



# Mentorship Malpractice among Lecturers and Mentee's Career Prospects

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## Abstract

The subject of mentorship malpractice among lecturers and its impact on mentees' careers has become a concern within academic institutions. The paper identified two primary categories of mentorship malpractice: active malpractice, which includes hijackers, exploiters, and possessors, and passive malpractice, manifested through bottleneck mentors, country clubbers, and world travellers. Each type presents unique challenges and potential harm to mentees' professional development. The paper further identified contributing factors, including lecturer-related issues such as burnout and lack of training, institutional factors like inadequate policies and oversight, and systemic problems including power imbalances and entrenched cultural norms. These factors create an environment where mentorship malpractice can flourish, leading to serious consequences including neglect, exploitation, and emotional abuse of mentees. The impact on mentees' career prospects is particularly significant, often resulting in delayed professional development, missed opportunities, and long-lasting psychological effects. While the need to combat mentorship malpractice is clear, multiple challenges exist at the mentor, mentee, and institutional levels. These include power dynamics, limited resources, lack of accountability, and resistance to change. The paper concluded that mentorship malpractice hurts both lecturers' and mentees' career prospects. In addressing mentorship malpractice, the paper suggested that mentors, mentees and institutions need a holistic approach involving institutional policy reforms, improved training and support for mentors, better protection for mentees, and a cultural shift in how academia views and values effective mentorship. Only through such coordinated efforts can the academic community begin to create healthier, more productive mentoring relationships that truly support mentees' career development.

**Keywords:** Mentorship Malpractice, Lecturers, Mentee's Career Prospects.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mentorship defines a fundamental cornerstone of academic and professional growth, serving as a transformative relationship that transcends traditional pedagogical interactions. Meanwhile, mentorship is a dynamic, intentional partnership where an experienced professional guides a less experienced individual through knowledge transfer, skill development, and career navigation (Ocobock et al., 2022). Within academic environments, this relationship becomes particularly crucial, as mentors play a pivotal role in shaping emerging scholars' intellectual and professional trajectories. The significance of effective mentorship cannot be overstated. For emerging academics, mentors provide more than mere guidance; they offer critical insights into complex professional landscapes, facilitate networking opportunities, support research endeavours, and help mentees develop essential scholarly competencies (Goerisch et al., 2019). A robust mentorship experience can dramatically accelerate career progression, enhance research capabilities, and cultivate the intellectual confidence necessary for sustained academic success.

However, the idealised vision of mentorship is frequently compromised by systemic challenges and unethical practices that can profoundly undermine mentees' developmental potential. Mentorship malpractice emerges as a complex phenomenon involving various detrimental behaviours that can significantly impede mentees' academic and professional advancement (Ebuwei, 2020). These practices range from passive neglect and inadequate support to more egregious forms of exploitation, intellectual manipulation, and deliberate obstruction of career opportunities. The current academic landscape reveals a critical research lacuna concerning the comprehensive understanding of mentorship malpractice, particularly among university lecturers. Despite the growing recognition of mentorship's transformative potential, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to systematically examining the negative dynamics that can emerge within these relationships. This research deficit creates substantial challenges in identifying, addressing, and mitigating the potential harm inflicted upon vulnerable early-career academics (Miles, 2023).

Existing literature predominantly focuses on positive mentorship models and their benefits, inadvertently creating a knowledge vacuum regarding the mechanisms and consequences of mentorship malpractice (Dutton, 2019). This research gap leaves institutional stakeholders without robust frameworks for recognizing, preventing, and addressing potentially destructive mentoring behaviours that can derail promising academic careers. The consequences of mentorship malpractice extend far beyond individual experiences, potentially perpetuating systemic inequities within academic institutions. The broader scholarly ecosystem suffers when mentees experience sustained professional marginalization, intellectual suppression, or deliberate career impediment. Talented researchers may be discouraged, innovative research perspectives might be silenced, and the intellectual diversity critical to academic advancement may be compromised. It is against this background that this paper sought to examine the impact of mentorship malpractice among lecturers and mentee career prospects.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)**

