



New Trendsⁱⁿ
Qualitative
Research



VOLUME 20 | N° 4

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.36367/ntqr.20.4.2024.e992>

Mary Mulenga-Wincierz

Submission date: March, 2024

Review date: August, 2024

Publication date: November, 2024

A GROUNDED THEORY OF EXPERIENCING AND PERCEIVING YOUTH MENTORING AS A PROCESS OF “MIXED EMOTIONS”

ABSTRACT

Many youths from disadvantaged backgrounds globally lack positive role models and meaningful relationships with supportive adults within their families and communities. Youths' involvement in relationships with caring adults, such as mentors, promotes their well-being. However, little is known about youth mentoring relationships in some parts of the world, particularly Zambia. This constructivist grounded theory study aimed to develop a substantive theory that explains the experiences and perceptions of mentors and mentees in Zambia. The sample included mentors and mentees who had been in relationships for at least one year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five mentors aged 31 to 68 and four mentees aged 18 to 20. The inductive, iterative and constant comparative method guided the coding, memoing, and theoretical sampling processes and led to the co-construction of four categories. This paper focuses on one category: “Experiencing and perceiving mentorship as a process of ‘mixed feelings’”. Mentees felt mentoring supported their emotional and psychological well-being, which enhanced their resilience and was perceived as a way of surviving. Mentors expressed that mentoring enabled them to support youths beyond their professional roles and enhanced their self-awareness, knowledge and reputation, which increased their self-worth and confidence and the desire to continue changing youths' lives. Challenges included meeting time issues, ineffective communication, and confusion in differentiating between the mentor's professional and mentoring roles, which caused difficulty in mentor-mentee interactions. They felt overwhelmed by their mentees' difficult circumstances and worked with limited resources. They also felt unrecognised and unsupported. Findings suggest priority issues and potential logical solutions, such as preliminary and ongoing mentor training, recognising and supporting youth mentoring, and providing essential primary resources to disadvantaged youths in Zambia to enable effective mentoring.

KEYWORDS:

Mentoring; Disadvantaged youth; Youth-adult relationships; Grounded theory; Zambia.

1. Introduction

This study's setting is Zambia, Africa; according to Census 2022, it has a population of 19.6 million people, with 60% living in poverty (Zambia Statistics Agency, n.d.) Zambia has a youthful population, half under 18 (Population Council and UNFPA [PC and UNFPA], 2018). Most Zambian youths have limited resources and live in households characterised by poverty, unemployment, and low income (UNICEF, 2013), and experience sexual, drug and alcohol abuse, sickness and ill-health, and lack of access to school opportunities (GRZ/UNICEF Zambia, 2023; Merrill et al., 2023), with poor education outcomes (PC & UNFPA, 2018). The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS leads to a wide range of traumas, including close family members' sickness and death (Murray et al., 2020; Neese et al., 2013). As a consequence of such traumas, in Zambia, orphaned or abandoned children may live with extended family but are not supported by the government (Chama, 2008; Mulenga, 2018) as in the foster-care system in the USA (Sapiro & Ward, 2020). Therefore, because many families struggle financially, sometimes children are abandoned and left to live in child-headed households (Chama, 2008). All these challenges are contributing factors to the emotional and psychological challenges most Zambian youths experience, including depression, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic disorder, and emotional and behavioural problems (Jörns-Presentati et al., 2021). Thus, mentorship is used as a strategy to improve the psychosocial well-being of youths (Murray et al., 2020).

Youth mentoring (YM) seems scarce and informal in Africa (Ddiba, 2013) and under-researched (Kadzomba, 2015). The little research in Zambia appears to be focused on workplace mentorship within health and higher education for improved service delivery and career development (Boyd et al., 2022; Mubanga et al., 2023; Mutale, 2014; Mutale et al., 2023). Rare studies on YM are focused on HIV-AIDS education and support, and entrepreneurship (Merrill et al., 2023; Mwamba et al., 2021). Limited research on YM in contexts outside the Global North (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Stebbins, 2006; Kadzomba, 2015) presents a biased view. The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory (CGT) study was to obtain a deeper understanding of the current mentoring practices in Zambia. The research question was: What experiences and perceptions do mentors and mentees associate with YMRs in Zambia? Next, I describe how I conducted my research.

2. Methodology

My ontological and epistemological positions are rooted in social constructivism; I value participants' voices and exercise reflexivity (Charmaz, 2008; 2014). Therefore, I adopted a flexible qualitative research design to explore and interpret the experiences and perceptions of mentors and mentees in YMRs in Zambia (Robson, 2002). Accordingly, GT, using its central principles of iterative data collection parallel to constant comparative analysis, was an appropriate methodology for conducting this study (Charmaz, 2014). Pitney and Ehlers (2004) acknowledge that grounded theory (GT) is a systematic approach to analysing qualitative data to generate explanations that further understand social and psychological phenomena, such as YM.

Thus, due to the limited theory on YM in Zambia and the scarcity of contextual theoretical foundations, this study aimed to attain new insights into the phenomenon and develop a theory that could be referred to (Charmaz, 2014). Hence, using CGT, I developed a theory of how mentors and mentees experience and perceive YM as a “mixed feelings” process.

