

Peer Mentoring and Students' Engagement in Social Work Classes: A Case Study in a Government College in Bangladesh

Shishir Chandra Paik

Lecturer, Social Welfare, Government Brojomohun College, Barishal, Bangladesh.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.802088>

Received: 30 January 2024; Revised: 21 February 2024; Accepted: 26 February 2024; Published: 12 March 2024

ABSTRACT

This study advocates integrating peer mentoring to boost student engagement in Bangladeshi social work higher education. Research objectives include evaluating the current status of peer mentoring in the college, analyzing merits and drawbacks of implementing peer mentoring in social work classes for student engagement, and investigating the relationship between peer mentoring practices and the level of student engagement. Qualitative study explores peer mentoring and student engagement in tertiary education using interviews, FGDs, and Classroom Observation. Thematic analysis, small sample size, and diverse representation ensure validity and reliability. The study uncovers traditional lectures and informal peer mentoring fostering student engagement. Formal peer mentoring significantly contributes to a peer learning environment, enhancing engagement through active learning. Strategies include scaffolding and motivation, addressing challenges through orientation and training. The study assesses integrating peer mentoring with traditional lectures in social work, uncovering limitations. Peer mentoring fosters a learning environment, emphasizing strategies for enhanced student engagement.

Keywords: Peer Mentoring, Peer Learning, Students' Engagement, Active Learning, Cognitivism, Constructivism, Collaborative Learning, Challenges, and Gaps.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introducing a novel professional approach, peer mentoring not only fosters peer learning but also actively engages students through the incorporation of active learning, cognitive, constructivism, and collaborative learning methodologies (Jacobi, 1991). Al Faruki et al.'s (2019) study in Bangladesh reveals that the conventional lecture method lacks interactive peer learning opportunities, motivation, and feedback channels, hindering effective student engagement. Within our institution, educators adhere to the traditional lecture model, leading to unsatisfactory student engagement due to the absence of peer learning prospects and insufficient integration of student engagement theories (Mannan, 2018). Consequently, this research aims to discern how the integration of peer mentoring alongside the traditional lecture method can effectively contribute to the assurance and enhancement of students' engagement within social work classes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Within tertiary education, peer mentoring emerges as a pivotal tool for engaging students through diverse pedagogical approaches, notably the peer learning paradigm (Clark & Andrews, 2009). Nevertheless, challenges in the implementation of peer mentoring, such as student absenteeism and the mentors' failure to comprehend mentees' needs, often result in the failure to achieve targeted goals (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). While peer mentoring proves effective for student engagement, a comprehensive examination of whether

the integrated approach, involving both peer mentoring and the traditional lecture method, yields superior results demands careful scrutiny. Does this combination truly enhance the creation of a peer learning environment and elevate student engagement in classes? This proposition necessitates thorough investigation, prompting the initiation of a qualitative study. The study aims to gather insights from teachers and students in the social work department of our institution, where the conventional lecture method prevails, to discern optimal teaching-learning practices.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Within the tertiary education landscape of Bangladesh, the prevalent traditional lecture method employed by teachers falls short in effectively engaging students and providing comprehensive theoretical knowledge (Khalil, 2019). Recognizing this limitation, the implementation of peer mentoring stands as a valuable avenue for enhancing teachers' professional practices and fostering interactive classrooms. The benefits extend to students who gain not only theoretical knowledge but also motivation and constructive feedback (Suchana, 2019). Social Work, as a subject within the realm of social sciences, currently relies on the traditional lecture method, yet its nature necessitates a more practical learning setting akin to peer learning (Sultana, 2017). In this context, peer mentoring emerges as an optimal solution, fostering student engagement through peer learning, collaborative learning, and active learning methodologies (Clark & Andrews, 2009). This qualitative study seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of peer mentoring in creating a peer learning atmosphere in social work classes, akin to an interactive classroom.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Evaluate the existing status of peer mentoring within my college.

1.3.2 Assess the merits and drawbacks of implementing peer mentoring as a strategy for enhancing student engagement in social work classes.