Social learning theory, pioneered by Albert Bandura in the 1960s and 1970s, represents a groundbreaking paradigm in understanding human behaviour and learning processes (Rotter,

2021). Emerging from the intellectual lineage of behaviourist and cognitive psychological traditions, the theory fundamentally challenges previous mechanistic views of learning by emphasizing the critical role of observation, social interaction, and cognitive mediation in knowledge acquisition. Bandura's seminal work diverged from traditional behavioural models by introducing a revolutionary concept, that is, learning occurs not merely through direct experience, but significantly through observational mechanisms. The theory posits that learning occurs through complex interactions between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioural experiences. Individuals do not merely respond to external stimuli but actively engage in cognitive processes of observation, interpretation, and decision-making. In watching others, particularly influential role models, people develop mental representations of behaviours, subsequently determining whether to emulate or reject those observed patterns (Rotter, 2021).

In academic mentorship contexts, social learning theory becomes particularly significant. Mentees do not simply receive instructional information, they absorb professional norms, research methodologies, ethical standards, and interpersonal dynamics through intricate observational learning. The mentor-mentee relationship becomes a nuanced landscape where knowledge transmission extends beyond explicit instruction, encompassing subtle behavioural cues, communication strategies, and institutional cultural practices. Bandura's framework identifies four fundamental processes governing observational learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Rayes & Albelaihi, 2023). Mentees selectively focus on mentor behaviours, retain those observations through symbolic coding, attempt to reproduce learned behaviours, and evaluate potential motivational consequences. This process explains how mentorship experiences can profoundly shape academic trajectories, professional identities, and career development.

The theory's relevance to mentorship malpractice research is multifaceted. It provides a sophisticated lens for understanding how destructive mentoring practices can be inadvertently learned and perpetuated within academic ecosystems. Negative mentorship experiences do not merely represent isolated incidents but potentially systemic learning mechanisms that can distort professional socialization processes. Critical implications emerge when considering how unethical mentorship behaviours might be unconsciously transmitted. A mentee experiencing manipulative, exploitative, or negligent mentorship may internalize these approaches, potentially reproducing similar dynamics in future professional relationships. This cyclical pattern suggests that mentorship malpractice represents more than individual misconduct—it reflects broader institutional learning dynamics. Social learning theory thus offers a powerful analytical framework for examining mentorship relationships. In revealing the complex interplay between observation, cognition, and behavioural adaptation, the theory illuminates the profound ways in which mentorship experiences can fundamentally shape academic careers, professional development, and institutional cultures.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship is an arrangement, or more meaningfully a relationship, in which an experienced individual instructs, guides, and assists a (usually younger) colleague, the protégé. When mentorship is effective, it functions in an atmosphere of mutual respect (Jacobs, 2022). The origin of the term mentorship is steeped in irony that has gone largely unnoticed, except perhaps,

by students of the classics. Mentor was an individual, or at least he was a character in ancient Greek mythology. A Mentor was an already ageing man when he appears in the Homeric epic “The Odyssey”. Odysseus chose to place his close friend Mentor in a position of great responsibility, that of looking after Odysseus’ young son Telemachus, while the hero was away fighting the Trojan War (Jacobs, 2022).

Mentorship represents a dynamic, purposeful professional relationship where experienced individuals provide guidance, support, and knowledge transfer to less experienced professionals (Terfa et al., 2022). Across diverse domains including education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and library sciences, mentorship emerges as a critical mechanism for individual and institutional development. In educational contexts, mentorship transcends traditional instructional interactions, serving as a comprehensive developmental process that nurtures teachers' professional capabilities, enhances self-efficacy, and facilitates effective pedagogical practices (Abetang et al., 2020). Specifically, Terfa et al. (2022) highlighted how mentorship significantly influences teachers' confidence and competence in implementing inclusive educational strategies, demonstrating the transformative potential of structured professional guidance.