2.1 Participants and Recruitment

Participants were purposefully selected based on availability and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2007). Nine participants in informal mentoring relationships (MR/s) were interviewed. Sampling criteria included an adult and a youth who lived in Lusaka or on the Copperbelt and were in an MR for at least one year, and disadvantaged youths needed to be 15 - 20 years old. In early 2021, I identified 15 Zambian-based organisations showing YM involvement on Facebook, but only one responded, and the contact number provided was inactive. I then contacted eight acquaintances via social media who seemed connected to YM through their work. Only one confirmed involvement in YMR with a youth. I then realised that I was dealing with a hard-to-reach population. I resorted to recruiting through personal contact and word-of-mouth. I recruited 10 participants: seven from Lusaka, one from Chingola (Copperbelt) and two from Kabwe. Phase 1 Interviews were conducted in September 2021.

During interviews, I encountered challenges with four of the seven participants in Lusaka. One participant, a mentor, failed to introduce me to his mentee and stopped communicating, so this pair were never interviewed. Also, I discovered that one of the mentees was not a youth as purported by his mentor but an adult, so the interview was stopped immediately. The mentor’s interview data of this pair was also excluded.

Hence, three pairs were successfully interviewed in the 1st phase (see Figure 1). As in Table 1, pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity; they consist of a name followed by either a letter M (male) or F (female), and a term mentor or mentee at the end to separate mentors from mentees. Table 1 shows the mentoring pairs, the number of years the participants had been in the relationships, and the towns where they lived. No participants were compensated.

Table 1. Relationship pairs

Mentor	Mentee	Relationship duration in years	Location
Ba Madam-F-Mentor	Limpo-F-Mentee	1 and nine months	Kabwe
Uncle Tony-M-Mentor	Bupe-M-Mentee	2	Lusaka
Mr Mike-M-Mentor	Dalitso-M-Mentee	(N/A)	Chingola/Lusaka
Ba Bishop-M-Mentor (Theoretically sampled)	Dalitso-M-Mentee	20 (from birth)	Chingola
Dalitso-M-Mentee (as a mentor)	Lweendo-M-Mentee (Theoretically sampled)	3	Chingola

*Pseudonyms

2.2 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling aims to find individuals who can answer questions emerging from data analysis, which supports theory development (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, two participants, a mentor and a mentee to one of the six participants interviewed in the 1st phase, were theoretically sampled and interviewed in January 2023, as shown in Table 1. Tables 2 and 3 indicate the demographic information of mentors and mentees, respectively.

Table 2. Mentor demographics

*Pseudonyms				
	Ba Madam-F-Mentor	Uncle Tony-M-Mentor	Mr Mike-M-Mentor	Ba Bishop-M-Mentor
Age in years	39	36	31	68
Education	Master's degree (in progress)	Diploma (College)	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Occupation	Social worker	Professional football coach	Governance and communication specialist	Theologian
Mentoring experience (in years)	16	14	10	28

Table 3. Mentee demographics

*Pseudonyms				
	Limpo-F-Mentee	Bupe-M-Mentee	Dalitso-M-Mentee	Lweendo-M-Mentee
Age in years	18	20	20	19
Education status	Grade11 (Currently)	Finished grade 12	College (1 st year)	Finished grade 12
School Attended	Government	Government and private	Government and community	Government
Family status (living with)	Head of the child-headed household	Guardian (aunt)	Guardian (grandfather)	Guardian (aunt)

2.3 Ethical Considerations

As the World Medical Association (n.d.) Declaration of Helsinki and Strydom (2005) recommend, I identify and adhere to specific social science research ethics. I shared the aim of the study with participants before the interviews to prevent any deception.

The participants were informed of their right to voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and consent to being audio-recorded (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Strydom, 2005). Interviews were conducted only after participants had read, understood and signed the informed consent form.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Using a semi-structured interview schedule, the open-ended, conversational and mutually constructed interview process between the participants and the author led to the acquisition of depth, richness and rigour in the data I collected. All participants were asked vital narrative-generating open-ended questions (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000): Tell me about a specific MR you have participated in. Probe: How has your experience been? Some questions were slightly modified to make them relevant to each part. What are your reasons for being a mentee? What are your reasons for being a mentor?

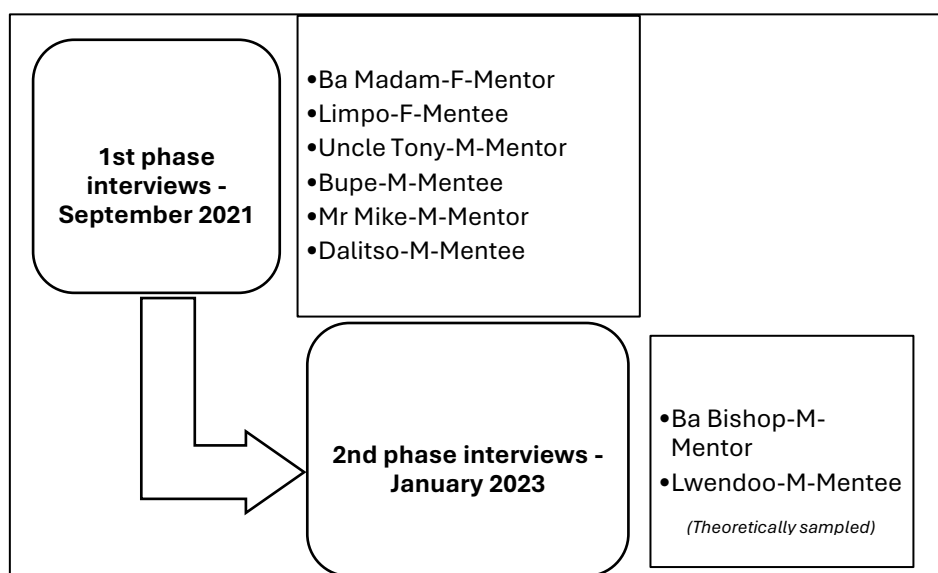


Figure 1. Data collection timeline

Five interviews were in person, while three were remote via Zoom video conferencing, all at separate locations, with an average duration of 65 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English, the official language of Zambia, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants' literal responses, some of which are grammatically incorrect, are quoted directly to preserve the voice and the sense and feel. I have inserted words or phrases in square brackets in some excerpts in the presentation and discussion of findings to facilitate comprehension.