1.3.3 Investigate the relationship between peer mentoring practices and the level of student engagement.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 What is the status of peer mentoring in social work classes?

1.4.2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of peer mentoring for engaging students in social work classes?

1.4.3 How can students' engagement be enhanced through peer mentoring in social work classes?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In Bangladesh, educational institutions face challenges in effectively engaging students due to the prevalent use of the traditional lecture method (Khalil, 2019). This study aims to assist educational institutions in adopting peer mentoring, a practice that has proven efficacy in enhancing student engagement through diverse pedagogical approaches like peer learning, active learning, and collaborative learning (Clark & Andrews, 2009). Within the tertiary education system in Bangladesh, particularly in disciplines such as social work, a deficiency in complete theoretical knowledge persists due to the exclusive reliance on traditional lecture methods without practical settings like collaborative learning (Mannan, 2018). This research seeks to address this gap by facilitating students in acquiring theoretical knowledge through practical settings fostered by peer learning and collaborative learning, integral components of peer mentoring (Jacobi, 1991). Furthermore, the existing traditional teaching-learning paradigm falls short in creating a conducive learning environment for active learning (Clark & Andrews, 2009). This study

endeavors to rectify this by establishing an interactive classroom learning environment, functioning as both a source of motivation and a channel for constructive feedback through the implementation of peer mentoring practices (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is characterized as a one-to-one, non-judgmental relationship forged during a crucial transitional phase in the mentee's life. In this dynamic, mentors willingly invest their time to provide support and encouragement, fostering a lasting connection (O'Hara, 2011). Houlston, Smith, and Jessel (2009) posit that a peer mentor assumes the role of a guiding figure, serving as a role model for students seeking academic support and emotional well-being guidance. In tertiary education, the applicability of peer mentoring extends to establishing a credible and non-authoritarian friendly environment, cultivating genuine peer learning environments enriched with academic aids like peer tutoring and social support such as career guidance (Phillip & Spratt, 2007).

Furthermore, within tertiary education, peer mentors uniquely access realms often beyond the reach of adult teachers, offering insights rooted in their practical experiences and "street knowledge" (Phillip & Spratt, 2007). Specifically, within social sciences, including social work, peer mentoring encompasses teaching practical subject matter like the 'problem-solving process' in Social Work (Suchana, 2019).

In essence, peer mentoring in tertiary education unfolds as a one-on-one relationship between an experienced mentor and a less experienced mentee, initiated during a pivotal transitional period and enduring significantly. The mentor dedicates voluntary time to furnish academic and non-academic support, promoting the mentee's active engagement through active learning, cognitivism, constructivism, and collaborative learning, ultimately fostering holistic development across academic, social, and emotional domains.

2.2 Peer Mentoring and Peer Learning

Peer learning, according to Slavin (1990), is the collaborative process of interdependent efforts aimed at achieving common academic goals. There exists a reciprocal relationship between peer mentoring and peer learning, as peer mentoring yields significant pedagogical aspects like Peer Tutoring, Peer Learning, and Supplemental Instruction (Clark & Andrews, 2009). Vygotsky's study (1978) emphasizes that in tertiary education, peer mentoring establishes a peer learning situation, creating the 'zone of proximal development' through interactive engagement between peer mentors and mentees. This not only fosters an interactive classroom environment but also serves as a motivational source and a channel for constructive feedback. Riechmann and Grash's study (1974) highlights that peer learning in tertiary education provides mentees with opportunities to review and discuss class lectures, proving particularly beneficial for teaching practical subjects in social sciences, such as social work, and effectively engaging students in the learning process (Clark & Andrews, 2009).

2.3 Theories of Students' Engagement

Utilizing interactive peer learning classrooms, peer mentoring actively engages students and aligns with engagement theories like active learning and collaborative learning.

