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May 2021

Impact Of Mentoring Amongst Indigenous Young Adults In Sabah, Malaysia

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IMPACT OF MENTORING AMONGST INDIGENOUS YOUNG ADULTS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 10, 2021

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Dedication

To all the changemakers -

may you continue to persevere and stay resilient in making a difference

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List of Abbreviations

BM   Bahasa Malaysia (Malaysia's national language)

RM   Ringgit Malaysia (Malaysian currency)

UPSR   Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Achievement Test)

SDG   Sustainable Development Goals

SPM   Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (Malaysian Certification of Education)

SWTS   School to Work Transition Survey

ABSTRACT

Most indigenous communities in Malaysia live in poverty and this has limited their access to education and decent employment. This study examines how mentoring relationships may aid indigenous young adults (19-24 years old) in Sabah, Malaysia in overcoming socio-economic barriers and securing stable employment. To explore this, several data sources were used that derived from interviews with mentors, a mixed method online survey with the mentees followed by telephone interviews with selected mentees from the responses. Findings indicate that the family's influence, language proficiency of the young adult, development of soft skills and financial literacy were factors that influence an indigenous young adult's employability, job security and stability. The findings also demonstrate that mentoring provides benefits such as increased positive character values, career advancement opportunities, preparedness of work, skills development and employment opportunities. Mentoring, if paired with an understanding of indigenous culture, may be an effective intervention tool especially in the development of Sabah's indigenous young adults towards human capital growth in Malaysia.

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Introduction and Statement of Research Question

The study examines the socio economic factors that affect securing stable employment for indigenous young adults (ages 19-24) in Sabah, Malaysia. It asks how these factors may be used by adult mentors to aid young adults for future job search and employment. Research demonstrates that youth unemployment in Sabah has always been the highest in the nation and, compounded with the structural violence faced by young adults, serious intervention may be required to help overcome this issue (Aun, 2020).

Having been brought up in the fringes of Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, I have been involved with social and development work both voluntarily and, over the past eight years, professionally. I have moved locations twice, in particular to Cambodia and the last five years being in Sabah - the state with the highest poverty rate in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). I have observed the challenges that native indigenous people face, particularly in the education sector. As one involved in many mentoring relationships, both as a mentor and mentee, I perceive that having such a relationship in a young person's life can be enriching. However, I acknowledge my ethnicity, place of birth and current income status as a middle-income earner may hinder me from understanding the struggles of an indigenous native. This thus leads me on the quest to explore this topic further.

The future of Malaysia's development is highly dependent on the human capital of young Malaysians. According to Khazanah Research Institute (2018), a government linked research agency, human capital is a key determinant for the country to advance into a high-income status. Despite the young generation today being attributed as the best educated one, they face considerable challenges in securing a job. Young Malaysians are challenged to progress in the labour market after leaving the education system (2018). According to the results of the school-to-work transition survey (SWTS) conducted between 2017-2018 in Malaysia, there is a lack of "soft

skills" within the younger generation that leads to them being unemployable (Khazanah Research Institute, 2018). Most employers rate soft skills and work experience above academic and professional qualifications and have claimed that they are lacking amongst young Malaysians (2018). Soft skills is an umbrella term that covers areas such as "strong work ethics, good communication skills, creative and analytical thinking, problem solving skills, acting as a team player, positive attitude, learning from criticism and working under pressure" (2018, p. 4).

This issue is greater amongst the rural and indigenous community in Malaysia. In Sabah alone (see map in Appendix A), there are approximately 39 ethic groups which makes up 58.6% of its 3.8 million population (Nicholas, 2019). The main groups are the *Dusun, Murut* and *Bajau* and they typically live in huts at rural villages or on stilt huts by the sea. Considering the structural challenges facing young people in Sabah, they would need to be equipped with the necessary skills to break free from the cycle of poverty. These structural challenges include inequality amongst indigenous people, access to schools and a lack of enforcement of national policies to make education more equitable for these young people. The SWTS reports that these students are more likely to be from rural schools and have poorer educational outcomes than the others (Khazanah Research Institute, 2018). Unfavourable outcomes such as these suggests that students who are pursuing their tertiary or vocational studies should be trained in areas of soft skills and leadership skills to ensure this will eventually match the needs of employers (Khazanah Research Institute, 2018). To achieve this aim, one possible intervention is through mentoring indigenous young adults in building resilience in the working world.

Mentoring has been variously defined to indicate a form of people development and a journey or process where one person invests time, energy, and personal knowledge in assisting the growth and ability of another person (Burke, 1984; Gordon, 1999). Karcher (2005) describes

three popular types of young people mentoring: cross-age mentoring, group mentoring and inter-generational mentoring. Cross-age mentoring is a relationship that provides a supporting peer environment by an "older and wiser" youth in a relationship that is "less task-focused than relationally focused" (2005). Group mentoring consists of a mentor who works in groups to teach youth about a particular topic focusing on "relationship building and group processes as a primary means of targeting developmental achievements among group participants" (Karcher, 2006, p. 713). Intergenerational mentoring occurs when youths are mentored by adults 55 years of age and older, as older people have the time "to contribute to family and community; they have more time lived, which has given them both practical experience and wisdom, and the time they have left to live may provide an impetus to leave a legacy and to pass on to future generations what they have learned" (Karcher, 2006, p. 713)

Mentoring has been associated with significant benefits such as educational benefits, social benefits and the development of higher levels of resilience (Peralta, et. al., 2018). Through the efforts of mentoring, a mentee may observe an improvement of positive characteristics in life and thus improve on their academic performance which may lead them to secure a stable job. In DuBois et al.'s (2011) evaluation of more than 70 mentoring programs, it was found that there is a positive correlation between mentoring and the outcomes of young people's behavioural, social, emotional and academic development. In another study of more than 400 university students of a mentoring program in Vienna, mentees performed better compared to students who did not participate in the program in terms of average grade and number of courses passed (Leidenfrost et al., 2014). Organisations like Pemimpin GSL and Closing The Gap in Malaysia organises mentoring and coaching programs for their selected youth and young adult scholars in the hope

of providing "crucial support and encouragement to enable them to achieve ambitious goals" (Closing The Gap, n.d.).

This study seeks to contribute not just in highlighting the plight of indigenous young adult Sabahans, but also to highlight the value of mentoring as a possible intervention that could develop them further and thus, help them overcome the social issues they face. It hopes to also contribute to the first Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. In the broader sense, this study seeks to also contribute to goal number four which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and goal number ten which is to reduce inequality within and among countries (The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development, n.d.)

A significant broader impact of this study is that the findings may also benefit other similar communities in Malaysia such as the *orang asli,* a large indigenous community in Malaysia and the indigenous in Sarawak - a neighbouring state of Sabah. Due to the similarity of the plight faced by refugees and other indigenous communities within the region, sections of this study could also benefit the study of such groups. This includes the aboriginal groups of Australia, refugees from countries like Myanmar and Thailand and undocumented migrants from Philippines and Indonesia. These groups stated are oftentimes marginalised and are amongst the poor in their countries. Thus, this study hopes to contribute towards improving job search and security of these vulnerable groups.