Charmaz's (2014) inductive analysis was applied to analyse the data from the eight interviews in a constant comparative method, which generated categories grounded in the data. In initial coding, I read all transcripts from the initial interviews. Then, I chose one interview and read it carefully, taking note of themes and patterns that emerged while constantly comparing statements and incidents within this interview transcript and coding the data. This process was applied to all interviews across the sample. During this initial coding process, I asked myself recommended pertinent questions such as "What is this person trying to say?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47) and "What persons are involved? What roles do they play? How do they interact?" (Böhm, 2004, p. 271).

Asking such questions and repetitively comparing the data increased my understanding of what participants perceived as crucial to them, and I started treating it analytically. After that, I logically grouped codes that appeared pertinent during initial coding. They were valuable in explaining the participants' experiences and perceptions based on similar meanings, themes and concepts. I used these codes to develop subcategories and categories. To ensure the analysis remained grounded in the data, I noted analytical memos of my interpretations of the findings.

After initial coding, I completed focused coding. Here, I compared data with codes, codes with codes, and emerging categories across the sample, an essential exercise in refining the codes and further co-construction of the theory. Then, I theoretically coded the data, relating categories with each other and comparing the emerging theory with literature. Figure 2 shows how I collected and analysed the data to co-construct integrated categories and their properties, leading to the co-construction of a coherent, substantive GT of YMRs in Zambia.

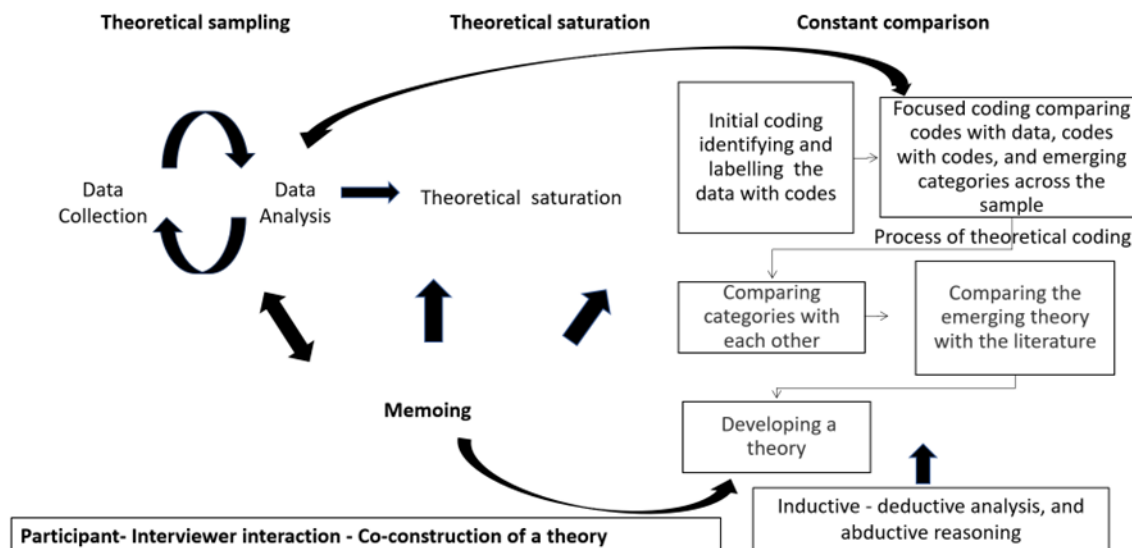


Figure 2. The iterative process of constructivist grounded theory

Created by E. Derrer-Merk & M. Mulenga Wincierz, 2024

2.5 Researcher Reflexivity

My positionality emphasises being self-conscious and reflexive throughout my research (Cope, 2014; Holmes, 2020). Thus, the data I present and discuss below is co-constructed between the participants and me. My inherent assumptions (Powell, 2016) resulting from my prior knowledge about mentoring and experiences as a youth worker and mentor, however, only guided my research process, i.e., they were applied, in this study, as sensitising concepts during data collection and analysis and in reporting the findings (Blumer, 1954; Charmaz, 2014). I remained open to collecting and analysing data and learning about the participants' experiences and perceptions, which challenged my preconceptions.

3. Findings and Discussion

Findings point to Mentors' and mentees' PMEs and NMEs, showing that ambivalence characterised their relationships. I present and discuss the mentees' experiences, the mentors' findings, and the experiences that result from environmental influences.

3.1 Mentee Positive and Negative Mentoring Experiences

Some mentees expressed that they received help in various ways, including emotionally and psychologically from their mentors. For example, Bupe-M-Mentee shared about being chased away from a family he had stayed with for a long time because of being accused of taking some electrical appliances from their house:

Me moving out of the house where I was staying, he [Uncle Tony-M-Mentor] helped me during that moment by encouraging me to pull up my socks and move on because that was the past and where I was going was my future.