Healthcare research conceptualizes mentorship as a fundamental infrastructure for professional capacity building. Ughasoro et al. (2022) added that mentorship in health research institutions revealed significant barriers and potential solutions from multiple perspectives. Their research emphasizes mentorship's critical role in addressing institutional challenges, promoting research skills, and supporting emerging professionals in navigating complex healthcare environments. Technological and entrepreneurial domains perceive mentorship as a crucial resource for innovation and professional advancement. Okeremi and Caesar (2023) further asserted that mentorship plays a vital contingent role in successful IT entrepreneurship in Nigeria, demonstrating how strategic guidance offers critical insights, network connections, and professional development opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs.

Library and information science perspectives frame mentorship as a structured developmental process addressing professional challenges, skill gaps, and institutional knowledge transfer. Adekoya and Fasae (2021) explored mentorship in librarianship, highlighting its significance in meeting professional needs and addressing systemic challenges within information science domains. Ojo et al. (2023) further opined that mentorship can fundamentally transform educational institutional dynamics, promoting comprehensive professional development. Core characteristics of effective mentorship include intentional knowledge transfer, holistic developmental approach, reciprocal relational dynamics, contextual adaptability, and transformative potential. Mentors facilitate not just skill acquisition, but comprehensive personal and professional growth across various professional landscapes.

Challenges inherent in mentorship processes include institutional barriers, complex power dynamics, communication limitations, and resource constraints. Ughasoro et al. (2022) identified these challenges in health research institutions, demonstrating the multifaceted complexities of establishing effective mentorship programs. Fundamentally, mentorship represents more than a professional development strategy; it is a transformative mechanism enabling individual potential, institutional knowledge preservation, and professional ecosystem evolution. Mentorship continues to be a critical intervention in contemporary professional landscapes by bridging experience gaps and facilitating structured learning. From educational settings to technological entrepreneurship, mentorship is a strategic tool for individual growth, institutional development, and professional transformation. However, while the mentor-mentee relationship is often mutually beneficial, the power dynamic is inherently unbalanced, and there

is the unfortunate possibility that mentors can act in ways that may hinder mentees' academic careers, a phenomenon known as mentorship malpractice.

## **Mentorship Malpractice**

The word mentorship evokes strong emotional and intellectual chords. In formal parlance, mentorship has been defined as “a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced-career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (mentee) aimed at promoting the career development of both. In our careers in academic medicine, we have seen mentees benefit from mentors through the development of critical thinking skills and advice on research ideas, scholarship, and networking opportunities (Chopra et al., 2016). Similarly, now as mentors, we have also benefitted by gaining an ally to support our work, developing larger circles of influence, and establishing legacies as academic leaders. It is thus not surprising that mutually beneficial mentor-mentee relationships are a key predictor of academic success. While much has been written about the qualities that constitute an ideal mentor, little attention has been given to behaviours that make one less desirable (Humphrey, 2010). This gap is important because mentor-mentee relationships are, by definition, unequal, with mentees being more vulnerable. Mentees are also likely to disproportionately suffer in a dysfunctional relationship, behoving them to be cognizant of mentor behaviours that threaten success. While small intermittent lapses are natural when managing various responsibilities, mentor behaviour that puts a mentee’s academic career at risk crosses a threshold we term mentorship malpractice (Chopra et al., 2016).

Mentorship malpractice is a pervasive and insidious issue that can have profound consequences for unsuspecting mentees. It occurs when individuals in positions of authority or influence exploit their power and expertise to misguide, manipulate, or take advantage of their mentees. This can manifest in various forms, such as emotional exploitation, intellectual property theft, or professional sabotage. According to Chopra et al. (2016), mentorship malpractice is a situation where mentees are misguided or taken advantage of, further highlighting the need for increased access to mentorship. The consequences of mentorship malpractice can be devastating, leading to damaged self-confidence, stifled creativity, and derailed career trajectories. Moreover, it can foster a toxic environment that discourages openness, trust, and vulnerability – essential components of effective mentorship.