Literature Review

Caradonna (2014) suggests that we are at "a crossroads in our civilisation" (p. 5) as we need "to embrace sustainability in a fullest sense - as an environmental, social, economic, and political ideal" (p. 5). The young of today - Millennials and the Generation Z (Gen-Z) will bear witness and participate at this crossroads, thus we need to take serious and intentional steps to

carry this burden together. The environment and economic pillars of society may be negatively impacted if humans themselves are faced with roadblocks and limitations to make these changes. When a society is not aware of growing problems or when a segment of communities are marginalised - it is difficult for the environment and economic sector of a nation to thrive.

The Context of Youth to Young Adult Transitions

The number of choices available and the related risk and uncertainty in decision-making for modern young adults is greater than for previous generations (Chisolm and Du-Bois Raymond, 1993). In particular, during transitions from high school to tertiary education and towards employment, a large number of research has demonstrated that those with the fewest resources are often impacted the most (Coles, 1995). Those that faces race, class and gender discrimination has demonstrated the gap and struggle in these transitions. Beck's (1992) individualization thesis argues that traditional structures of education, family and work "have become fragmented and that this has led to a blurring of social roles" (Philip and Hendry, 2000, p. 212) thus causing traditional networks of support within the family or community unable to offer them guidance.

Indigenous youth in Sabah are facing the looming problem of not being able to escape poverty or low wage cycle for a number of reasons including; mismatched expectations of the working world, inadequate leaders or mentors to guide them, insufficient training in life and soft skills needed to secure and keep a full time job and lack of motivation and sense of purpose. Whilst there is no available data about unemployment rate specifically for indigenous communities in Malaysia, most countries that have researched on this reported higher unemployment rates amongst indigenous groups. For instance, the Maori tribes in New Zealand have double the unemployment rate compared to the entire nation, Native Americans in Canada have similar disad-

vantages and the lower castes and tribes in India have also twice as high employment rates (Mangan and Trendle, 2019). For Malaysia, youth and young adult unemployment is most evident in the state of Sabah and it also records the highest graduate unemployment rates for both men and women (Aun, 2020).

It is thus important to ensure that young adults have the necessary skill sets to gain and secure stable employment. What this means is that they employ a "set of achievements - skills, understanding and personal attributes - that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations" (Achinewhu-Nworgu et al., 2006, p. 277). Achinewhu-Nworgu (2006) goes on to say that being employable will not just benefit oneself but also contribute significantly to the workforce, improve standard of living and stimulate the nation's economic growth. Being resilient is another skill that can be cultivated through a long term presence of a caring adult who can contribute to the young person in moving towards adulthood (Werner, 1990). Resilient individuals have the capacity to manage with changes or adversity and are able to endure such circumstances without being stressed (Swathi et al., 2009). One method of intervention that has been commonly adopted to develop these young adults is through mentoring relationships. Mentoring has been described to help a young person ease these transitions towards adulthood and different phases in life through various support and advice (Hamilton, 1991)

The Mentoring Approach

A more experienced or older person can significantly contribute to a younger person's life by coaching, sharing life experiences and guiding them towards achieving their full potential. Bozeman and Feeney (2007) defines mentoring as "a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant" and it involves "informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of

time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the mentee)". This adds on to Kram's (1985) definition where it states that mentoring as a developmental relationship and puts emphasis that mentoring can be part of one's developmental growth which includes socio-emotional, education and career development (Arthur and Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Scandura, 1992). Several authors have also observed that mentoring is a strategy and practice for an individual's career success due to the consequence of input from a mentor to a mentee (Atkinson, 2002; Knouse, 2001; OReilly, 2001). The value of mentoring as an "empowerment strategy in the areas of health and wellbeing, education and employment and as a remedial and preventive measure in reducing offending behaviours" (Bainbridge et al., 2014, p. 23) cannot be denied.

The intervention of mentoring has the possibility to narrow inequality through the provision of social capital as these young communities may have little to no access to certain resources that could enable social mobility (Albright et al., 2017; Mangan and Trendle, 2019). Inequality such as racial and economic segregation may limit educational and employment opportunities perhaps available to these marginalized communities compared to those who are in a more affluent or accessible place (2017). With that, it is important to note the four guidelines provided by Tolan et al., (2008) concerning mentoring relationships. They include:

1. "Having an expectation of trust and respect in a relationship developing between the mentor and mentee over an extended timeframe irrespective of whether it was formally or informally developed;
2. Mentors having more advanced knowledge and/or experience than the mentee and were committed to providing upward mobility and support to mentees according to mentees' needs;
3. a relationship involved the transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support according to the needs of mentees with the intention of fostering their growth and development; and
4. an absence of role inequality based in the contexts of training, certification, parent-child or teacher-student relationships" (p. 3)

In the study by Mangan and Trendle (2019), they deduced that mentoring has provided improved outcomes for marginalized groups such as the Maori youth, Latino students in the U.S. and students from low-income backgrounds in South Korea. According to the same study, mentoring contributes, amongst other factors, to the likelihood that the indigenous young people who will complete their work training programs (2019).

Key Success Factors of a Mentoring Relationship

Karcher et al. (2006) states that having the right infrastructure and dosage to a mentoring relationship are critical factors that would influence the outcomes. Infrastructure are "practices related to the screening, matching, training, and ongoing support for mentors" (2006, p. 715). The dosage is the quantity of mentoring that the youth receives in terms of frequency, intensity and duration of the relationship (Karcher et al., 2006). Both these factors are interdependent of one another and very likely will determine the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. In addition, those that went above and beyond formal mentoring boundaries were likely to have seen more distinct and successful results (Philip and Hendry, 2000)

The mentoring guidelines suggested by Tolan et al. (2008) also help build the mentoring relationship to a higher degree of trust and mutual respect. By having such a relationship and bond, a mentor will be able to help the mentee to realise his/her highest potential through shared activities, experiential learning, knowledge and encouragement (Delgado, 2002). Through effective facilitation and coaching techniques, the mentee would be able to "value, develop and express him or herself to word towards their goals" (Lee, 2015, p. 421). Mentors are usually vigilant towards their mentees challenges or concerns. They provide advice or input through various means including private conversations, phone calls, emails, messaging services, writing letters or feedback sessions (Awaya et al., 2003).

A mentoring relationship is similar to a teacher or sports coach relationship whereby mentoring can "provide encouragement and support, shapes behavior using reinforcement, stimulates growth with challenging assignments, narrates growth and development, nurtures creativity and acts as an intentional model" (Lee, 2016, p. 420). Among the various types of mentoring practices, the one that is more effective towards workplace development is instrumental mentoring in which its primary objective is to provide the mentee the learning of skills or achieving a specific goal (Karcher et al., 2006). This is done by giving advice, guidance and coaching the mentee towards the goal. Mentors introduce challenging behaviors when they view their role as encouraging the mentee to engage in a predetermined task or to achieve a prescribed goal" (Karcher et al., 2006, p. 714) such as increasing an academic skill, learning a new soft skill or picking up a specific technical skill.

Mentoring: The Malaysia Context

Lee (2016) discusses that mentoring literature in Malaysia has been limited to reporting practices that are "dependent on the goals of the organisations or programmes and assimilated into the organisations' normative practices" (p. 422). Few studies within the context of an issue or concern linking with mentoring are available. Furthermore, due to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the indigenous communities, a mentoring relationship may require researchers to put on a different lens when studying them. Hence, this study aims to address a contextual issue concerning young adults unemployment in Sabah and how mentoring can impact the issue.