This situation negatively impacted Bupe-M-Mentee for a long time; he did not accept what happened to him. For instance, he disclosed: "The people [at] ... my previous home ... helped me a lot, and I feel it wasn't fair to me to have left the house the way I did because I have an attachment to them." He further stated that he was still sentimental about how he left the family, which made him angry and frustrated, when he played soccer. Bupe-M-Mentee strongly believed that his mentor, Uncle Tony-M-Mentor, had helped him to come to terms with his situation and appreciated him for that. He said:

Like I said, I still think about my previous home, but I know I am stronger because of what they did to me ... and the coach [Uncle Tony-M-Mentor] helped me realise that [which], to some extent, helped me be a better player.

Similarly, Ba Madam-F-Mentor's revelations about Limpo-F-Mentee's life situation indicated the dire circumstances that could have led her to experience constant emotional and psychological challenges. She disclosed that Limpo-F-Mentee lived in a child-headed household where she was the head. Consequently, with no help from extended family or government, Limpo-F-Mentee had to take care of her siblings, her younger sister's child and herself while going to school, a situation that left her in constant anguish, hopelessness and helplessness (Jörns-Presentati et al., 2021). Limpo-F-Mentee confirmed her mentor's disclosures about her difficult situation and credited her strength to cope with her challenges to her:

These things draw me backward, for example, when I think about the responsibilities I have at home, everything waits for me. I have to manage everything, such that sometimes I don't have time to go to school ... there [are] times when I want to give up [but Ba Madam-F-Mentor] tells me to leave some things unattended ... and go to school or do school [work] then later attend to other home duties. This is what has made me strong, and even now, I am strong.

Bupe-M-Mentee and Limpo-F-Mentee were overwhelmed by the constant problems they encountered, but their mentors' support and guidance were their sources of strength to overcome daily challenges. This finding points to how mentors remain cardinal in safeguarding disadvantaged youths' psychological and mental well-being (DeWit et al., 2016; Hurd & Zimmermann, 2013; Sapiro & Ward, 2020). One crucial skill mentors can give their mentees is the capacity for self-belief and self-kindness, as Lyman (2016) suggested.

Furthermore, for Limpo-F-Mentee, meeting with her mentor was a therapeutic emotional support that helped her to offload her burden:

When we meet...she asks me about how I and my younger siblings are doing at home. Then I explain...how my siblings and I are doing and managing to survive. Thereafter, she encourages me to remain strong and tells me that she will find ways in which she can help. When she says that I feel relieved because when she says that I know that she wants to help me.

This excerpt shows that mentoring is crucial, especially for vulnerable youths who must fend for themselves and their families without outside help. Most youths in the Global South, like Limpo-F-Mentee, mainly depend on themselves and their mentors for social assistance, unlike their counterparts in Global North countries, who are assisted through programmes like foster care (Sapiro & Ward, 2020).

While some mentees had positive mentoring experiences (PME/s), they also had negative mentoring experiences (NME/s), except for Limpo-F-Mentee and Lweendo-M-Mentee. For instance, one of Bupe-M-Mentee's challenges stemmed from his mentor's inconsiderate and controlling attitude and behaviour towards him. Bupe-M-Mentee "strongly felt that his mentor was a "complicated person" who "just wants things done without any hesitance ... it's very hard to understand the kind of person he is." This scenario of Bupe-M-Mentee and his mentor paints a picture of a relationship undergoing challenges leading to experiences of negative emotions, especially on the mentee's part. Thus, while Bupe-M-Mentee has PMEs through receiving emotional and psychological help from his mentor, he also has NMEs resulting from his mentor's questionable actions, leading him to have mixed feelings about his mentor.

Dalitso-M-Mentee mentioned another NME. He experienced the ongoing challenge of scarcely having mentoring sessions because his mentor was primarily absent. This situation drove Dalitso-M-Mentee to try and find another way to maintain the connection:

I think what has not been okay is [that] the very person [Mr. Mike-M-Mentor] has been quite busy, so I find myself not meeting him often ... but I ensure that I follow each and every single post he makes on his social media platforms.

This finding may depict a young person yearning to be in the presence of his mentor and may cause feelings of abandonment and somewhat rejection. MacCallum et al. (2017) also reported that meeting time issues, mentee abandonment and the mentor being too busy were some of the main challenging factors contributing to mentees' NMEs and unsuccessful MRs.

Thus, frustration may have led the mentee to have contradictory feelings and ideas about his mentor and the relationship.

3.2 Mentor Positive and Negative Mentoring Experiences

All mentors revealed that they had benefitted from being in MRs with the youth. Mentors had experienced personal growth through learning from their relationships. For example, one of the life lessons for Ba Madam-F-Mentor was to be more resilient. She developed a spirit of perseverance, of “never giving up” and “... having that positive attitude about life ...” despite someone “... going through the worst that life can offer”. This finding resonates with Rekha and Ganesh (2012), who state that experiences in MRs are central to lifelong learning and development for both mentees and mentors. Mentors’ hard work yields important rewards, as literature indicates that mentors “reaped benefits” from their efforts to support mentees (Blake-Beard et al., 2021, p. 8).

