications**

The institutional aspect of mentoring programs is highly influential in how the other components would

develop and be applied. The relationship between mentors and the institution they work for and the terms this professional bond is established upon determine the level of motivation of mentors and the program's capability to yield positive results. Financial issues as well as program structure influence the mentoring process in a direct manner. They determine the wages, resources, and services that the organization is able to provide. Institutions must acknowledge the implications of being a mentor as much as they consider the burden mentees have and had to face in their lives and throughout the mentoring process.

Feeling supported is one of the key elements for mentors to be able to work efficiently and effectively. Currie et. al. (2001, 66) write that "an important advantage is the moral support that mentors receive from the organization. Considering the intensity of mentoring as a job and the issues they help resolve, mentors carry a heavy responsibility [author's translation]." The Blade Runners program ensures mentors are well-supported since under their

philosophy they understand the responsibilities of being a mentor and how this could lead to professional burnout. Throughout the program the organization provides spaces for mentors to release stress and develop sources of support they can channel their frustrations through. Networking, leadership structure, training, and vacations are some of the areas this program focuses on in order to tangibly acknowledge and compensate the role of mentors in the organization and the weight of their responsibilities.

While networking has already been discussed in section 5.5., the other areas must be further discussed under this section. Currie et. al. (2001, 65) explain that the Blade Runners program has a triple direction structure in which mentors, staff, and government agents are in charge of the organization and share leadership responsibilities. The fact that they are not under a strong vertical hierarchical structure might lead mentors to feel better included in the organization and collaborate in adjusting the program not only to participants' needs but also theirs. This ensures that both sides of the

mentoring relationship are being evaluated and constantly analyzed as mentors have more decision-making power than in programs where the hierarchy is more rigid.

Training plays a crucial role in program development. When mentors are well-trained and have the necessary knowledge for engaging in a mentoring relationship they will feel better prepared, have more confidence, and establish a solid base for starting this process. Roelen et. al. (2019, 4) write about the Terintambwe program, a graduation program that provides income support, asset transfers, access to saving facilities, skills training and coaching to participants. The authors not only report on the program outcomes for participants but also on mentors' perceptions of program development and organizational strategies. These expressed concern on the quality and length of training programs: "senior programme staff voiced some concerns regarding the quality of support that CDAs can provide on the basis of that training and suggested that more ongoing training is needed" (ibid, 7). In fact, mentors developed their own

training program since they realized the one provided by the organization was not sufficient. " One CDA explained that a group of CDAs had started their own SILC in order to help each other and become fully proficient in their full functioning as they felt that they did not receive enough information and skills through the training that was provided by Concern" (ibid, 13). Therefore, mentors were personally motivated to improve their knowledge, yet the organization was not able to provide the space for doing so effectively. On the other hand, the Blade Runners program ensures that mentors are well-prepared and have several opportunities to grow professionally (Currie et. al., 66). The level of satisfaction and sense of motivation mentors develop is tightly related to the training process, since throughout it the organization demonstrates how invested it is, the resources it offers to mentors, and the level of engagement it has as an institution. It is one of the main components organizations are able to establish a relationship with mentors through.

An organizations' capability to establish a good-quality relationship with mentors is strongly connected to the financial aspect of the institution. While Roelen et. al. (2019, 8) report that mentors in the Terintambwe program expressed concerns regarding low wages, Currie et. al. (2001, 66) write on the importance of vacations for mentors, implying that Blade Runners is able to offer mentors more stable economic conditions to mentors than in the first case. Low wages lead to mentor turnover, since these are forced to find a new job and therefore are not able to continue mentoring (Roelen et. al., 8). This causes constant changes in the human capital structure of the organization, which has negative results on program outcomes. Currie et. al. (2001, 57) write that changes in staff during program development must be closely monitored, since they create the need for rebuilding trust between mentors and participants, as well as going through an adjustment process with new staff members.

Contrastingly, the Blade Runners program ensures that mentors can take a recess and have the time to decompress

when needed as to deal with professional stress and avoid burnout. The conditions offered by the Terintambwe program and the Blade Runners program are therefore substantially different, and this might be connected to institutional budget. This leads to the question of how effective mentoring programs can be when financial resources are limited, a topic that requires further research and that escapes the scope of this review.