There is a lack of agreement of epistemologies between the indigenous and other mainstream communities thus this may pose a likelihood of difference in mentoring approaches and standards. According to Masron et al. (2013), indigenous people in Malaysia hold a different perspective about development. Instead of desiring only economic growth, they value traditional

heritage and community needs. As a minority community, they lack representation and participation in politics, are oftentimes living in poverty and have severe lack of access to social services (2013). Although the natives in Sabah and Sarawak are better off than those from Peninsular Malaysia, development generally lags behind. Therefore, in contemplating the context of mentoring work with indigenous in Malaysia, an important consideration should involve value-based relationships and an approach that is non patriarchal (Peralta et al., 2017).

Methodology

Overview

This study examined the role of mentoring on indigenous young adults in Sabah, Malaysia. It examines how mentoring relationships may impact these population towards a stable and secure employment for these young adults. Although previous studies have measured and researched the effects of mentoring and employment, I was interested to explore this target group as they may have had a different cultural upbringing and environment compared to the larger population. I hypothesized that mentoring contributes (1) positively to the development of an individual young adult in the area of attitudes, emotional stability and spiritual well-being, and (2) to career development of an individual leading to stable employment. All study procedures were approved by the School for International Training Institutional Review Board.

Study Setting

This research was conducted in Sabah, the farthest state from capital Kuala Lumpur and the poorest of the country's thirteen states. A report in 2019 states that two of its districts - Tongod and Pitas are amongst the top 3 poorest districts in Malaysia (Pakan poorest district in Malaysia, 2019). They average out at RM3,066 (~USD731) per household income per month

(2019). Many of them work as farmers and rubber tappers of which large hectares of land are deforested for palm oil and timber. It is not a secret that the majority of the population in Sabah are from the bottom 40 percent of the population in terms of income levels (Andrew, 2019).

In the area of education, Sabah scores the lowest during state examinations. Year to year, they have continuously scored at the bottom of Primary 6 and Secondary 5 state examinations, very well below the national average (Ralon, 2019). Sixteen out of twenty districts who scored the lowest in the Primary Six examinations are from the state of Sabah and Sarawak, both the most eastern states in Malaysia. As for the Secondary Five examinations, 50% of the lowest ranked districts are from Sabah and Sarawak (2019). According to the Ministry of Education 2013-2025 Blueprint (2013), there is a drop out rate of 23.3% of indigenous students going from primary to secondary schools due to the shortage of secondary schools especially in the rural areas.

Graduate unemployment in 2017 was approximately 204,000, representing about 40% of total unemployment in the country. At 13.5%, Sabah is the highest among all states in overall youth unemployment (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018).

Procedure

The study used several different sources of data to answer the research question. Firstly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the mentors (n=5) as a form of qualitative research. This was to examine the mentors' understanding about mentoring, the challenges they face when mentoring indigenous youths and the development they have seen of their mentee throughout the process. The key question to understand the socioeconomic factors that may impact indigenous young adults in securing a stable and secure job was asked in this manner: "In your opinion, what could possibly impact a mentee of yours (ages 19-24) from finding or securing a job?". Drawing from the assumption that indigenous communities may possibly face challenges

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that are different from those who are non-indigenous, the interview questions were designed to ask if mentoring could be an intervention to close some of these gaps.

In order to collect more detailed information from young adults who have had mentoring relationships, an online survey presented in Google Forms was distributed. The survey used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative questions and was sent out to potential participants. After clearing the demographics of the respondents, the survey asks the following question as a qualifier: "Have you previously or currently been mentored by someone?". Respondents were included in the sample if they responded "Yes" or "unsure".

The objective of the survey was to understand if mentoring has been an intervention that contributes to the development of the individual leading to stable employment. I ask the following question: "In your opinion, can mentoring provide an impact towards a stable and secure employment? Please explain". Respondents will answer either 'yes', 'no', 'maybe' or 'unsure' followed by a field to further explain their response. To avoid bias, I described measures to keep responses confidential and no names or personal identifier were recorded. It was emphasized that participation of this survey would not affect any current or future relations with their mentors.

The survey was conducted in Bahasa Malaysia language. With the help of a head teacher of language at a secondary school in Sabah, the survey was translated to Bahasa Malaysia from English and then the translator had to back translate it to English. This is to check if the translation was accurate and thus provides credibility to the quality of the language.

Based on the consent provided by the mentees in the questionnaire, I narrowed down five to be contacted via a phone interview to allow me to understand deeper the causal relationships between mentoring and its contribution to their development, in particular their career. In the

call, each lasting approximately 12 minutes, I asked the key question "How has mentoring contributed to where you are in terms of work preparedness today?" to achieve the finding. Results of this focus group are correlated with the survey and the mentors' structured interview to address the stated hypotheses.

Sampling

There are two populations for this research - the adult mentors and young adult mentees. The criteria for inclusion in the sample population for mentors included 1) being an adult above 28 years old and 2) are currently mentoring or had previously mentored at least one indigenous young adult from Sabah. Participants were identified using a snowball sampling strategy in which I first began interviewing two mentors from my personal network. Thereafter, I received other referrals directing me to other potential mentors. I specifically ask for contacts who preferably are from a different profession than the current mentor so that I am able to expand the diversity of population.

Sampling for the survey of the mentees used the following three criteria: 1) Age between 19-24 years old, 2) ethnicity of an indigenous group, and 3) place of birth within the state of Sabah, Malaysia. As for the interviews with the mentees, I selected participants from the pool of people who completed the survey.. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked consent with the following question - "Are you open for the researcher to contact you for further information regarding this topic?". 39% of the respondents provided their consent, out of which five were contacted. The factors leading to the selection of the five mentees were based on a variety of their age, ethnicity and demographics.

Findings

Demographics of Mentors and Mentees

The five mentors who were interviewed have each more than fifteen years of mentoring indigenous individuals in Malaysia. At the time of the interview, all of them are currently mentoring at least one indigenous person in Sabah. The occupation of the mentors include a medical services professional, hostel warden, social worker, high school teacher and a university professor.