2.3.1 Active Learning

Within tertiary education, the active learning process is often likened to a holistic approach, facilitating the

transition from surface learning, characterized by memorization, to the deeper understanding achieved through interactive and active learning (Clark & Andrews, 2009). Chickering and Gamson's (1987) comprehensive study identified seven effective principles for active learning, including frequent contacts, fostering reciprocity and mutual cooperation, utilizing active learning techniques, providing prompt feedback, emphasizing time management, setting high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and creative learning approaches. Despite potential challenges such as contact issues and time management, active learning proves instrumental in conceptual mapping, brainstorming, cooperative learning, role-playing, project-based learning, and peer teaching—activities that effectively engage students in tertiary education classes (Zayapragassarazan & Kumar, 2012).

2.3.2 Cognitivism

Cognitive development in students is intricately linked to Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Constructivism, specifically through the "Zone of Proximal Development" (Cholewinski, 2009). Baroudi and David's study (2020) underscores the utility of cognitive constructivism, particularly for weaker students, emphasizing the scaffolding approach in the classroom to bolster cognitive skills and knowledge. Cholewinski's research (2009) outlines various models of cognitivism, including modeling, explanation, coaching, scaffolding, reflection, articulation, and explorations. These models contribute to students' cognitive development by actively engaging them in class activities. Baroudi and David (2020) also note that students can construct knowledge within the "Zone of Proximal Development" of an interactive classroom, provided there is proper intervention, fostering greater engagement in tertiary education despite challenges like mismanagement and limited learning opportunities.

Furthermore, peer mentoring emerges as a catalyst for students' cognitive learning processes, significantly impacting the gradual development of cognitive skills, the quality of self-questioning, study habits, and addressing negative traits such as poor skills and heightened personal anxiety (Hembree, 1988).

2.3.3 Constructivism

The Theory of Constructivism posits that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through a process aligned with their intellectual developmental stages, steps, or existing situations, relying on internal cognitive structures rather than passive absorption (Bruner & Garton, 1978). Comprising Cognitive Constructivism and Social Constructivism, the former, a structuralist learning theory, elucidates how learners construct knowledge through staging and mental adaptation (Cholewinski, 2009). In contrast, Social Constructivism asserts that learning is a situated, societal, and collaborative process, with learners taking full responsibility for constructing their skills and knowledge (Bruner & Garton, 1978). Peer mentoring contributes to knowledge construction by engaging students in active learning processes rooted in both cognitive and social constructivism within social sciences classes (Bruner, 1996).

2.3.4 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning, a facet of peer learning, involves an interactive and cooperative process, exemplified by activities like group work and discussions, enhancing student engagement in classes. This approach fosters more effective learning, encourages reflection on learning outcomes, and facilitates information sharing, surpassing the outcomes of individual learning (Boud, Cohen, & Samson, 2014). Laal and Ghodsi (2012) advocate for structured collaboration and peer-based collaboration within a peer learning environment, creating an ideal setting for collaborative learning that ensures sustained student engagement. Boud et al. (2014) emphasize that collaborative learning yields social, psychological, academic supports, and assessment benefits, significantly contributing to students' cognitive and social development, thus enhancing engagement in tertiary education classes. Zayapragassarazan and Kumar (2012) further highlight the efficacy of pair-based activities and informal small groups in cooperative and collaborative learning

projects, ensuring and enhancing student engagement in social sciences classes at the tertiary level.

2.4 Challenges in Peer Mentoring Practice

In a higher education study on peer mentoring and student engagement, Colvin and Ashman (2010) identified challenges like student absenteeism and the mentor's failure to understand mentee demands, mitigated through proper orientation and motivation. Similarly, in another study, Clark and Andrews (2009) noted challenges such as peer mentor favoritism and punctuality issues, addressed through adequate orientation, motivation, and ongoing training in peer

2.5 Gaps in Literature

Peer mentoring emerges as a highly effective teaching approach for engaging undergraduate students in arts and social sciences, both in private and government educational institutions at the tertiary level, despite challenges such as student absenteeism (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Suchana (2019) and Sultana (2017) conducted studies in two private universities in Bangladesh, affirming the significant contribution of peer mentoring in fostering engagement through interactive peer learning classrooms and various student engagement theories. While the practice of mentoring or peer mentoring in Bangladesh's undergraduate level is uncommon, some private universities are pioneering its introduction to provide peer learning opportunities and enhance student engagement. Remarkably, no study has addressed the practice of peer mentoring for student engagement in government colleges in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study holds particular significance, bridging a literature gap by examining the implementation of peer mentoring as a novel professional teaching practice in a government college, aiming to establish a peer learning environment and ensure enhanced student engagement in social work classes.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to delve into abstract concepts, experiences, and processes related to peer mentoring and students' engagement in tertiary education. Known as "real-world" research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the data collection methods include interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Classroom Observation to gather valid and reliable qualitative data (Creswell, 1998). A small sample size and thematic analysis approach further ensure the collection of robust data and the development of themes on the research topic (Robson, 2011).

