

## Perceptions of Senior Faculty on the Success Factors of Peer Coaching Initiatives for Junior Faculty in Medical Education: A Qualitative Study

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore the success of peer coaching initiatives for junior faculty, focusing on the perceptions of senior faculty members within a medical education institution. Peer coaching as a professional development strategy, has gained attention for its potential to enhance teaching skills, research productivity and overall job fulfilment among junior faculty. The aim of this study is to explore the factors influencing the success of peer coaching initiatives for junior faculty in medical education, specifically from the perspective of senior faculty members. The study seeks to identify key themes related to the effectiveness, benefits, challenges, and recommendations for improving peer coaching programs, thereby contributing to the understanding of faculty development in academic settings.

**Materials and Methods:** This qualitative experimental study of the perceptions of senior faculty members, explored through in depth interviews, brought to light critical themes concerning the possible factors of influence on the success of peer coaching in medical education for junior faculty such as trust, communication, institutional support, and qualities of effective coaches. The selection criteria for this study comprised senior faculty members with wide experience in teaching and aptitude in peer coaching programs. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, where semi structured interview transcripts were studied to identify recurring themes and patterns associated with the effectiveness and challenges of peer coaching initiatives.

**Results:** The analysis discovered that in depth interviews with senior faculty members regarding the factors influencing the success of peer coaching enhance teaching skills and increase research efficiency among junior faculty. Good communication skills are an important factor in peer coaching. Trust and mutual respect were recognized as themes.

**Conclusion:** This study explored the effectiveness of peer coaching initiatives for junior faculty in medical education, meeting on factors that contribute to successful coaching relationships, the challenges faced by the participants, and the potential for enhancing these programs.

**Keywords:** Faculty Development, Junior Faculty, Medical Education, Peer Coaching, Qualitative Research, Senior Faculty Perceptions

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## INTRODUCTION

Peer coaching has been recognized to be an effective tool for professional development in academia, especially within the medical educational context. The technique fosters an interlinked approach to work and gives an opportunity to inculcate teaching skills, besides giving an opportunity to research being put into practice. But the success of any peer coaching endeavor is strictly dependent on the perception of senior faculty about such schemes because they are the ones instrumental in providing the platform for such schemes. Success factors with regard to attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of senior faculty toward peer-coaching programs for junior faculty.<sup>2</sup> This collaborative process not only supports in the development of essential skills but also contributes to a supportive academic culture that values constant learning. Despite the possible benefits, the success of peer coaching programs is expressively influenced, understanding these perceptions is vital for institutions seeking to design and implement effective peer coaching programs that can meet the growing needs of faculty and contribute to enhanced educational outcomes.<sup>5</sup> The mutual exchange of facts and feedback between coaches and coachees creates an environment conducive to reflection, critical thinking, and skill development.<sup>6</sup> The global perspective of this study highlights the increasing recognition of peer coaching as an effective tool for faculty development in higher education institutions worldwide.<sup>3</sup> As educational systems across the globe, endeavor to enhance teaching quality and faculty engagement; peer coaching initiatives have evolved as a valuable tool for fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and supporting professional growth among coaches.<sup>4</sup> The findings of this study can inform similar initiatives in diverse cultural and institutional contexts, highlighting the universal importance of trust, relationship dynamics, and structured support in successful peer coaching programs.<sup>16</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a qualitative exploratory study carried out on a private dental institution, with in depth interviews from senior faculty members who are experts in the subject matter and have expertise in medical education.

A purposive sampling technique was used for sampling by enlisting. The study targeted senior faculty members who had vast experience of the subject matter and the clinical field. The focus on senior faculty members allows

for an exploration of their experiences and perceptions, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of peer coaching.<sup>7</sup> The concept of data saturation steered the sample size determination, as it is essential to collect enough data to identify recurring themes and patterns.<sup>8</sup> The chosen sample size allows for a thorough exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the success of peer coaching.

Semi-structured interview questions were made available to elicit in depth information from participants of the study. The questions for the interviewer were formulated in conjunction with help and guidance from the medical educationists and then some pilot interviews were conducted.<sup>9</sup> After permission from participants, it was requested that interviews be recorded. Recordings were helpful in transcribing data. The researcher transcribed data and carried out a thematic analysis. The method of triangulation was applied to ascertain the validity of the data collected. To transcription data, the recordings of the in-depth interviews were listened to. Single meaningful units in the transcriptions, which captured something interesting about the research question were coded. Codes were used in getting subthemes that are categories. By merging the subthemes, main themes were developed.

After establishing the purpose of each respective theme, the themes and their sub-themes were critiqued. Against the above research question, evidence proving the existence of the themes was duly supported by data extracts, quotes from the findings of the data analysis procedure.

## RESULTS

This qualitative study gives high value to insights of perceptions received from senior faculty members regarding peer coaching for junior faculty in medical education. Through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, several key themes emerged, highlighting the effectiveness of peer coaching, the essential qualities of successful coaches, and the critical role of institutional support. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of peer coaching and its potential to enhance faculty development.

After conducting primary data collection, qualitative thematic analysis was done on the same. Details of the demographic characteristics of respondents of the study

are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Profile of Study Participants**

Participant number	Designation/subject	Gender
01	HOD/ General Pathology	Female
02	HOD/Pharmacology	Female
03	HOD/Community Dentistry	Female
04	HOD/Physiology	Female
05	HOD/Oral Biology	Male
06	HOD/ Dental Materials	Female

After the thematic analysis results appeared thus: factors identified by the senior faculty for the success of junior faculty. Five themes and 17 subthemes emerged after coding categorization of the data. Table 2 gives the overview of the themes and representative quotes from the participants. The analysis revealed following critical themes related to the success of peer coaching initiatives:

**Effectiveness and Benefits of Peer Coaching:** All participants stated that peer coaching improves teaching skills, research productivity, and job satisfaction of junior faculty members. All the respondents indicated that it fosters an amiable climate for professional development.