The questionnaire was circulated between January 26th to February 12th, 2021 and received 37 respondents who fulfilled the criteria listed in the methodology section. Age 24 received the most responses compared to the other age group. 64.8% (n=24) were female respondents and 35.2% (n=13) were male (See Figure 1). The *Dusun* tribe received the most respondents at 83.7% (n=24) followed by the *Rungus* tribe at 10.8% (n=4). The remainder were from the *Murut* and *Kimaragang* tribe. Amongst those that responded, 70.2% (n=26) were students, 18.9% (n=6) were working (full time employment or contract) and 8.1% (n=3) were awaiting
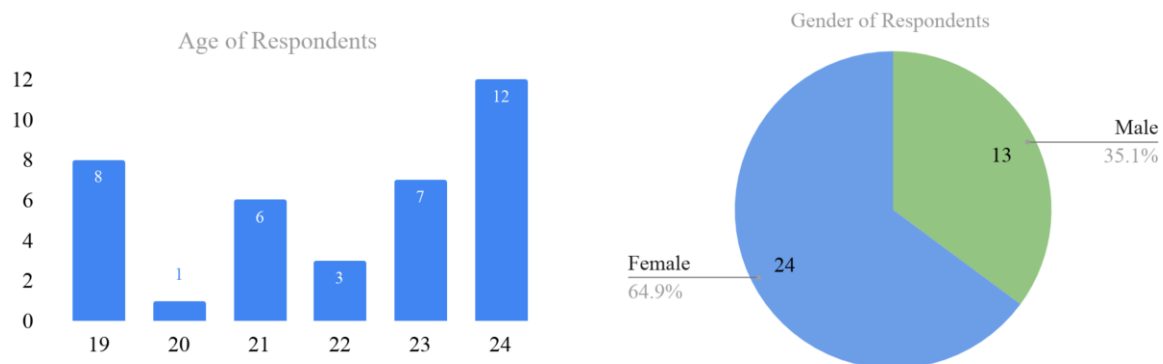
employment results. Only 2.7% (n=1) were unemployed (See Figure 2).
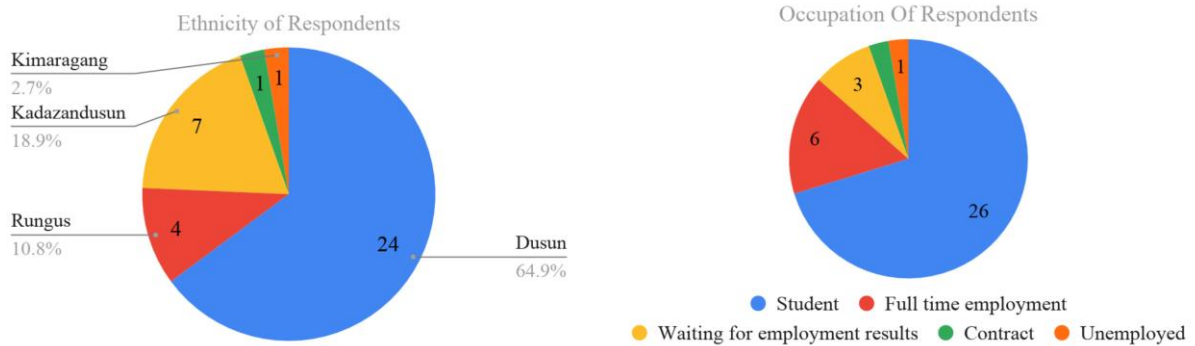
Figure 1. Age and Gender of Respondents

Figure 2. Ethnicity and Occupation of Respondents.

89.1% (n=33) consider themselves to have been mentored by someone and 10.8% (n=4) were unsure. 75.6% (n=28) of the respondents considered them to currently have a mentor (See Figure 3). 43.2% (n=16) have a mentoring relationship of one year or less, 24.3% (n=9) between two to three years, 18.9% (n=7) between four to five years and 8.1% (n=3) (See Figure 4).
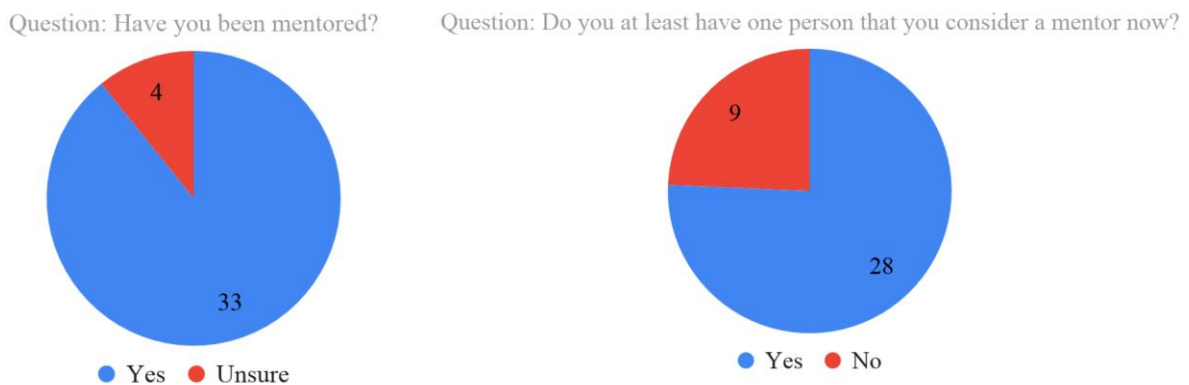
How long have you been mentored?
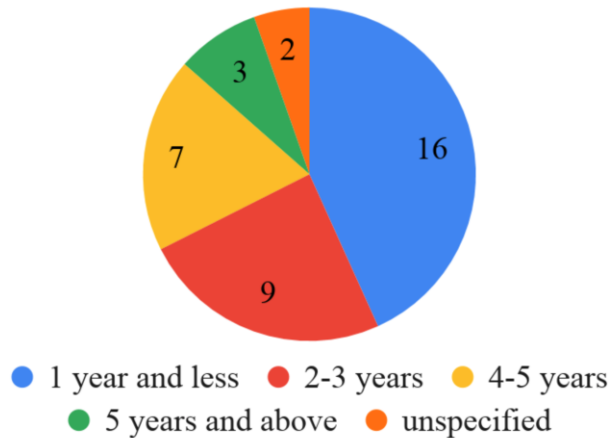
Figure 3. Relationship with a Mentor.

Figure 4. Length of Mentoring amongst Respondents.

Defining Mentoring

During the semi-structured interview with the mentors, each of them were asked to provide their definition of mentoring. Most of the mentors consider mentoring as a process and a journey of imparting knowledge and experience to someone who is generally younger or at a lower station in life. The mentors also suggested that the effectiveness of the relationship hangs in the willingness of both parties desiring to make the process work. This would mean that the mentee would be open to not just receive advice but also constructive criticism. The above can be highlighted by the following two quotes from the mentors:

> "Mentoring is a process of bringing up someone who is younger and journeying with them to impart experience and wisdom. It is suggesting steps or giving advice even though he or she doesn't want to hear… In order for the relationship to be effective, there should be an established relationship." (Male, teacher)

> "Mentoring is a journey with a person in life whether spiritual, emotional or career wise. Mentoring can also be focused, for example, if in the workplace - the process can be more professional and career aligned" (Female, Medical practitioner)

The illustration of mentoring being a journey is consistent with previous literatures. Crow and Matthew (1998) affirms with relatable metaphors such as mile markers, terrain, routes and destinations when describing mentoring. Mentors are also portrayed as trusted guides as they previously had experience in the journey before (Daloz, 1999). This was commented by one of the mentors as such:

> "Mentoring is a two way process of imparting your lifestyle to the one you mentor and also the mentee has to be willing to be open to be mentored. It will not work with a one way process as mentoring requires openness and transparency with both parties… Both parties have to agree to have one another accountable." (Female, Hostel Warden)

However, a mentoring relationship is not a depiction of the same journey that the mentor once took but perhaps more of one who has had more experience in life (Awaya et al., 2003).

In the survey, the mentees were asked an open ended question: "In your opinion, how would you define a mentor?". Each response was tagged with up to five key words in their definition and thereafter a word cloud was generated (wordcloud.com). Word clouds are visualisations of the frequency of words "that give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in a source" (Better Evaluation, 2020). The larger the word in the visual the more regular the word was used. This format is used to communicate the important points when the respondents provided feedback.