3.2 Population and Sampling

Employing a purposive sampling technique, six students and three teachers were selected, adhering to Alvi's (2016) recommendation. Equal representation of male and female students ensured gender balance. Due to the absence of female teachers in the department, three male teachers were chosen. The selection excluded mentors and mentees in a mentoring relationship to mitigate potential complications, issues, and problems, following Creswell's guidance (2009).

Table: 3.2.1 Coding of the Participants

| Teachers/Students | Designation | Sex | Educational Qualification |
|-------------------|---------------------|------|---|
| Teacher 1 (T1) | Associate Professor | Male | Bachelor of Social Sciences, Master of Social Sciences, and PhD |
| Teacher 2 (T2) | Assistant Professor | Male | Bachelor of Social Sciences and Master of Social Sciences |

| | | | |
|----------------|----------|--------|---|
| Teacher 3 (T3) | Lecturer | Male | Bachelor of Social Sciences and Master of Social Sciences |
| Student 1 (S1) | Student | Male | 2 nd Year |
| Student 2 (S2) | Student | Female | 2 nd Year |
| Student 3 (S3) | Student | Male | 3 rd Year |
| S4 | Student | F | 3 rd Year |
| S5 | Student | M | 4 th Year |
| S6 | Student | F | Master of Social Sciences |

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

In this study, interviews gathered private insights from peer mentors and mentees, focus group discussions explored public opinions, and direct observations documented classroom interactions of teachers, peer mentors, and mentees (Robson, 2011).

3.3.1 Interviews

Characterized as structured conversations centered on specific questions, interviews in this study served as a direct and reliable method for collecting data on the topic, as emphasized by Creswell (2009). They yielded crucial insights into the status of peer mentoring, its advantages and disadvantages, and the impact on students' engagement (Robson, 2011).

3.3.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Defined as a facilitated group discussion on a specific topic, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in this study, guided by a moderator, sought diverse responses and corroborated insights from other data collection methods (Willig, 2013). FGDs efficiently gathered varied and comparative perspectives on the status, advantages, and disadvantages of peer mentoring, as well as students' engagement, without extensive time and financial resources (Creswell, 1998).

3.3.3 Classroom Observation

Observation, a systematic procedure for data collection in natural settings, was employed in this study. Classroom observation provided firsthand data on peer mentoring and students' engagement, offering insights beyond mere reports (Creswell, 2003; Willig, 2013).

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity, assessing the ability of data collection methods to measure their intended targets, and reliability, ensuring consistent results under similar conditions, are crucial concepts (Robson, 2011). This study achieved external validity by including respondents from the second year to the master's final year and ensuring a representative sample size. Construct validity was maintained through designing objectives, questions, methods, and instruments based on literature review and colleague input. Since the findings were not statistically analyzed, conclusion validity was not addressed. Reliability was addressed by minimizing participant errors through clear and understandable questions (Creswell, 2009; Robson, 2011).

3.5 Research Instruments

This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interview protocols, focus group discussion (FGD)

guidelines, and a checklist for classroom observation to collect qualitative data. All sessions were recorded with approval and subsequently transcribed to extract key insights on peer mentoring and students' engagement in tertiary education in Bangladesh (Hashemnezhad, 2015).

3.5.1 Interview Protocol

In this qualitative study, the use of semi-structured open-ended questions, known for their depth and knowledge construction capabilities, was employed (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Questions were tailored separately for teachers and students. Responses to questions 1-5 addressed research question one, questions 6-7 focused on research question two, and questions 8-16 provided insights into research question three.