Mr Mike felt that being involved in MRs with Dalitso-M-Mentee and other youths made him realise that he could contribute to the change of youths and empower them for leadership roles. He said, “... now that I’m a mentor, one of the things that I’ve actually noticed is my ability to preserve and prepare young people for leadership”. Similarly, Rekha and Ganesh (2012) reported that MRs enhanced mentors’ self-awareness and self-realisation, which increased mentors’ self-worth, self-confidence and desire to continue changing other people’s lives.

Some mentors used mentoring to facilitate their work and achieve their professional goals. For instance, Uncle Tony-M-Mentor stated that mentoring Bupe-M-Mentee and other disadvantaged youths made his job of football coaching possible:

I deal with vulnerable children ... [so, that] did not only make me to be a coach for football, but it made me to go as far as understanding ... their lifestyles ... [So], I can help where necessary ... [and] meet my goal as a coach ... it really made me to go that far [to] ... make my job easier and effective. ... that’s what really made me to go into mentoring.

From the excerpt, one can infer that mentors can achieve their professional goals through mentoring. They go beyond their professional roles to help mentees with their challenges, which, in turn, helps them to respond positively and, in the case of football, become better players and people in general.

Conversely, despite mentors benefiting from their MRs, as they were content and felt satisfied with their roles, leading to PMEs and positive perceptions, they experienced numerous challenges, too. The challenges emanating from the mentees’ “tough” life conditions were a source of negative feelings, triggering experiences of mixed emotions among the mentors. For example, the circumstances surrounding Limpo-F-Mentee made mentoring challenging for Ba Madam-F-Mentor.

She disclosed how difficult it was for her to visit Limpo-F-Mentee because her father, even though he did not live with them, was aggressive when he visited them and discovered that someone had helped them in any way:

[The] last time I went there ... like I mentioned, he's a drunkard...I was told that the father is aggressive when he finds out that someone was visiting the kids ... He doesn't want assistance from other people.

This caused Ba Madam-F-Mentor to avoid visiting Limpo-F-Mentee at home, making it difficult to mentor her. She revealed:

Another thing I would say is ... the location ... where she's staying ... it's really difficult for me to go there because ... of ... the circumstances surrounding the girl, sometimes it's difficult to visit her at home. So those are the challenges.

Challenging life circumstances in mentees' homes and communities pose fear to mentors and the MRs (Lakind et al., 2015), and unsupportive parents contribute to ineffective mentoring and relationship failure (Basualdo-Delmonico, 2013; Spencer et al., 2011). The situation of Ba Madam-F-Mentor is discouraging; she may feel disappointed, frustrated and hopeless about the mentee's circumstances, and some may feel like failures (Nottingham et al., 2017; Zaraki, 2023). These negative feelings contribute to mentors' NMEs, leading them to have mixed emotions about their MRs and their processes.

Uncle Tony-M-Mentor felt it was "not easy" to mentor Bupe-M-Mentee because of his "difficult background". He found Bupe-M-Mentee's unhealthy behaviour challenging to manage, making mentoring him challenging. He revealed that Bupe-M-Mentee's difficult circumstances, such as having an absent father, being orphaned at a young age and experiencing "rejection" from his mother's family, made him a "difficult" person. Pointing to the occurrences during training, Uncle Tony-M-Mentor shared that Bupe-M-Mentor was easily frustrated and aggressive at the slightest trigger, which seemed normal in football. This finding affirms Stewart (2022) and Straussner and Calnan (2014), who reported that youth from challenging backgrounds suffered from poverty-induced cumulative traumatic stress, which they were unlikely to control. The heightened problematic behaviour of mentees, such as those being studied, is a source of challenges sparking mentor frustration and emotional exhaustion (Lakind et al., 2015). Consequently, while Uncle Tony-M-Mentor has PME, as earlier discussed, he also experiences difficulties leading to NMEs, thereby triggering conflicting emotions in him.

Notably, one challenge for Mr Mike-M-Mentor was his life situation. He acknowledged:

I think the only part that I feel ...has not been going well is [that] I've not been giving the young man so much time because these past few months, I've really, really been busy. So, maybe I've not been giving the young man so much time and effort.

For instance, this may arouse feelings of self-blame for not being able to fulfil his duty of mentoring. Doing so may cause the mentor to question his mentoring interests, commitment and efforts, thereby developing conflicting sentiments about his relationship.

3.3 Environmental Influence on Mentoring Experiences

A mentor also narrated that their lack of capacity to help their mentees materially posed challenges to their relationships. Uncle Tony-M-Mentor stated:

It's very difficult for you to make somebody understand...poverty when you don't have what it takes...to help somebody to get out of that ... I think the basis and the platform we stand on as mentors is quite unfavourable, whereby it takes a long time or ... a lot of work to make our mentees understand what we talk about, because of who we are [mentors with little capacity to help] ... it's quite challenging.

In this quote, Uncle Tony-M-Mentor points to the difficult conditions in which he mentors Bupe-M-Mentee. The mentee has unmet essential resources, such as stable accommodation, food, safety and security, while the mentor feels he has limited capacity to help the mentee meet those needs. Firstly, this finding depicts the realities of many mentors in low-income countries, such as Zambia, who have low salaries and income inequality, wherein no resources are available for YM nationally. Unlike in the Global North, governments have recognised the importance of mentoring and invested vast funds to enhance and promote it (Cicurel, 2022; Youth.gov., n.d.). Consequently, Mr Mike-M-Mentor suggested that the Zambian government “allocate funding for mentoring and positive development for adolescents and youth.”