Based on Figure 5, most of the mentees consider their mentors as someone who would provide guidance, advice, teaching and counsel in life. They also consider mentors to be a leader within their sphere and therefore able to provide wisdom and support.
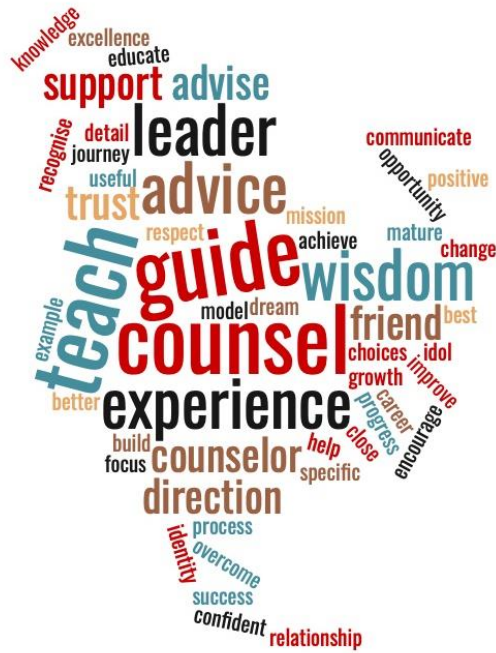
Figure 5. Word Cloud for how does a Mentee Define Mentoring

The survey also asks: "In your opinion, what are the traits of an effective mentor?". Similarly, each response was tagged with up to five keywords and a word cloud was generated. Based on Figure 6, most mentees feel that an effective mentor would need to be a good listener, firm in his or her methods, has a disciplined lifestyle and understands the mentee's challenges and issues in life.

Figure 6. Word Cloud for Traits of an Effective Mentor

As for who the mentees would consider as their mentor, a multiple-choice question with multiple answers was asked. The question was: "I consider the following as my mentor…" and nine pre-selected options were given. The tenth selection was "others" where they are able to fill in their own responses. This is to avoid bias if any of the predefined responses does not match the mentee's experience.

Based on the survey responses, interestingly, a high number of 70.27% (n=26) considers their own parents as their mentor (See Table 1). For non-parental responses, more than 50% consider their educators and religious leaders as mentors. 59% (n=22) consider their friends as mentors. These responses would need to be taken into consideration of the demographics of the respondents as only 18.9% (n=7) is currently employed during the time of the research.

Table 1. Types of mentors.

Who do you consider as your mentor?	% respondents	No of respondents
Parents	70.27%	26
College / University Lecturer	59.46%	22
Friends	59.46%	22
School Teacher	54.05%	20
Religious Teacher / Leader	51.35%	19
Hostel Warden	27.03%	10
Work Supervisor / Employer	21.62%	8
Club Advisor / Leader	8.11%	3
Sports Coach	5.41%	2

Socioeconomic Factors Impacting Indigenous Young Adults Towards Employment

In this section, I explore four main factors affecting indigenous young adults towards securing employment or having a stable job. During the interview sessions with the mentors, these factors were discussed. They include the young person's family influence, language proficiency of the young adult, development of soft skills and financial literacy.

Family Influence

A key factor that impacts an indigenous young adult transition in the workplace is their family's influence and home environment. Most of the mentors felt that the crucial decision of the young adult to progress after studies lies in the family and most of the time on the parents. The culture of an indigenous community is associated with community and is filial oriented; when a student leaves home to further their study, the physical family bond may be broken. Many indigenous communities have large families and the responsibility to care for the younger siblings would fall on the older children (Abdullah et al., 2015). This may impact a young adult

leaving home to pursue work or even studies. This was highlighted from the following two statements by the mentors:

> "I have a bright student in the past who was doing well academically and scored 7As for her SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education). She had dreams to study biotech in a college in the city but her parents called her back home to fulfil her responsibilities to care for her younger siblings. She now works in a restaurant at her village as a waiter" *(Female, Hostel Warden)*

> "One of my boy graduated with a degree in tourism management. I assisted him to find a job with several tour agencies and he even received several offers. Finally, his mother called him back to the village to tend the fields as his parents were getting old" *(Male, Teacher)*

This could mean that despite being excellent in academic performance, an indigenous young adult may face crucial decision making should the family intervene. When confronted with that, it may impact the trajectory of the young person and even so, his or her family.

Language proficiency

Another key factor that may affect a young adult towards a stable and secure employment is their level of both the *Bahasa Malaysia* (BM) and English language. The BM is the national language of Malaysia and is taught throughout school. English is a compulsory language to learn in school and has been used to teach subjects such as Mathematics and Science.

Most of the mentors feel that compared to their peers, most indigenous young adults from Sabah are not able to compete in written BM language and both spoken and written English language. They feel that this happens due to the inability to access quality teaching in schools and the slang and colloquial form of using the BM language. Two mentors note that English is taught in BM in their mentees' class room because the standard of understanding English based on the national level is insufficient. In another example, one of the mentors said: "Take for instance, the word *pukul* (*o'clock* in English). In textbooks, you are taught to say *pukul satu* (one o'clock) but most Sabahans are so used to say *'jam satu'* in their colloquial language and this often translates

to what they write on paper". One of the mentors who is a teacher and responsible for grading national level exam papers says: "I can easily spot a student from Sabah by just reading their essays. The mannerism of their language stands out but unfortunately it does not comply with the national level of grading scheme".

The language factor potentially influences an indigenous young adult because this may open up a gap in communication. Written BM language is widely used amongst government and civil agencies and English is used nationally and internationally.

Soft skills development

The soft skills development of an indigenous young adult in Sabah also contributes to them securing a stable employment. Most of the mentors find that most of their mentees lack soft skills such as confidence and communication skills at the workplace. Many of them felt that their mentees were not confident in sharing their thoughts and felt shy in conveying something even if it is wrong. A female mentor who constantly mentors indigenous young adults at her workplace says, "Most of the staff that first join me lack confidence and are afraid to speak up. They often do not have the courage to speak their mind even if they know it is wrong. And when they actually do speak up, these are rare times". She goes on to say that most who join her have never been mentored and after two to three years working under her mentorship, she could see the difference in their confidence. Majority of the mentors felt that leadership qualities in their mentees were lacking compared to other mentees who are non-indigenous that they have previously mentored. Some felt that this is due to the fact that many indigenous have not been given the opportunity to lead in school. One mentor said, "most of my mentees are 'followers' - they would heed anyone and everyone's directive without thinking it through. This has led to some negative con-

sequences". This is something of concern because at the workplace, young adults would be required to have critical thinking in making decisions. Youth Employment UK (2019) considers critical thinking as a way of making sense of information, having a reasoned argument towards it and to support it with evidence. This quality, according to the mentors who were interviewed, has been needed to be cultivated amongst their mentees.

Financial literacy

Finally, the level of financial literacy and planning could impact an indigenous young adult in finding and securing a job. Many of the mentors commented that they have seen multiple examples of indigenous young adults moving from one job to the other for a mere RM30-100 (~USD7-25) per month increase. This is because many of them do not understand the concept of opportunity cost or the factor of hourly rate. For instance, when a person works for RM1,200 (~USD285) per month, this equates to RM7.50 (~USD1.80) per hour for a 40-hours work week. With a salary increase to RM1,300 per month for a 45 hours work week, this would equate to an increase to RM8.10 (~USD1.92) per week, a mere RM0.60 (~USD0.14) increase. All of this does not include further possible increase in transportation/fuel costs and time costs when the individual has to be a part of family or friends.