3.5.2 FGD Protocol

Guidelines for Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were crafted to elicit diverse responses, validate insights from other methods, and optimize time and cost savings (Powell & Single, 1996). Tailored separately for teachers and students, questions 1 of each FGD protocol addressed research question one, question 2 pertained to research question two, and answers to questions 3-7 of each protocol delved into research question three.

3.5.3 Observation Protocol

Utilizing a classroom observation protocol proved instrumental in capturing data from real-time activities, surpassing reliance on reported activities (Rio-Roberts, 2011). The checklist was structured with section 2 addressing research questions one, two, and three, while section 3 focused on assessing students' engagement through "Standards for a Participation Grade" and "Formative Assessment."

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Conducting interviews at respondents' preferred times and locations, the researcher ensured flexibility. Teacher interviews averaged approximately fifty-five minutes, while student interviews lasted around thirty minutes. Employing semi-structured open-ended questions facilitated the collection of in-depth, descriptive data on key themes.

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were strategically placed in the research process, involving three teachers and six students separately. FGDs, lasting about one hour for teachers and forty-five minutes for students, accommodated participants' schedules and locations. The researcher followed FGD protocols tailored for each group.

Classroom observations, each lasting forty-five minutes during regular class times, were strategically timed after interviews and an FGD. This multilayered approach, employing interviews, FGDs, and classroom observations, provided intensified and validated data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding. Audio recordings of all interactions, conducted with participants' informed consent, were meticulously analyzed for data transcription.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Following ethical approval from the University authority, all data collection procedures proceeded with the participants' explicit consent. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's purposes, and their ethical approval was obtained through signed consent forms for utilizing their data, comments, and opinions. Assurance was provided regarding the confidentiality of their information, including demographic details.

3.8 Data Analysis

To ensure accuracy and originality, the transcribed records underwent a meticulous double-checking process (Robson, 2011). Utilizing thematic analysis after coding raw data, key features, similarities, and dissimilarities were identified and summarized to construct various themes, following Creswell's approach (1998). Additionally, supplementary techniques such as comparative analysis, theoretical sensitivity, and theoretical saturation were employed to enhance the analysis and discussion of qualitative findings.

3.9 Summary

The methodology is crucial for ensuring a smooth and valid research process. This study strategically embraced a justified qualitative research design, research methods, data collection instruments, procedures, and analysis processes. Ethical considerations included obtaining approval and written consent, assuring participants of data confidentiality and anonymity.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Status of Peer Mentoring in Social Work Classes

The findings reveal that teachers, covering all academic levels from the first year to master's final year, predominantly employ the traditional lecture method in their classes. T1, in an interview response to questions 1-5, acknowledged the consistent use of traditional lectures, occasionally integrating assignment work. Notably, formal peer mentoring structures are absent in the social work department, but teachers encourage informal peer mentoring among students, fostering participatory and engaging classes. In an FGD, S4 affirmed the prevalence of traditional lecture methods, occasionally supplemented with assignments and motivational speeches to enhance class participation.

Classroom observation Note 1, from section 2 of the checklist, highlights a teacher entering with a book and delivering the class lecture through the traditional method, incorporating informal peer mentoring among students. The findings suggest that teachers in the social work department employ traditional lecture methods coupled with informal peer mentoring, attracting regular class attendance. Al Faruki et al.'s (2019) study supports the notion that traditional lecture methods alone may not sufficiently engage students in tertiary education, emphasizing the significance of integrating new professional practices such as peer mentoring. Additionally, the findings underscore the department's practice of informal student peer mentoring, as directed by teachers, contributing to heightened student engagement.

4.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Peer Mentoring for Engaging Students in Social Work Classes

The findings underscore that despite having certain disadvantages, peer mentoring offers substantial advantages in engaging students within classes, creating opportunities for peer learning, and incorporating various pedagogical elements like interactive classrooms.