#### **G. Challenges to program effectiveness**

Program effectiveness depends on a variety of factors that many times are not under the area of influence of mentors or organizations. Mentors might not be able to intervene or help participants in managing their family dynamics, nor could they shape a participant's attitude towards the mentoring process if this one is not willing to cooperate. Issues like these usually escape the scope of mentoring programs, and yet they are highly influential throughout the process. These factors must be taken into consideration and kept in mind when developing a mentoring program even if

they cannot be directly or effectively addressed by the organization.

Compatibility issues are one of the main reasons that lead mentees to leave mentoring programs or to not be as engaged as possible in the process. Currie et. al (2001), Fapohunda (2011), and Bonus (2020) write that disagreements and conflicts between mentors and participants might arise. These might not be unavoidable since they are connected to psycho social elements rooted in human relationships. However, organizations can create strategies on how to proceed when these types of issues arise as an effort to ameliorate conflicts and look for healthy solutions for both mentors and mentees. The matching process is one of the key elements in regard to this challenge, since a thorough understanding of mentor and mentee personalities and expectations could facilitate the development of better matching strategies.

Mentee attitudes are also key to program effectiveness. Eby et. al (2008) write that some results might lead to the conclusion that program effectiveness depends on mentee attitudes and their

level of engagement. This is closely connected to the lives participants are exposed to while being involved in the mentoring process. Household tensions and personal issues are some factors that hamper progress, according to Roelen et. al. (2016). For instance, the authors mention that when the husband of a program participant does not agree with her financial decisions tensions arise, and they become a difficulty in the development of the program (ibid, 20). Therefore, creating strong and solid support structures for participants is key for them to be able to manage all the issues they might be facing on a daily basis.

The time and energy mentees must invest in the mentoring process could lead to them leaving the program if they are not able to see progress as they expect it. Babcock and Ruiz (2016, 32) write that “Although currently participant retention remains high, (only three families exited and all for reasons of their control), it can be imagined that the time investment might serve as an obstacle to consistent family participation.” Additionally, Allen (2007, 135) adds that “The most

frequently mentioned factor by participants was that mentoring could be a major drain on time.” Organizations must be therefore careful in not demanding participants more than they are able to invest in the program, especially if the organization’s capacity to support participants (because of its structure or budget) is not sufficient for retaining them.

Finally, organizations that lead mentoring programs cannot necessarily ensure the sustainability of their work once a program ends. Coelho (2016, 51) writes that the changes that take place during the mentoring program might not be long-lasting. A program participant, for instance, expressed that he did not feel supported and “had no one to talk to”, which meant he was not able to develop a support structure once the program ended. While this is one case and definite conclusions cannot be drawn from it, it is clear that further research is needed regarding participants’ progress after the mentoring process.

## **VI. Discussion**

Seven different components were identified and analyzed throughout this literature review. While they are all relevant individually, their value lies in their interconnectedness. The mentor-mentee relationship, the institutional aspect of mentoring programs, and their psychosocial component shed light on the many complexities and subjectivities that exist in the process of creating an effective and long-lasting program. The social interactions that take place throughout a mentoring process and the tangible features of such processes such as infrastructure, budget, organization structure, etc., must be factored in when thinking about developing a mentoring program. The first poses an important challenge for organizations since relationships are subjective and cannot happen in fabricated, controlled environments. They develop within the frameworks the organization establishes yet several elements in that process are out of the organization’s control. However, the steps and models applied by the organizations—meaning who the program is targeted to, if they focus only

on the participant or also on their family and social networks, if they analyze a participant's needs based on previously made assumptions or if they identify them with mentees throughout the mentoring process, etc.–can potentially create a basis for mentors and mentees to be able to address either verbally or tangibly the issues that might hamper a participant's process towards economic progress.

An effective mentoring process comprises and takes into account the needs of participants without imposing a specific view on a) what these needs are (meaning that participants must have the space to express what these needs are, what their priorities are in terms of addressing them, and how these needs affect their livelihoods) and b) how specifically these needs would be responded to (participants must be able to participate in the process of creating and building the strategies they would apply to address their needs). These elements play a key role in constructing the notion of mentee empowerment many programs aim to develop. By giving participants the opportunity to state their own needs and expectations the process becomes a

*collaboration* rather than a relationship in which the mentor becomes a figure to follow and listen to without reciprocity.