The circumstances of the mentors in this study have many effects, especially putting a toll on the mentors' mental well-being. They may feel inadequate to help and hopeless and helpless about the situations of their mentees and their MRs (Ramani et al., 2006; Stark et al., 2021). From this discussion, mentoring in a context where mentees are disadvantaged, and mentors have a dearth of resources strongly contributes to mentors' NMEs, which directly adds to mentors' inconsistent feelings and indirectly affects mentees' experiences of their MRs. The effects of MRs' PME or NMEs on the mentors' and mentees' attitudes and behaviours, impact the relationships' quality and, ultimately, mentee development process.

Adding to the participants' mixed emotions is the belief that YM was scarcely known, and lacked recognition and support, especially from the government. For example, Ba Bishop-M-Mentor, who believed mentoring was essential, expressed his disappointment that it was “uncommon” in the country. Similarly, Dalitso-M-Mentee was displeased “that [the] government hasn't been doing enough in order ... to promote mentorship.” The feeling that YM was scarce and that the government was not committed to it is sustained by Uncle Tony-M-Mentor, who believed that mentors “tend[ed] not to be recognised ... [by] organisations and people involved in youth [development].” He felt that “they [were] recognised ... as football coach[es], but not as ... mentor[s].”

Uncle Tony-M-Mentor suggested that lack of recognition and support contribute to the reasons for having limited resources to help him and other mentors in mentoring youth. Conversely, their recognition and support, as Uncle Tony-M-Mentor believed, “will cushion [his] challenges and ... give [him] a relief, and a strong backup to keep going.”

This finding can insinuate that mentors feel neglected and unappreciated, which can discourage and demotivate them. This could lead mentors to doubt their mentoring capabilities (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Subsequently, the feelings emanating from the participants' perception of the environment in which their relationships occur are a source of negative emotions, causing mixed feelings.

4. Final Considerations

The findings offer insight into the unique experiences contributing to the “mixed emotions” of mentors and mentees in YMRs in Zambia. Notwithstanding PMEs, findings also illuminate challenges and overwhelming NMEs resulting from internal and external relationship factors. This study has important implications for policy and practice and contributes to CGT methodology. MRs in Zambia should be recognised and supported, especially by youth development stakeholders, such as the government, so that, among other practical recommendations, mentors can be trained in empirically and contextually informed mentor best practices to enhance their capacity to mentor effectively. For instance, the government could establish institutions that support mentor training free of charge and train youth mentors and adults aspiring to be mentors, formal or informal. Mentoring guidelines for the mentor and mentee can also be established through such institutions. Doing so could help mentors and mentees better manage the challenges in their relationships and reduce the chance of NMEs and mixed emotions.

The study further testifies the flexibility of CGT methodology by illustrating that it can transcend cultural and geographical boundaries and be applied to cultures and regions such as Zambia, where its use is scarce and particular research such as this one may have never been conducted (Bergh et al., 2022). The methodology has aided in providing insight into MRs in Zambia, and its use is extended by highlighting social injustice in the country by youths in this study experiencing a lack of essential resources (Charmaz, 2019).

This study should be treated as a primary step in researching YMRs in Zambia. However, the study had potential limitations, including having a small sample size, and thus, findings cannot be generalised. They should be interpreted with caution and applied to similar contexts.

5. Acknowledgements

I want to thank the participants for giving deep insight into their experiences and perceptions of YMRs. Thank you to my chair, Prof. Dr Iris Clemens, for her invaluable supervision and support of my doctoral research. I also sincerely thank my colleague E. Derrer-Merk for her constructive feedback on this paper.

6. References

- Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research* (South African ed.). South Africa Oxford University Press.
- Basualdo-Delmonico. A. (2013). *The Invisible hand in youth mentoring: Parent, mentor and agency perspective on parental role* [Doctoral Dissertation, Boston University]. Boston University Libraries OpenBU. <https://hdl.handle.net/2144/13137>
- Bergh, D. D., Boyd, B. K., Byron, K., Gove, S., & Ketchen, D. J. (2022). What constitutes a methodological contribution? *Journal of Management*, 48(7), 1835–1848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063221088235>
- Blake-Beard, S., Shapiro, M., & Ingols, C. (2021). A model for strengthening mentors: frames and practices. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12), 6465. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126465>
- Blumer, H. (1954). "What is Wrong with Social Theory." *American Sociological Review*, 18, 3–10. https://doi.org/https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Blumer/Blumer_1954.html
- Boyd, M. A., Fwoloshi, S., Minchella, P. A., Simpungwe, J., Siansalama, T., Barradas, D. T., Shah, M., Mulenga, L., & Agolory, S. (2022). A national HIV clinical mentorship program: Enabling Zambia to accelerate control of the HIV epidemic. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 2(2), e0000074. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0000074>
- Böhm, A. (2004). Theoretical coding: Text analysis in grounded theory. In U. Flick, E. Kardorff & I. Steinke (Eds.) *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 270–275). SAGE Publications.
- Chama, S.B. (2008). *Program approach for child-headed households in Zambia* [Doctoral Dissertation, Virginia Commonwealth University]. VCU University Archives. <https://doi.org/10.25772/ffs5-dt05>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the Grounded Theory Method. In J. A. Holstein, & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp. 397–412). Guilford Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications
- Charmaz, K. (2019). “With constructivist grounded theory you can’t Hide”: Social justice research and critical inquiry in the public sphere. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(2), 165–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419879081>
- Cicurel, I. (2022, May 18-May 20). *Mentoring is intergenerational solidarity* [Virtual keynote address]. European Mentoring Summit 2022: Linking Formal and Informal Mentoring in a Holistic Approach, Leeuwarden, Netherlands. <https://mentoringsummit.eu/onlineems2022/>
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and Meanings: Credibility and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89–90. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.89-91>
- Ddiba, D.I.W. (2013, March 27). *Mentorship: A missing link in education in Sub-Saharan Africa?* [Paper Presentation]. 7th Education Without Borders International Students’ Conference, Dubai, U.A.E. https://www.academia.edu/4580874/Mentorship_A_missing_link_in_higher_education_in_Sub_Saharan_Africa
- Derrer-Merk, E. & Mulenga Wincierz, M. (2024). Iterative Process of Constructivist Grounded Theory. In M. Mulenga Wincierz (Presenter), *Experiences and perceptions of mentors and mentees in youth mentoring relationships in Zambia. A constructivist grounded theory study* [Conference PowerPoint presentation]. 8th World Conference on Qualitative Research (WCQR) 2024, Johannesburg, South Africa.