In an interview response to questions 6-7, T2 emphasized the significant advantages of peer mentoring, including the creation of a peer learning environment. Peer mentoring provides essential services such as sponsoring, advocating, counseling, reapplying concepts, scholarships, and role modeling, fostering student engagement. However, the drawbacks are minimal, involving extra pressure on peer mentors and time consumption for meetings.

During an FGD, S3 highlighted peer mentoring's substantial contribution to creating a peer-assisted learning environment, promoting effective learning in a friendly and non-authoritarian setting. A minor disadvantage noted was the potential for peer mentors to provide incorrect answers.

Classroom observation Note 2, from section 2 of the checklist, affirmed that peer mentoring fosters a peer learning environment, leading to an interactive classroom and serving as a significant source of motivation and a channel for constructive feedback.

Overall, the study's findings reinforce the notion that peer mentoring programs significantly contribute to establishing a genuine peer learning environment with an interactive classroom. The programs offer noteworthy academic advantages, including peer tutoring, along with non-academic support like career guidance through motivational encouragement and feedback. While acknowledging few disadvantages, such as occasional pressure on mentors and the possibility of incorrect responses, the study aligns with Clark and Andrews' (2009) findings, emphasizing the positive impact of peer mentoring in creating a friendly peer learning environment, engaging students through active learning, cognitivism, constructivism, and collaborative learning, and providing valuable motivation and feedback to mentees on their academic work. In summary, despite its minor drawbacks, peer mentoring proves highly beneficial in teaching social work students, fostering an interactive classroom, and enhancing student engagement through active and collaborative learning.

4.3 Students' Engagement via Peer Mentoring in Social Work Classes

4.3.1 Students' Engagement through Peer Mentoring, Peer Learning, and Students' Engagement Theories

The study's findings shed light on how peer mentoring effectively engages students through various pedagogical approaches, including peer learning in interactive classrooms, active learning employing scaffolding methods, cognitivism fostering self-development, and constructivism embracing cognitive and social aspects. Collaborative learning is also a key element, involving group tutoring.

During an interview, T1 elaborated on the diverse ways peer mentoring can foster engagement, encompassing interactive classrooms, active learning through scaffolding, cognitivism promoting self-development, and the combined cognitive and social aspects of constructivism. Group work, a crucial component of collaborative learning, was also emphasized.

In an FGD, S4 reiterated the positive impact of peer mentoring on learning class content in interactive classrooms. Students not only gain subject knowledge but also receive motivation and feedback on their academic work, encouraging increased engagement in classes.

Classroom observation, as indicated in Notes 3, 6, and 7 from sections 2 and 3 of the checklists, highlighted the active engagement of social work students with peer mentoring experiences. The assessment of students' engagement through participation standards and formative assessment methods further confirmed their active involvement in class activities.

The study's findings align with previous research. Zayapragassarazan and Kumar (2012) observed that active learning, involving assignments, group discussions, and scaffolding approaches, enhances student engagement. Chickering and Gamson (1987) emphasized cognitivism, contributing to self-development and analytical processes. Cholewinski (2009) noted that constructivism promotes engagement through cognitive and social constructivist methods. Johnson (1989) found collaborative learning effective through peer-based collaboration, group work, and discussions.

Collectively, these empirical findings underscore that peer mentoring plays a multifaceted role in engaging students. It not only fosters peer learning in interactive classrooms and active learning through scaffolding but also supports cognitive, constructivism, and collaborative learning. The study provides robust empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of peer mentoring in engaging students across various pedagogical

dimensions.

4.3.2 Strategies for Enhancing Students' Engagement in Social Work Classes

The findings underscore the effectiveness of several strategies, including scaffolding, assignment work, motivation, and individual tutoring, in ensuring and enhancing students' engagement in social work classes.

In an interview, T3 emphasized the instruction given to peer mentors to implement scaffolding and assignment strategies, fostering active student engagement in classes. The insights from an FGD, where S6 expressed the positive impact of peer mentors employing scaffolding, providing motivation, and offering individual tutoring, further reinforced the significance of these strategies.

Classroom observations, noted in Note 4 from the checklist's section 2, highlighted the encouraging impact of scaffolding and motivation strategies on students, prompting increased engagement in social work classes.