## **Forms of Mentorship Malpractice**

Chopra et al., as cited in Deb et al. (2022), categorized mentorship malpractice into two primary types (active and passive)

### **Active Mentorship Malpractice Types**

Active mentorship malpractice is a deliberate and harmful breach of the mentor-mentee relationship, where mentors exploit their position of authority to manipulate, exploit, or harm their mentees. This egregious behaviour can take many forms, including emotional manipulation, intellectual property theft, professional sabotage, and unwanted advances or harassment. Mentors who engage in active malpractice may use their influence to undue their mentees' confidence, stifle their creativity, or obstruct their career advancement. They may also abuse their power to

extract personal gains, such as financial benefits or intellectual property rights. However, active mentorship malpractice can be broken down into three subtypes:

**The Hijacker:** They are those mentors who commit academic theft by appropriating their mentee's intellectual property, whether it is research ideas, project frameworks, or grant proposals. The hijacker often operates through indirect manipulation, initially showing passion for the mentee's work before gradually assuming control. They might start by suggesting minor modifications to the project, then progressively increase their involvement until they have carefully taken ownership. This behaviour may manifest in various ways, such as adding their name as the primary investigator on grants originally conceived by the mentee, presenting the mentee's research findings at conferences without proper attribution, or publishing papers based on the mentee's work while minimizing the mentee's contribution.

The damage inflicted by hijacker mentors extends beyond immediate career impacts. Mentees often experience severe psychological consequences, including diminished confidence in their abilities, reluctance to share new ideas, and lasting trust issues that can affect future academic collaborations. The hijacker's actions create a toxic academic environment that contradicts the fundamental principles of mentorship: nurturing growth, fostering independence, and supporting professional development.

**The Exploiter:** They are those mentors who thwart a mentee's success by saddling them with low-yield activities. They systematically destabilize their mentee's progress by assigning them tasks that provide little to no benefit to their professional development. The exploiter often masks their actions under the guise of "paying dues" or "gaining experience," but their true motive is typically self-serving. They might burden mentees with excessive administrative duties, routine laboratory maintenance, or teaching responsibilities that far exceed reasonable expectations. Exploiter mentors often justify their actions by claiming these tasks build character or provide valuable experience, but the reality is that they are using their mentees as free or low-cost labour to advance their agenda. This can manifest in various ways: assigning mentees to write grants they won't be credited for, having them perform data analysis for projects they're not involved in, or requiring them to manage lab operations that should be handled by dedicated staff. The long-term impact on mentees can be severe, leading to delayed career progression, missed opportunities for meaningful research experience, and a skewed understanding of academic priorities.

**The Possessor:** They are those mentors who dominate the mentee across various areas of collaboration. The Possessor exemplifies a controlling and suffocating form of mentorship that stifles growth and independence. Mentors maintain complete control over their mentee's academic and professional life, often extending their influence beyond reasonable boundaries. The possessor might insist on approving every decision their mentee makes, from research methodology choices to conference attendance and even career moves. They frequently discourage collaborations with other researchers, limit networking opportunities, and attempt to shape the mentee's career trajectory according to their vision rather than the mentee's interests and goals. This type of mentor often justifies their behaviour as "protection" or "guidance," but rather creates dependency and restricts the mentee's professional development. The possessor might require mentees to continue collaborating with them long after the formal mentorship period ends, discourage independent publication, or attempt to influence the mentee's choice of

future positions. This behaviour can lead to stunted professional growth, limited networking opportunities, and a narrow skill set that doesn't reflect the mentee's full potential.

### **Passive Mentorship Malpractice Types**

Passive mentorship malpractice occurs when mentors, despite their best intentions, unintentionally harm or neglect their mentees through inaction or inadequate support. This action a damaging phenomenon, can arise from various factors, including a lack of clear guidance, inadequate communication, and insufficient support. Their unintentional bias, inattention to mentee needs, and failure to set boundaries contribute to passive mentorship malpractice. In most cases, mentors overlook their responsibilities or assume a hands-off approach, leaving mentees feeling frustrated, disappointed, and uncertain about their progress. The consequences of passive mentorship malpractice can be far-reaching where mentees experience delayed or stalled growth, diminished confidence, and reduced motivation as well as missed opportunities and unrealized potential. Passive mentorship malpractice is also divided into the following three subtypes;