Some of the mentors also consider that most indigenous young adults lack financial planning and therefore, do not have sufficient savings or investments. This impacts their desire to hop from one job to another for a meagre sum of raise. A hostel warden who has mentored more than 30 mentees says, "The fact that the young adults do not save money sets them back by a lot. They will then borrow money and end up in debt. This impacts their work performance and outlook of life. It sorts of sets them back rather than forward".

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From a Mentor's Perspectives: The Impact of Mentoring Towards Employment

The mentors who were interviewed provided several perspectives about their mentoring experience. In this section, I explore three areas that were discussed during the interview. They are (1) a mentor's measurement of a successful mentoring relationship (2) the impact mentoring can have at the workplace and (3) mentoring is itself reciprocal in relationship.

A mentor's measurement of success

Most of the mentors consider the mentoring journey a success when their mentee 'pays it forward' in reaching out and mentoring others. The term 'pay it forward' became popular when a movie with the same name was released in 2000 can be defined as an expression "to show appreciation of a good deed one has benefited from by making a kind gesture towards another person" (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). A mentor described it as such:

> "Something I stress to my students - they don't need to show me appreciation and say 'thank you' - you pay it forward to someone else. Currently, I do not see it, but if I see an effect of this in the future and it is known to me - my students are paying it forward, this would give me great joy!" (Male, Teacher)

The teacher would consider it a success when his own students mentor others in the future. He is also willing to trade their gratitude towards him with them paying it forward instead. Another mentor highlighted this concept by stating:

> "They will also be a mentor to others. For eg: in hostel context, some of the seniors reinvest back to the younger students" (Female, Hostel warden)

This mentor considers 'paying it forward' as an immediate contribution to her mentees younger hostel mates. There is a slight difference to the male teacher's definition of 'paying it forward' as something more future and lifelong. Another mentor described:

> "When they understand how important is mentoring, and when i see them mentoring the younger generation than them" (Female, Medical practitioner)

This mentor suggests the correlation of having the knowledge on the importance of mentoring and thereafter, it should lead to 'paying it forward' to another person.

Another success area of a mentoring relationship that may impact employment would be when the mentee finds a job according to his or her passion or academic degree. Too often than not, many indigenous young adults find themselves in a different field altogether compared to what they have studied or even are passionate about. This happens when they are not guided or counselled adequately which path to take during their academic years. Take for instance this comment by the hostel warden mentor - "I have seen countless young people working in a different field from what they studied. This is because they were not coached or guided through in their early years. In our hostel, I ensure that we find out their personality, passion and the right career path before they are enrolled in college or matriculation". The mentor who works as a highschool teacher says, "I know of students who studied in vocational school enrolled in a car mechanical course and end up working in a farm after they graduate - simply because they do not have interest in cars! Then why enrol in the course in the first place?". The hostel warden described her experience observing mentoring and the education system - "We have seen in recent years Malaysia had churned out many graduates who cannot fit into the working environment as many of their courses are not work-related and are just academic in nature without relevance to the real world". Therefore, an important element that can be considered a success of a mentoring relationship for an indigenous young adult could be in the form of the type of work they find.

Finally, all the mentors consider a successful mentoring relationship when their mentees recall the lessons they have learnt. This happens when the mentees apply the lessons during challenging times or at crossroads. One mentor remarks that when he finds out that his mentee "does

not just hear or listen to his advice but applies it to his life - then I know that it has taken root and this actually makes me happy".

Workplace impact

All the mentors agree that it is important to have a mentor prior to entering the workforce or during employment, especially in the early days of the job. Having a mentor before employment especially during the transition from student to employed provides stability to the mentees. The mentors agreed that when an indigenous young adult has had a mentoring relationship during their student days, they are better set up towards job security, although it is still not a guarantee. Upon entering the job market, most mentors also agree that mentoring should still continue, even though the mentor may change. The mentor teacher says that "It is important for young adults who enter work to have a mentor to work beside them. For example, in a teacher trainee's case, the institute will usually allocate a senior to mentor them. This will help the new trainee to learn the ropes about her job in a more experiential manner". With the young adult having someone to model after, he or she will be able to refer for guidance when faced with challenges or questions. The mentors also agree that mentoring provides a support system when in employment, helps the mentee set goals and vision for their life and develops good character values. All these provide stability for indigenous young adults at the workplace. This is summed up by the following description from one of the mentors:

> "If a younger person is properly mentored, they will be more mature in their thinking, and not comply with the pressures of society. This will help them to think objectively and connect information and knowledge to their sphere of working life. Mentoring also help provides an avenue to help to develop a young man or woman's integrity and character, thus being able to cope with the pressures of life" (Female, Hostel Warden)

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Reciprocal Mentoring: A learning journey

The mentors that were interviewed unanimously characterised that their mentoring relationships had in many ways 'taught' them in return. This is despite the traditional method of mentoring where a more senior and experienced person teaches or journeys with another younger participant. In the study of Indigenous Australians, O' Shea et al. (2016) found that the mentors were developing learnings on the culture and knowledge of the indigenous groups and have received added value from the mentoring program they were a part of. This was highlighted by the following comments from the mentors:

> "I benefit *the most* from this mentoring process and I believe it is a two-way relationship. I also learn as a mentor and it develops me. Some of the things that my mentees teach me are not something I have thought of before. I learnt so much as a mentor more than if I am not a mentor." (Male, Teacher)

> "Mentoring helps me to enhance my skills to motivate people. I has helped me to find the best solution to help students to find their path" (Female, University professor)

> "Mentoring is two ways. I also learn from the mentee. It gives me an understanding about their aspiration and certain realities in life and helps me to put things in perspective" (Female, Medical practitioner)

The comments suggest that the mentors were impacted by the journey they have had with their mentees and this has transformed to their own development. This has led them to have greater understanding and empathy towards the indigenous and other vulnerable groups.

From a Mentee's Perspectives: The Impact of Mentoring Towards Employment

In this section, I explore five key outcomes of mentoring from the mentee's perspectives. They were derived from the survey as well as the interview with the selected five mentees. The outcomes of mentoring that were explored were having positive values, career advancement opportunities, preparedness of work, skills development and employment opportunities.

The Impact of Mentoring According to Mentees

To derive the impact of mentoring amongst the mentees, the following five outcomes were considered. All were measured by likert scale scales from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'very bad' and 5 being 'excellent'. These outcomes were:

Positive values. The key question that was asked to obtain this outcome was: "How effective was your mentor in helping you develop discipline and positive habits in your life?"

Career advancement opportunities. The key question that was asked to obtain this outcome was: "How effective was your mentor in opening new opportunities for career advancement?" and "How effective was your mentor in introducing you to individuals or networks who influenced your career development?".

Preparedness for work. The key question that was asked to obtain this outcome was: "How effective was your mentor in helping you prepare towards employment?"

Skills Development. The key question that was asked to obtain this outcome was: "How effective was your mentor in helping you develop soft skills (for example: Communication skills, Team work, Time management, Critical thinking, Organisation skills, conflict management, Leadership, Creativity, Openness towards criticism)?"

Employment Opportunities. The key question that was asked to obtain this outcome was: "How effective was your mentor in helping open doors for employment opportunities?"