The findings align with Zepke and Leach's (2010) study, which identified the significant enhancement of students' engagement in tertiary education classes through the application of scaffolding, rapport building, and communication strategies.

In conclusion, the empirical evidence strongly supports the idea that employing peer tutoring, scaffolding, and motivation strategies significantly enhances students' engagement in social work classes at the tertiary education level. These multifaceted strategies play a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to active and sustained student involvement in the learning process.

4.3.3 Challenges and Possible Solutions of Peer Mentoring Practice in Social Work Classes

The findings reveal that the implementation of peer mentoring practices may encounter challenges, including students' absenteeism, failure to complete assignments, and difficulties in adhering to schedules.

In an interview, T2 highlighted instances where mentees did not attend classes, posing challenges for peer mentors in understanding their needs. However, these challenges were addressed by providing comprehensive orientation and motivation on peer mentoring practices.

During an FGD, S5 expressed concerns about peer mentors displaying favoritism and reluctance to become academic friends. Classroom observation, as noted in Note 5 from section 2 of the checklist, emphasized that challenges such as student absenteeism and lack of punctuality could hinder the smooth practice of peer mentoring among students.

The study suggests that while peer mentoring may face challenges, such as absenteeism and mentors' difficulties in understanding mentees' needs, these challenges can be effectively addressed through the provision of proper orientation, motivation, and training to mentors and mentees. Colvin and Ashman (2010) similarly identified challenges in their study but found that providing appropriate training to mentors and mentees effectively mitigated these challenges, supporting the notion that strategic interventions can enhance the success of peer mentoring practices.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Findings

5.1.1 Status of Peer Mentoring in Social Work Classes

In tertiary education in Bangladesh, teachers predominantly employ the traditional lecture method

supplemented with class activities. However, findings underscore the method's limitations in effectively engaging students. Additionally, teachers guide students in informal peer mentoring due to the absence of a formal mentoring structure.

5.1.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Peer Mentoring for Engaging Students in Social Work Classes

The qualitative findings emphasize that peer mentoring offers significant advantages by fostering a peer learning environment and providing support services, including sponsorship, advocacy, counseling, and role modeling. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of peer mentoring in engaging students through various theories such as active learning, cognitivism, constructivism, and collaborative learning. However, it acknowledges that peer mentoring is not without drawbacks, with potential challenges like increased pressure on mentors and the time-consuming nature of meetings.

5.1.3 Students' Engagement via Peer Mentoring in Social Work Classes

The study's findings illuminate that peer mentoring facilitates peer learning, engaging students in interactive classrooms. It further enhances engagement through active learning activities, cognitivism's self-development, and constructivism's cognitive and social dimensions. Additionally, the study identifies effective strategies like scaffolding, motivation, group work, assignments, group discussions, and peer tutoring for significantly boosting students' engagement.

5.2 Implications for Current Practice and Further Research

The study has empowered the researcher to enhance professional practice by incorporating peer mentoring with traditional lectures. It also provides valuable insights into pedagogical aspects, emphasizing interactive classrooms, scaffolding, self-development, cognitive and social constructivism, and group work. Future research avenues in Bangladesh's tertiary education, such as peer mentoring's impact on student retention rates and psychological support, should be explored further.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

While respondents were limited to one department, the study's validity and reliability remained intact due to the careful sampling and rigorous data analysis employed. Despite time constraints, the study's focus on the social work department, overseen by the researcher, mitigated potential issues. The research's exclusive concentration on peer mentoring and students' engagement, within the framework of a qualitative design, ensured the study's coherence and integrity.

5.4 Recommendations

In the realm of teaching social work, the enhancement of professional practices can be achieved by integrating student peer mentoring alongside the conventional lecture method. This integration, whether formal or informal, empowers educators to deliver more effective instruction in social work. Moreover, peer mentoring can be strategically employed to foster engagement among social work students, utilizing both formal and informal approaches within the traditional lecture method. Regular training programs, emphasizing motivation and orientation, are pivotal for the seamless implementation of mentoring initiatives, ensuring effective student engagement in social work classes.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

Within tertiary education in Bangladesh, peer mentoring offers extensive opportunities to engage students

through diverse educational theories, including active learning via class activities, cognitivism fostering analytical development, and constructivism encompassing cognitive and social dimensions. The incorporation of student peer mentoring alongside traditional lecture methods emerges as an optimal strategy for teaching social work practically, creating an interactive classroom conducive to heightened student engagement in social work classes within the realm of social sciences.