**The 'Bottlenecks':** These are those mentors who are preoccupied with their competing priorities and do not have the bandwidth or the desire to attend to mentees. The Bottleneck mentor looks common but deeply problematic form of passive mentorship malpractice. This mentor type is characterized by chronic unavailability and insufficient attention to their mentees' needs, often due to competing priorities or a simple lack of interest in mentoring responsibilities. While they might have initially agreed to serve as a mentor with good intentions, their actual commitment falls far short of what effective mentorship requires. The bottleneck mentor frequently cancels or postpones meetings takes weeks or months to review manuscripts or proposals, and provides minimal feedback when they do engage. This type of mentorship malpractice is particularly frustrating for mentees because it creates a state of perpetual midpoint. Projects stall while waiting for approval or feedback, career opportunities may be missed due to delayed letters of recommendation, and professional development stagnates without proper guidance. The bottleneck mentor's behaviour often creates a cascade of delays that can significantly impact a mentee's academic progress and career timeline. While this form of malpractice might seem less actively harmful than the previous types, its cumulative effect can be just as damaging to a mentee's professional development.

**The Country Clubber:** This is a type of mentorship malpractice where mentors focus on conflict evasion and avoid difficult but necessary conversations. The mentor prefers to maintain a pleasant atmosphere over providing necessary critical feedback and guidance. The mentor might initially seem appealing, as they create a comfortable environment free from observable conflict. However, this conflict-avoidance style of mentorship ultimately does a serious disservice to mentees by depriving them of crucial professional development opportunities. The country clubber mentor typically shies away from addressing performance issues, avoids giving constructive criticism, and may even withhold important negative feedback that could help the mentee improve. This mentorship style often leads to significant problems in the mentee's professional development. Without honest feedback about areas needing improvement, mentees might continue making the same mistakes or failing to address weaknesses in their work. The country clubber's reluctance to engage in difficult conversations can result in mentees being unprepared for the realities of academic or professional life, where conflict resolution and critical feedback are essential skills. Furthermore, this mentorship style can create a false sense of

security and competence that may lead to shock and disappointment when the mentee faces more demanding situations in their future career.

**The World Traveller Mentor:** They are mentors who spend little to no time or effort on mentoring while often exploiting the mentee for self-promotion. This mentor type is physically and mentally absent from their mentoring responsibilities, often prioritizing their own visibility and career advancement over their mentees' development. While they might maintain a high profile in their field through conference appearances, invited talks, and various professional activities, they invest minimal time and effort in actually mentoring their charges. The world traveller might use their mentees' work to enhance their reputation while providing little in return in terms of guidance, support, or professional development opportunities. This type of mentor often maintains a large group of mentees, possibly to create the appearance of being a successful mentor, but provides little meaningful support to any of them. They might be quick to take credit for their mentees' successes in public forums while being absent during crucial periods of project development and problem-solving. The impact on mentees can be severe, as they essentially navigate their academic or professional development without proper guidance while still being nominally under the mentor's supervision.

### **Factors Contributing to Mentorship Malpractice**

Mentorship malpractice can have severe consequences on mentees' academic, professional, and personal development. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, compromising the effectiveness and integrity of mentorship relationships. These factors include but are not limited to:

**Lecturer-Related Factors:** These are personal and professional challenges that mentors face in their academic roles; such as burnout and lack of training (Ajayi, 2022). Burnout is a significant contributor, as faculty members often juggle multiple responsibilities including teaching, research, administrative duties, and securing funding. This overwhelming workload can lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. When mentors are burned out, they may lack the emotional and mental capacity to provide quality mentorship, potentially becoming bottleneck mentors or country clubbers by default rather than intent. The lack of formal mentorship training is another crucial lecturer-related factor. Many academics become mentors simply because of their position or expertise in their field, without receiving any formal preparation for the mentoring role. This lack of training can result in mentors being unaware of best practices, unable to effectively navigate challenging situations, or struggling to provide constructive feedback (Ajayi, 2022). They might unknowingly engage in harmful practices, believing they are following traditional academic mentoring models they experienced themselves.