All the participants were very positive about their mentoring relationships and how it helped them in the past or currently in life. All but one participant responded between good and excellent to the questions asked. Various participants commented that due to the additional experience the mentor had in life, they were able to learn new things from them otherwise not known to them.

The results showed that three outcomes stood out amongst the rest (See Table 2). These were calculated with having more than 50% cumulative of 'very good' (scale 4) and 'excellent' (scale 5). The first outcome that mentoring provides positive values had 54% (n=20) of them responding affirmatively. Most of the mentored youth tend to report that discipline and integrity as key values that the mentors succeeded in helping them with. In a study of finding out what are the attributes of exemplary teacher mentors, 70% of the teachers genuinely want to help their students to learn and discover positive values from them (Cambria, 2006). It can be therefore considered that most mentors desire the best for their mentees and would want to impart something valuable to them.

The second outcome had 56.8% (n=21) affirming that their mentors had influence in preparing them towards employment. Many of the mentees expressed gratitude that they have received much insights about the work life from their mentors otherwise not found through other relationships. This was highlighted through an explanation by *mentee23:* "My mentor shares with me about his experience on the job and gives me advice towards preparing in the real world. I don't think I would have learnt some of these pointers from anyone else'. *Mentee9* and *mentee22* explains that their mentoring relationship has exposed them to possible problems or challenges that they will face when stepping into employment. According to *mentee31*: "My mentor at work provides me with the experience of working in groups and that has helped me expand my knowledge and skills". The above aligns with the study results by McDonald and Lambert (2014) that a mentoring relationship may serve as a pivotal moment in life that can successfully set a young person onto career success.

Table 2. Scores for effectiveness of mentoring

Rating	Academic Guidance	Prepared towards employment	Developed soft skills	Helped developed discipline and positive habits in your life	Opened doors for employment opportunities	Opened opportunities for career advancement	Introduced you to individuals or networks who influenced your career development
Very Bad	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Bad	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.70%	0.00%
Good	35.14%	37.84%	18.92%	35.14%	51.35%	37.84%	43.24%
Very Good	27.03%	45.95%	48.65%	18.92%	29.73%	32.43%	32.43%
Excellent	27.03%	10.81%	27.03%	40.54%	5.41%	8.11%	13.51%
Not relevant	5.41%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	10.81%	16.22%	8.11%
Unspecified	5.41%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%

The third outcome had 75.7% (n=28) of the mentees acknowledge that the mentors have positively developed their soft skills which includes communication skills, team work, time management, leadership and conflict management. This was expressed by *mentee18* who said that his mentor "gave me a good understanding of how to be a leader and how to create a good work environment and culture for myself and the people around me". *Mentee16* said that "my mentor helped to open my mind to see various solutions to challenges and more importantly has helped me be courageous in my decisions". This affirms previous studies where mentors can assist young people through skills and capacity development that would be valuable for the labor force. (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Clausen 1991; Lerner 2005). By being role models, mentors can promote social learning by providing their mentees with real life examples towards achieving success in their careers. (Akers et al. 1979; Bandura 1977)

The findings show that the indigenous young adults highly favors mentoring as an intervention and appreciates the benefits it has added into their life.

Discussion

The findings from this study strongly support both hypotheses that mentoring does (1) add positively to the development of an individual young adult in the area of attitudes, emotional stability and spiritual well-being, and (2) help towards career development of an individual leading to stable employment. This illustrates the usefulness of mentoring, showing how it can benefit an indigenous young adult's employment outcomes especially into his or her early parts of careers.

Most mentors and mentees in this study attribute that mentoring relationships have led indigenous young adults to develop positive attitudes and character traits. In a study of positive attitudes at the workplace, Tenney et al. (2016) has discovered that this could lead to outcomes such as better health, increased levels of income, lower levels of unemployment, stronger motivation in life and more positive relationships. Although this study covers a large and representative sample size in the U.S., similar findings were also found in other countries and cultures from Russia, Australia and South Korea (2016). Likewise for the indigenous young adults in Sabah, having a mentor in life may set them up towards outcomes that could potentially change the course of their family and community. As highlighted earlier, most of the indigenous people still live in a vulnerable state where poverty is concerned and having an upper hand at the workplace may provide a significant turn around.

Following that, a key finding is that a high number of mentees consider their parents as mentors (See Table 2). Sufficient studies show that indigenous communities, including those amongst the *Orang Asli* in Malaysia, Aboriginals in Australia and First People of Canada have strong family bonds (National Collaborating Centre For Aboriginal Health, 2015; Ristevski, 2020; Sadeka et al., 2020). In contrast to western cultures and structures, indigenous groups tend

to be rooted in "a complex system of kinship structures, roles and responsibilities, and connection to culture" (Ristevski et al., 2020, p. 126). Beck (1992) argues that the family support towards young people in securing a job, especially amongst the vulnerable has decreased over the years. However, it was found that there is a deep rooted filial, honour and community centred aspect amongst the indigenous young adults in this study.

This could potentially impact the family's support towards the young adult transiting to the workplace. Culturally, while this family bond is admirable and valuable, it remains a question and something yet unexplored, that if the family's influence could perhaps be a stumbling block to the progression of a young adult towards securing a job. This is in reference to the career choice of the young adult which may provide the job security needed to break out of the poverty cycle. Some of the mentors in this study commented that a few of their previous mentees who were academically bright students had to relinquish returning back to their village to either take care of family members or to tend to work at home, most of the time, at a farm. This seemingly pull factor by the family may possibly impact the growth development of the young adult and may cause regression instead of progression.

An issue that cropped up during the findings is the quality of Malaysia's education system towards preparing the indigenous young adults for the workplace. Based on the interactions with the mentors and mentees, it was discovered that there was a lack of emphasis on ensuring the indigenous are integrated into the education system in an equitable manner. These struggles include teaching capabilities and some form of discrimination of teachers within the schools that the indigenous person attends, in particular for English. As cited by a mentor, the English language was taught in BM in his mentee's school and thus not having a strong command of the language puts them in a vulnerable state when finding a job. It was observed that all the mentees

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preferred to have the interviews for this study in BM rather than English because they seemingly show a lack of confidence in the language. In a study of the *Orang Asli* and education in the state of Kelantan, there was some form of discrimination shown to the indigenous students and teachers tend to prefer to teach the good students and neglect the marginalised (Abdullah et al., 2013).

Further to that, most indigenous children do not attend preschool and their first experience of the school system is at age seven at the public school (Kamarulzaman and Jusoh, 2008) This already puts them at a backpedal and a perpetual catching up as they do not have the basics to compete with their peers. As explained earlier, most indigenous live in the rural, outskirts or by the sea and thus, lack understanding of life in the city. Public examinations however, do not take into consideration this and ask questions or provide scenarios that an indigenous may not make sense of. For instance, in the 2018 UPSR *(Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah)* or Primary School Achievement Test for English writing, students were required to answer questions based on a chart that showcase gardening lessons, art classes and piano lessons (See Appendix B). Most indigenous adults, what more a young person would be able to understand the nuances of such activities. Therefore, Malaysia's education system as a whole does not quite prepare an indigenous young adult towards academic success thus this increases the need to have other interventions, such as mentoring, to aid these students.