#### **Qualities of Effective Senior Faculty Coaches:**

Such effective coaches were of considerable experience,

empathetic, good at communication skills and committed to the process of coaching. Participants often agreed that the best coaches are approachable and supportive.

#### **Impact of Trust and Relationship Dynamics:**

The identified two key elements toward the foundation for successful coaching relationships include trust and mutual respect. A participant commented that one necessary component for the aspect of any positive dynamics is effective conflict resolution, along with open communication.

#### **Role of Institutional Support and Resources:**

Full institutional support and backing, not just monetary; necessary training and recognition by participants. The teaching practices will have to be taken up by institutions, as faculty development will then become a priority in keeping a comfortable coaching environment.

#### **Challenges and Barriers in Peer Coaching:**

The primary challenge to the conversation was the lack of time and a fixed framework for engagement. Not being open to receiving feedback was also seen as one of the challenges. Respondents said that the peer-coaching process could be much better if more structured approaches were implemented regarding it.

Themes from the study are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Themes from the Study, Including Quotes: Qualitative Study of Attitudes, Beliefs, And Experiences of Senior Faculty Toward Success Factors In Peer-Coaching Programs For Junior Faculty**

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES
Effectiveness and Benefits of Peer Coaching	Enhancement of teaching skills. Increase in research productivity. Improvement in job satisfaction. Contribution to a supportive institutional culture	Refine teaching methods and gain confidence.
Qualities of Effective Senior Faculty Coaches	Experience and expertise. Empathy and communication skills. Commitment to the coaching process. Ability to provide feedback	Connect on a personal level and communicate feedback constructively.
Impact of Trust and Relationship Dynamics	Importance of trust in coaching relationship. Mutual respect and understanding. Effective conflict resolution.	Creates a supportive environment where junior faculty feel value
Role of institutional support and resources	Availability of financial backing. Training opportunities for coaches and coachees. Recognition of coaching efforts within the institution.	Improves engagement and commitments through acknowledgements and incentives.
Challenges and barriers in Peer coaching.	Resistance to feedback and change. Time constraints faced by faculty. Lack of structured frameworks for coaching.	Balancing coaching with other duties is challenging.

The results of this study emphasize the significant impact of peer coaching on the professional growth of junior faculty, as perceived by senior faculty members. The identified themes not only illustrate the benefits and challenges associated with peer coaching but also offer actionable recommendations for institutions to enhance their coaching programs. With this kind of atmosphere, reducing the barriers might help educational institutions make peer coaching initiatives more effective in improving teaching and results for learning in medical education.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the success factors for peer coaching which play influential role in junior faculty development. This discussion is devoted to find the threats, opportunities and suggestions for enhancing the outcomes of peer coaching programs.<sup>10</sup> The increase in teaching competencies they pointed out is similar to that said peer coaching is an avenue for faculty members to try out better teaching practices and get feedback hence improve their teaching pedagogy.

It correlates with the study that stated, peer coaching enhances the number of researches produced because it provides an opportunity for doubles and multiplications of ideas.<sup>11</sup>

The participants also presented job satisfaction, which can be boosted by means of peer coaching, as one of the significant points. This is a similar conclusion of two studies which found that faculty members involved in peer coaching because of increased job satisfaction arising from supportive, cooperative coaching relationships.<sup>12,13</sup> Among the best practices peer coaching programs, according to another study, is the extent to which such programs are established and implemented in consideration of the existing academic climate and the objectives of the learners.<sup>14</sup>

This paper has brought out five characteristics of good senior faculty coaches; these include experience, empathy, non-verbal communication, commitment and availability which have been widely supported by literature concerning the best practices for faculty coaching. Being acquainted with the particular type of undertaking, as pointed out by the participants, is critical in the delivery of useful advice. This is in light of recent studies in which it was established that the senior coaches have

an added advantage in rendering realistic prescriptions that can be implemented by junior faculty in their career

advancement.<sup>9</sup> Emotional intelligence is also another important pre-condition for the competent performance of a coach, with focus on empathy and communication skills to foster the level of trust for the coaching process convey that empathy should be used largely in coaching since empathetic coaches can appreciate the struggles of junior faculty and tend to encourage the junior faculty

in a manner that promotes development.<sup>15</sup> In the same way, good communication skills help the coaches in passing their messages in a positive and in a way that does not offend the personalities of the athletes as this is paramount for developmental purposes.

Participants emphasized that the consistency and sustainability of coaching relationships largely depend on the time, commitment, and availability of senior faculty coaches. This supports the assertion that dedicated coaches are more likely to invest the necessary time and effort to foster mature coaching partnerships, ultimately leading to meaningful and long-lasting outcomes. There are a few limitations in the study. One limitation is that it will have a small sample size conducted only in one institute of dental science. Also, there was no junior faculty input in this study.

Future studies should be conducted in more institutions, with a larger sample size. Additionally, the opinions of junior faculty members will be incorporated to provide more valid conclusions.

## CONCLUSION

Peer coaching effectively supports faculty development by enhancing skills, fostering professional growth, and building supportive peer relationships. It aids in improving teaching and research practices but faces challenges such as time constraints, lack of structured framework, and resistance to feedback, which can be addressed through a supportive culture. Key themes include the importance of trust and empathy for strong relationships, institutional support for sustainability, and a positive perception of its potential for faculty development.

## DISCLAIMER

None to declare.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

**ETHICAL STATEMENT**

An ethical clearance letter was obtained from the Institutional Review Board and the Ethics Committee at RIPHAH (reference: IRC# 24/1022).

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