**Institutional Factors:** Factors like inadequate policies and lack of accountability play a significant role in enabling or preventing mentorship malpractice. Many academic institutions lack comprehensive policies governing mentorship relationships or clear guidelines for mentor responsibilities and accountability. Without formal structures to evaluate mentorship quality or address complaints, problematic behaviours can persist unchecked (Ramdhany et al., 2023). Additionally, institutions often prioritize research output and grant funding over mentorship



quality when evaluating faculty performance, creating incentives that may encourage exploitative or neglectful mentoring practices. The absence of institutional support systems for mentors and mentees can exacerbate these issues. When institutions fail to provide resources, training, or recognition for quality mentorship, they implicitly suggest that mentoring is a secondary priority. This can lead to mentors viewing their mentoring responsibilities as burdensome rather than integral to their academic role.

**Systemic Factors:** These factors like power imbalances and cultural norms encompass broader structural and cultural issues within academia that contribute to mentorship malpractice. Power imbalances are inherent in academic hierarchies, creating situations where mentees may feel unable to address problematic mentoring behaviours for fear of retaliation or career damage (Sarkar, 2024). These power dynamics can be particularly pronounced for mentees from underrepresented groups who may face additional barriers and vulnerabilities. Cultural norms within academia can normalize certain forms of mentorship malpractice. The tradition of "paying your dues" or the belief that struggling is a necessary part of academic development can justify exploitative practices. The competitive nature of academia, emphasis on individual achievement, and scarcity of resources can foster environments where hijacking ideas or exploiting mentees become rationalized as necessary for survival or success.

### **Consequences of Mentorship Malpractice on Mentee's Career Prospects**

The consequences of mentorship malpractice can be profound and far-reaching, often creating lasting impacts on mentees' personal well-being, professional development, and career trajectories. However, in the context of this paper, the following are the consequences of mentorship malpractice on a mentee's career prospects.

**Neglect (lack of guidance, inadequate feedback):** Neglect in mentorship manifests as a fundamental failure to provide the guidance and support necessary for a mentee's development (Tuma et al., 2021). When mentors fail to offer adequate feedback, mentees often find themselves navigating complex academic or professional landscapes without proper direction. This neglect can take various forms, from chronically cancelled meetings to superficial reviews of work that lack meaningful insight. Mentees might submit drafts of papers or proposals only to receive cursory feedback months later, if at all. The absence of regular, constructive guidance can leave mentees questioning their abilities and unsure about their progress. This uncertainty can lead to delayed project completion, missed opportunities for improvement, and a general sense of professional isolation.

**Exploitation (using mentees for personal gain and emotional labour):** is a form of mentorship malpractice where mentors misuse their position of authority for personal benefit (Cohen & Baruch, 2022). This can manifest in various ways, from assigning mentees excessive administrative tasks that serve the mentor's interests to requiring them to perform emotional labour by managing laboratory dynamics or supporting other students without recognition or compensation. Mentees mostly find themselves writing papers outside their area of specialization, managing projects without appropriate credit, or handling teaching responsibilities well beyond their formal obligations. The exploitation often extends to emotional dimensions, with mentees feeling obligated to provide personal support to their mentors or

manage their mentor's professional relationships. This type of exploitation not only consumes time that should be spent on the mentee's development but can also create patterns of professional subordination that persist throughout their careers.

**Emotional Abuse in Mentorship:** This phenomenon is damaging, as it strikes at the core of a mentee's self-confidence and professional identity. This form of malpractice might involve public humiliation during meetings, belittling comments about research ideas, or dismissive attitudes toward the mentee's contributions (Porterfield, 2024). Some mentors use criticism not as a tool for improvement but as a means of asserting dominance or expressing their frustrations. The impact of such emotional abuse can be long-lasting, leading to impostor syndrome, anxiety about presenting work, and hesitation in pursuing ambitious projects or opportunities.

In other words, the consequences on mentees' career prospects can result in delayed completion of degree programs, weakened publication records, and missed networking opportunities. Mentees might struggle to develop the professional skills and connections necessary for career advancement, leading to difficulties in securing positions or funding. The impact can extend well beyond the immediate mentorship period, affecting the mentee's ability to establish independent research programs or advance in their chosen field. Furthermore, mentees who experience malpractice might find themselves lacking strong letters of recommendation or professional references, which are often crucial for career advancement. The absence of proper mentoring in early career stages can create gaps in professional development that become increasingly difficult to overcome. Some mentees might even abandon their chosen field entirely, representing a significant loss of talent and potential contributions to their discipline. These consequences often interact and compound each other, creating a cascade of professional and personal challenges that can take years to overcome. The impact of mentorship malpractice thus extends beyond individual careers to affect the broader academic and professional communities, potentially perpetuating cycles of poor mentorship and limiting diversity and innovation in various fields.

