



“You are also Laughing on The Outside, But Inside, It Hurts You So Badly, and You Want to Talk About It, But You Can't”: Experiences of Harm in Mentoring Relationships: A Story of an African Youth Aspiring for a Football Career

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Abstract

This paper draws on findings from a constructivist grounded theory study of mentors' and mentees' experiences and perceptions of youth mentoring relationships (MR/s) in Zambia. To understand how mentee harm is perpetuated in MRs in football training (FT) and its impact on the youth and the relationship. I focus on one mentee who experienced harm in the MR with his football coach. Five mentors aged 31 to 68 and four mentees aged 18 to 20 were sampled purposively. Using a semi-structured interview guide containing narrative-generating questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with all the participants with a mean of 65 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was iteratively collected and parallel to constant comparative analysis involving coding, memoing, and theoretical sampling. This led to the inductive co-construction of four categories. Data revealed that the mentee in FT experienced emotional harm perpetuated by his mentor because of the disclosure of private information. The mentor disclosed his mentee's information to his teammates, who started using it against him. The study illustrates the interconnectedness between the mentor's incautious actions, the mentee's constant negative mentoring experiences and persistent harm in FT. This study demonstrates that mentors in FT may be perpetrators of constant harm in mentoring and coach-player relationships. The study shows short and long-term effects of mentee prolonged harm, such as bottling up negative emotions to avoid conflict, unhappiness, anger, frustration, angst and uncertainty, which affects personal and career development. This study calls for means to prevent or mitigate mentors' chances of harming mentees and create a safe and healthy environment for them, leading to positive career development in FT and overall.

Keywords: Constructivist Grounded Theory; Football-Training in Africa; Harm; Mentoring; Private Disclosure