While mentoring relationships develop the institutional aspect becomes highly influential in how these would evolve. Without institutional support mentors cannot completely focus on their professional roles and mentees might not be provided with the necessary resources and spaces for constructing a strong foundation for improving their life conditions. This not only includes institutional budget, organization hierarchy, and the structure of programs, but also the philosophical aspect and the way an organization views the mentoring process affects program outcomes. If an organization views the mentor-mentee relationship in a hierarchical manner, for instance, meaning that they consider the mentor to be *superior* or in a higher position than mentees, this would be reflected in how the program develops and how the mentoring relationship would take place. This notion might be reflected in how participants perceive mentors, which in turn could translate

into an unequal power dynamic within the relationship.

It is also important to consider that power dynamics must be acknowledged and addressed throughout the mentoring process, as Bonus (2020) writes. Having a constant awareness of the systems of power both mentors and mentees are involved in could lead to the creation of more organic, insightful, consistent, and trusting relationships. This is crucial since interpersonal bonds are a critical component of the mentoring process, as previously viewed in this paper.

Following the institutional aspect of mentoring programs, the relationship between mentors and the organization must be taken care of in order for the first to be able to completely focus on the mentoring process. Organizations must support mentors and ensure they have the resources to stay motivated and have the spaces to voice out their concerns and needs. Programs cannot be fully focused on responding to mentees without acknowledging the level of responsibility that lies on mentors and how this may affect a participant's path toward life improvement. The type of support that

mentors might require can be seen through two specific axes: organizational activities and financial stability. The first includes elements such as creating spaces for mentors to connect, having planned meetings during the week, and constructing a structure that recognizes and appreciates the work of mentors. The second refers to the compensation mentors receive for their work. As previously mentioned, mentors must be motivated and cannot be so if their salaries are low or if they do not have periods of rest, as Currie et. al. (2001, 66) mention. When having financial stability, mentors can better collaborate in the growth process of mentees.

Closely tied to the institutional aspect, reinforcing social networks is an essential strategy in the mentoring process. A participant's life is constantly affected by the environment they are surrounded by. Therefore, at the same time they are being mentored participants are exposed to family and community dynamics that might or might not be conducive to the mentoring process. When programs target not only participants but also acknowledge the role

of the groups they belong to (such as families or communities) they are more likely to construct support systems that might lead to the creation of long-lasting improvements.

When developing programs organizations have certain expectations on mentors' profiles. They expect mentors to have certain characteristics in order to fit into the organizations' goals and expected results. Considering the components identified throughout this review, an ideal mentors is a) willing to develop a trusting relationship with mentees and cherish that trust; b) engaged in the mentoring process as they must be able to recognize issues and strengths in the mentoring relationship; c) committed with the goals of mentoring programs and the growth process of participants; d) emotionally intelligent, considering the emotional burden mentoring processes can take on mentors and the fact that mentees might need mentors to support them emotionally; e) good in communicating both with mentees and their supervisors; f) empathetic, in order to create strong connections with mentees and be able to

understand their life conditions and needs; g) good in conflict resolution since various issues may arise throughout the mentoring process they must be prepared to manage in a healthy and effective manner, even when these issues might involve themselves. These characteristics comprise some of the key elements organizations must take into account when building the profile of mentors and throughout their hiring processes.

The results of this review reflect the need for a more solid understanding of mentoring programs as sensible endeavors where the many intricacies of issues such as poverty, gender discrimination, unemployment, domestic violence, psychological issues, attitudinal difficulties, etc., are displayed and reflected.

The challenge in better understanding best strategies and practices in mentoring programs is that parallel interventions cannot be isolated from the mentoring component, which implies that the assumed results of mentoring processes are actually the results of a combination of interventions

and must be taken as such. Further research is needed regarding how both mentors and mentees view a specific mentoring process and how programs can better address a participant's needs in a sustainable manner.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Throughout this literature review it was possible to identify the main components of mentoring programs and how they are relevant to the construction of effective strategies when mentoring individuals. These findings demonstrate how different aspects of a mentoring program are co-influenced and determine the level of impact a program can have on participants' lives. Understanding the main characteristics of an effective program, such as program flexibility, reinforcement of social networks, institutional support, organizational structure, program philosophy, attitudinal intricacies, and high quality interpersonal relationships could contribute to the construction of long-lasting effects in participants' lives.

The many challenges posed by the complexities of mentoring processes tied to the fact that organizations and mentors might have no influence on the environment participants live in nor on their personal experiences reflect a need for programs to thoroughly analyze participants' issues and collaborate with mentees to construct strategies for effectively responding to their needs.

However, this review is not exhaustive because of its previously mentioned limitations. It must be considered as an overview of the patterns found across the included studies and not as a comprehensive research on the main components of programs.

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