### **Challenges to Combating Mentorship Malpractice**

Mentorship malpractice is detrimental to a mentee's career prospects which should be carefully fought yet mentors, mentees, and institutions face several challenges in combating mentorship malpractice. Some of these are:

**Mentors Challenges (Time Constraints and Competing Priorities):** Mentors face significant challenges in addressing mentorship malpractice, including time constraints and competing priorities that make it difficult to provide consistent, quality mentorship (Lee et al., 2019). Many mentors struggle to balance their teaching responsibilities, research demands, administrative duties, and mentoring obligations. Additionally, many mentors lack formal training in effective mentorship practices, leaving them ill-equipped to handle complex mentoring situations or provide appropriate guidance. Some may unconsciously perpetuate poor mentoring practices they experienced themselves, creating a cycle of problematic mentorship.

**Mentees Challenges (Power Dynamics and Professional Vulnerability):** Mentees encounter unique challenges in addressing mentorship malpractice, particularly related to power dynamics and professional vulnerability (Brown, 2022). Many fear that speaking up about problematic

mentoring could harm their career prospects or lead to retaliation. They might lack knowledge about what constitutes appropriate mentorship and may struggle to identify when they're experiencing malpractice versus normal professional challenges. Furthermore, mentees often lack access to alternative mentors or support networks that could help them navigate difficult mentoring situations.

**Institution Challenges (Structural and Practical):** Institutions face structural and practical challenges in implementing effective oversight of mentorship relationships (Johnson, 2015). Many struggle to develop comprehensive policies that can address the diverse forms of mentorship malpractice while remaining flexible enough to accommodate different disciplinary needs. Creating effective accountability mechanisms without damaging mentor-mentee relationships or academic freedom can be particularly challenging. Additionally, institutions often lack the resources to provide adequate mentor training programs or support services for both mentors and mentees.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective mentorship is the bedrock of academic and professional excellence, nurturing growth, expertise, and lasting relationships. However, when mentorship falters, the repercussions are far-reaching and devastating. Mentorship malpractice has a profound impact, extending beyond individual relationships to affect the broader academic and professional landscape. The ripple effects of poor mentorship perpetuate harmful practices, as some mentees may replicate the damaging behaviours they endured. Moreover, talent loss becomes a stark reality as disillusioned individuals abandon academia and professional fields, seeking more supportive environments. Ultimately, mentorship malpractice takes a dual toll. Mentees see their potential stifled, while lecturers risk tarnishing their reputations and jeopardizing career advancement. It is imperative that we recognize the gravity of mentorship malpractice and collectively strive to cultivate a culture of excellence, empathy, and accountability, ensuring that mentorship empowers, rather than hinders, the next generation of leaders.

## Strategies for Combating Mentorship Malpractice

Combating mentorship malpractice requires a multi-dimensional approach involving strategic interventions from mentors, mentees, and institutions.

- Mentors, mentees, and institutions should establish a clear mentorship agreement that can provide a structured framework for expectations and responsibilities. These agreements should explicitly outline communication protocols, meeting frequencies, project ownership, feedback mechanisms, and performance evaluation criteria.
- Mentors, mentees, and institutions should implement mandatory mentorship training programs that can equip mentors with the necessary skills and awareness to provide effective guidance. These programs should focus on developing emotional intelligence, understanding power dynamics, creating inclusive mentoring environments, and recognizing potential malpractice scenarios.
- Mentors, mentees, and institutions should create independent oversight and confidential reporting mechanisms within institutions that can provide mentees with safe channels to

report mentorship malpractice. These systems should ensure protection from retaliation and include neutral, experienced professionals who can mediate and investigate potential mentorship misconduct effectively.

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