REFERENCES

1. Al Faruki, M.J., Haque, M. A. & Islam, M. M. (2019). Student-Centered Learning and Current Practice in Bangladeshi College Education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(13).
2. Alvi, M. (2016). A Manual for Selecting Sampling Techniques in Research.
3. Baroudi, S., & David, S. A. (2020). Nurturing female leadership skills through peer mentoring role: A study among undergraduate students in the United Arab Emirates. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 74(4), 458 -474.
4. Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Samson, J. (Eds.). (2014). *Peer learning in higher education: Learning from and with each other*. Routledge.
5. Bruner, J. (1996). *The Culture of Education*. Harvard University Press.
6. Bruner, J. S., & Garton, A. (1978). *Human Growth and Development: Wolfson College Lectures, 1976*. Clarendon Press.
7. Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7).
8. Cholewinski, M. (2009). An introduction to constructivism and authentic activity. *Journal of the School of Contemporary Society International Studies, Nagoya University*.
9. Clark, R., & Andrews, J. (2009). Peer mentoring in higher education: A literature review.
10. Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks, and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 18(2), 121-134.
11. Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.
12. Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*.
13. Creswell, J. W. (2003). A framework for design. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (pp. 9-11).
14. Hashemnezhad, H. (2015). Qualitative content analysis research: A review article. *Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics (JELTAL)*, 3(1), 54-62.
15. Hembree, R. (1998). Correlates, causes, effects, and treatment of test anxiety. *Review of Educational Research*, 58(1), 47-77.
16. Houlston, C., Smith, P. K., & Jessel, J. (2009). Investigating the extent and use of peer support initiatives in English schools. *Educational Psychology*, 29(3), 325-344.
17. Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505-532. Creswell, 1998
18. Johnson, C. S. (1989). *Mentoring Programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
19. Khalil, M. I. (2019). ICT Integration in Tertiary Education: A Study on a Government College in Barishal City. *Journal of Brojomohun College*, 1(1), 63-77.
20. Laal, M., & Ghodsi, S. M. (2012). Benefits of collaborative learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 31, 486-490.
21. Mannan, M. A. (2018, September 11). Education in Bangladesh. *The Daily Ittefaq*, p. 6.
22. Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*.
23. O'Hara, D. (2011). The impact of peer mentoring on pupils' emotional literacy competencies. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 27(3), 167-177.
24. Philop, K., & Spratt, J. (2007). A synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending. Manchester, Uk: The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

25. Powell, R. A., & Single, H. M. (1996). Focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 8(5), 499-504.
26. Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interviews. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 8(3), 238-264.
27. Riechmann, S., & Grash, F. (1974). A rational approach to developing and assessing the construct validity of a student learning style scales instrument. *The Journal of Psychology*, 87(2).
28. Rio-Roberts, D. (2011). How I learned to conduct focus groups. *Qualitative Report*, 16(1), 312-315.
29. Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research*. West Sussex: Wiley.
30. Slavin, R. E. (2010). Cooperative learning: What makes group-work work. In *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice* (pp. 161-178).
31. Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
32. Suchana, A. A. (2019). Mentoring at tertiary level education: A tool to exceed students' problems. *International Journal of English*, 7(4).
33. Sultana, S. (2017). SWOT analysis of mentees for productive mentoring in tertiary education: Perspective Bangladesh. *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS)*, 37(1), 129-139.
34. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Process*. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.
35. Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. McGraw-Hill Education.
36. Zayapragassarazan, Z., & Kumar, S. (2012). Active learning methods. *Online Submission*, 19(1), 3-5.
37. Zepke, N., & Leach, L. (2010). Improving student engagement: Ten proposals for action. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 11(3), 167-177.