- DeWit, D. J., DuBois, D., Erdem, G., Larose, S., & Lipman, E. L. (2016). The role of Program-Supported Mentoring Relationships in promoting youth mental health, behavioral and developmental outcomes. *Prevention Science*, 17(5), 646–657. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-016-0663-2>
- DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (2013). Youth Mentoring: Progress and Prospects for the 21st Century. In D. L. DuBois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (2nd ed., pp. 525–534). SAGE Publications. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412996907.n36>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Sociology Press.
- GRZ/UNICEF Zambia. (2023, April). *Evidence Synthesis on Adolescent Health and HIV in Zambia*. <https://www.unicef.org/zambia/reports/evidence-synthesis-adolescents-health-and-hiv-zambia>
- Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1–10. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1268044.pdf>
- Hurd, N. M., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2013). An Analysis of Natural Mentoring Relationship Profiles and Associations with Mentees' Mental Health: Considering Links via Support from Important Others. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(1–2), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9598-y>
- Jörns-Presentati, A., Napp, A., Dessauvague, A. S., Stein, D. J., Jonker, D., Breet, E., Charles, W., Swart, R. L., Lahti, M., Suliman, S., Jansen, R., Van Den Heuvel, L. L., Seedat, S., & Groen, G. (2021). The prevalence of mental health problems in sub-Saharan adolescents: A systematic review. *PLoS ONE*, 16(5), e0251689. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251689>
- Kadzomba, S. (2015). *An evaluation of the impact of a mentoring programme in two Soweto-based schools* [Master's thesis, University of South Africa]. Unisa ETD [12686]. <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/20137>
- Lakind, D., Atkins, M., & Eddy, J. M. (2015). Youth mentoring relationships in context: Mentor perceptions of youth, environment, and the mentor role. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 53, 52–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.03.007>
- Lyman, A. (2016, May 31). *Why mentoring others has helped me*. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-mentoring-others-has_b_10214756
- MacCallum, J., Beltman, S., Coffey, A., & Cooper, T. (2017). Taking care of youth mentoring relationships: red flags, repair, and respectful resolution. *Mentoring & Tutoring Partnership in Learning*, 25(3), 250–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2017.1364799>
- Merrill, K. G., Frimpong, C., Burke, V. M., Abrams, E. A., Miti, S., Mwansa, J. K., & Denison, J. A. (2023). “Project YES! has given me a task to reach undetectable”: Qualitative findings from a peer mentoring program for youth living with HIV in Zambia. *PLOS ONE*, 18(10), Article e0292719. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0292719>
- Morse, J. M. (2007). Sampling in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 229–244). SAGE Publications
- Mubanga, B., Fwoloshi, S., Lwatula, L., Siamwanza, N., Zyambo, K., Sichinga, H., Tappis, H., Mulenga, L. B., Moonga, A., Ziko, L., Simushi, F., Massamba, H. M., Hapunda, G., Sichimba, F., Mtonga, H., & Kalubula, M. (2023). Effects of the ECHO tele-mentoring program on HIV/TB service delivery in health facilities in Zambia: a mixed-methods, retrospective program evaluation. *Human Resources for Health*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-023-00806-8>


- Mulenga, A. (2018). *Challenges Faced by Pupils from Child-Headed Households: A Study on Selected Public Schools in Kabwe Urban District*. [Master's Thesis, University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University. UNZA Repository <https://dspace.unza.zm/server/api/core/bitstreams/7f10d852-8dcc-4493-8316-3e01028bdadb/content>
- Murray, S. M., Bolton, P., Kane, J., Lakin, D. P., Skavenski Wyk, S., Paul, R., & Murray, L. (2020). Measuring symptoms of psychopathology in Zambian orphans and vulnerable children: Scale validation and psychometric evaluation. *Assessment*, 27(6), 1335–1348. DOI: 10.1177/1073191118780455
- Mutale, W. (2014). *Evaluation of a Complex Health Intervention in Zambia: The case of the Better Health Outcome through Mentorship and Assessment (BHOMA) Applying system wide approaches to measuring health system strengthening: Essential Markers and Impact Pathway*. <https://doi.org/10.17037/pubs.01917782>
- Mutale, W., Nzala, S. H., Martin, M. H., Rose, E. S., Heimburger, D. C., & Goma, F. M. (2023). Accelerating organizational change to build mentorship culture in Zambian universities. *Annals of Global Health*, 89(1). <https://doi.org/10.5334/aogh.4032>
- Mwamba, L. k., Musonda, A. Daka, H., & Mulenga, R. M. (2021). Strategies for enhancing mentorship of in [sic] entrepreneurship: A case study of undergraduate students of Kwame Nkrumah University, Kabwe-Zambia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, V(IX), 2454-6186. <https://dspace.unza.zm/server/api/core/bitstreams/4dbe9527-37cc-4fbd-94b2-f9b642c4db7e/content>
- Neese, A. L., Pittman, L. D., & Hunemorder, R. (2013). Depressive symptoms and somatic complaints among Zambian adolescents: associations with stress and coping. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 23(1), 118–127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2012.00834.x>
- Nottingham, S. L., Mazerolle, S. M., & Barrett, J. L. (2017). Effective characteristics of formal mentoring relationships: The National Athletic Trainers' Association Foundation Research Mentor Program. *Athletic Training Education Journal*, 12(4), 244–255. <https://doi.org/10.4085/1204244>
- Pitney, W. A., & Ehlers, G. G. (2004). A grounded theory study of the mentoring process involved with undergraduate athletic training students. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 39(4), 344–351. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC535527/pdf/i1062-6050-39-4-344.pdf>
- Population Council & UNFPA. (2018). *State of the Youth in Zambia policy brief: Education, unemployment, and poverty reduction*. <https://zambia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Brief-Policy-Youth-Zambia-FINAL%20%283%29.pdf>
- Powell, J. (2016). *A Grounded Theory of Effective Peer Mentoring in Secondary Schools* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Essex]. OAI 2.0. <https://repository.essex.ac.uk/15776/1/J%20E%20Powell%20Doctorate%20Thesis.pdf>
- Ramani, S., Gruppen, L., & Kachur, E. K. (2006). Twelve tips for developing effective mentors. *Medical Teacher*, 28(5), 404–408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590600825326>
- Rekha K. N., & Ganesh M. P. (2012). Do mentors learn by mentoring others? *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 1(3). DOI: 10.1108/20466851211279466
- Rhodes, J., & Lowe, S. R. (2008). Youth Mentoring and Resilience: Implications for practice. *Child Care in Practice*, 14(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575270701733666>
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (2nd ed.). Wiley.
- Sapiro, B. & Ward, A. (2020). Marginalized youth, mental health, and connection with others: A review of the literature. *Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 37(4), 343-357. <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/social-work-and-child-advocacy-facpubs/159/>

- Spencer, R., Basualdo-Delmonico, A., & Lewis, T. O. (2011). Working to make it work: The role of parents in the youth mentoring process. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 39(1), 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20416>
- Stark, C., Wehrman, J., Stutey, D., Solis, A., Severn, K., Cammell, M., Gloden, H., Enkler, K., Notestine, L., & Palacios, A. (2021). Therapeutic Mentoring for Multiply Marginalized Youth: A Grounded Theory Study of Mentors' adaptation during the COVID-19 Crisis. *Journal of Human Services*, 40(2), 116–132. <https://doi.org/10.52678/001c.75388>
- Stebbins, R. A. (2006). Mentoring as a leisure activity: On the informal world of Small-Scale Altruism. *World Leisure Journal*, 48(4), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04419057.2006.9674461>
- Stewart, S. (2022). *Examining the role of mentorship on youth residing in urban poverty: The effect of attitudes toward school and sense of inadequacy on academic achievement*. [Doctoral dissertation, DePaul University]. https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1436&context=csh_etd
- Straussner, S. L. A., & Calnan, A. J. (2014). Trauma through the Life Cycle: A Review of Current Literature. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 42(4), 323–335. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-014-0496-z>
- Strydom, H. (2005). Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human services professions. In A. S. De Vos, H. Strydom, C. B. Fouche, & C. S. L. Delport (Eds.), *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human services professions* (3rd ed., pp. 56–70). Van Schaik.
- UNICEF. (2013, October 28). *Update of the Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Zambia*. http://www.unicef.org/zambia/Updated_Situation_Analysis_of_Women_and_Children_In_Zambia_part1.pdf
- Wagstaff, M. & Parker, A. (2020). Youth, “waithood,” and social change: Sport, mentoring, and empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 9(1), 18-31. https://jsfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/wagstaff.youth_.waithood.social-change.pdf
- Wimpenny, P., & Gass, J. (2000). Interviewing in phenomenology and grounded theory: Is there a difference? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31(6), 1485–1492. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.01431.x>
- World Medical Association. (n.d.). *WMA - the World Medical Association-WMA Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants*. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/>
- Youth.gov. (n.d.). *Federal Support for Mentoring*. Retrieved March 29, 2024, from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/interagency-federal-support-mentoring>
- Zambia Statistics Agency. (n.d.). *2022 census: Key statistics*. Retrieved February 1, 2024, from <https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/#>
- Zaraki. (2023, June 2). *How childhood trauma affects us as adults – Healing the heart*. <https://www.mentalhealthcenter.org/how-childhood-trauma-affects-adult-relationships/>

Mary Mulenga-Wincierz

Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) - University of Bayreuth, Germany

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4688-5967>

 wincierzmm@gmail.com