During the research period, there was no observation of power dynamics affecting the mentoring relationship from both divides. In examining the impact of mentoring amongst indigenous young adults through the lens of Gaventa's (2006) powercube framework, it is vital not to have power over, with decision-making spaces that are non participative. In other words, "decisions [were] made by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretense of broadening the boundaries for inclusion" (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). At the same time, forms of power that are both

hidden (i.e., particular people and institutions determine[d] the decision- making actors and agenda) and invisible (by effecting "how individuals think about their place in the world... shap[ing] people's beliefs, sense of self, and acceptance of the status quo" [Gaventa, 2006, p. 29]) should be avoided. Effective mentors should input in the lives through a visible and invited space and that the interests of the mentees are represented.

In a case study of an indigenous group in Guatemala, it was found that to build the capacity and social leadership, the mentoring intervention program was designed to be based on their needs and daily practices and at the same time to reaffirm cultural and indigenous traditional practices that contribute to improving inter-generational equity (Oxfam, 2011). Similarly, within the context of indigenous young adults in Sabah, mentors or future mentors need to take into consideration the power dynamics, cultural nuances and social norms in order to effectively achieve the goals of mentoring. A mentor should avoid the practice of 'studying down', where "people in more powerful positions in institutional hierarchies are 'the researchers,' and 'the subjects' are those with less institutional power" (Awaya et al., 2003, p. 49). This is an outdated model, holds a position of power over another person and does not yield positive results (2003).

The impact of mentoring could not just be explored through the results of academic or career development. Mentors make the effort to input into a younger person's life because they want to pass on their experience, gain further insights from another person's life, learn and grow from another relationship and to build personal skills in helping another person (Philip and Hendry, 2000). All the mentors in this research reported that they experienced growth and learnings throughout their journey with their mentees. Traditionally, although the goal of a mentoring relationship is to develop the mentee, this can also be deemed as a learning partnership and benefit the mentor as well (Haggard et al., 2011). Kolb (1984) defines learning as "a process whereby

knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (p. 38) and according to Kram (1996), personal learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills or competencies "contributing to individual development, including the interpersonal competencies of self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback. Such development invokes a greater understanding of oneself as increasingly connected to others" (p. 140). Both these definitions suggest a transference of an intangible product through learning. Rekha and Ganesh (2012) suggests that through such understanding, mentoring programs could be designed to fulfill the learning needs of mentors as well as mentees.

In that manner, mentoring has a larger impact than just the mentee's development. If done effectively and conducted with a humble posture, it can be a mutually beneficial relationship. The reciprocity of this relationship encourages a two way learning process to help each other grow, learn and acquire new knowledge (Lankau and Scandura, 2007). The impact for the indigenous community could be larger when the learnings especially about cultural nuances and social interactions are passed on and from one mentor to another. This too, is 'paying it forward' as described by various mentors when asked about what would constitute a successful mentoring relationship.

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Limitations

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As this study was confined to ascertaining the impact of mentoring on indigenous natives in Sabah, this paper could do with a larger sample size - in particular having a wider variety of ethnicity, a larger age demographic and ones with various education backgrounds. It would have also lent further credibility if the actual mentors of some of the mentees were interviewed thus being able to match and tally both the mentor and mentee's feedback. This could have perhaps led to additional learning outcomes.

The findings of this study were based on the perception of those ages 19-24 years old only and may not have fully experienced the breadth of having more than five years of working experience. The results could have been different if young adults above age 24 were included in this study. This is reflected by 70.2% (n=26) of the respondents were students and the remainder were either working, waiting for their work results or unemployed. As the survey conducted was online, this necessitated literacy and internet connection, which means the sample reflects young people who have those capabilities and does not reflect those who are unable to read or lack connectivity to respond to the online survey.

Perceptions by mentees could also be investigated in greater depth, using more rigorous methods like qualitative research methods such as face to face interviews or focus groups. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to two strict movement control orders (MCO) in Malaysia between the months of March till May 2020 and September 2020 till January 2021. From this, all face to face interviews had to be conducted virtually or via telephone. Majority of the interviewees were back in their village hometowns thus the lack of stable internet connection contributed to the complexity of the interviews. Some interviews were cut short, some had to continue the session over voice recording through Whatsapp and some had to reschedule it due to power failure or poor bandwidth.

Considerations for future research

At the conclusion of the data collection process, additional research components became evident. One potential research is to conduct a study on the possible correlation towards the success of the mentoring relationship due to the same ethnicity and gender. There was some evidence in this study showing that gender or ethnicity of the mentor could impact the mentees development. However, the sample size is too small to make any correlation. Separately, a study

could be explored of the involvement and impact of mentors of the main ethnicities in Malaysia (the Malays, Chinese or Indians) who have previously or currently mentored indigenous young people.

For a more correlated impact of poverty and indigenous families, future researchers could consider a longitudinal study. It will be useful to study on indigenous groups that have broken the poverty cycle through the intervention of mentoring and other related factors. Apart from that, another suggested research could be done is a comparative study of indigenous young adults at the workplace between those who have been mentored and those that have not, and if there are differences in outcomes of work output.

Conclusion

In light of the fact of the challenges that faces the indigenous young adults in Sabah, mentoring should play a significant role in shaping an alternative narrative. This research literature and study generally agrees that, if done effectively and through understanding of the indigenous culture, mentoring can prove to be a powerful tool. This intervention needs to take into consideration the value of community and family that an indigenous community places high value in. Another thing to note is that when power hierarchies come into play, this may negatively impact the trajectory of the young person including his or her family and community.

There are numerous programs throughout universities and organisations that have mentoring programs but at the time of this study, there are no organisations that focuses solely on providing mentoring towards indigenous young people in Malaysia. Most of the mentoring relationships such as the ones who were interviewed in this study were voluntary and self-organised. Leaders of communities, religious organisations, schools or organisations should consider heeding the call of investing in the growth of these indigenous young adults through mentoring.

Whether informal or formal, the result of such programs may bring life transformation to these individuals and potentially their communities. Mentoring, if conducted intentionally, can be an important driver to complement institutional programs in the education and employment sector.

The next generation - especially the vulnerable and those marginalised, has to be given opportunities to step up and compete so that they can be effective contributors to social change in their communities. Through the exchange of learnings between mentors and the indigenous young adults as mentees, possibly, we may be able to develop quality young Malaysians who are work-ready and be able to shape the country towards high-income status.

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Appendix B

An actual English writing paper of the UPSR *(Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah)* or Primary School Achievement Test examination in 2018

SECTION B

[15 *marks*]

Study the advertisement below. Answer the questions that follow in the space provided.

Teliti iklan di bawah. Kemudian jawab soalan-soalan yang berikutnya di ruang yang disediakan.

KAMPUNG JENTAYU
RECREATION CENTRE

Attention to all!
Come to our recreation centre and register for a variety of classes available.

Activity	Age	Day	Time
Piano lessons by Madam Lucas	Everyone	Monday	2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.
Swimming lessons by Miss Sheila	14 – 17 years old	Tuesday	4.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Gardening lessons by Mr Phillip	For adults only	Wednesday	9.00 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.
Colouring lessons by Encik Azlan	Primary School children only	Thursday	2.30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.
Singing lessons by Puan Nora	7 – 13 years old	Friday	3.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Classes are open to members of the Kampung Jentayu Recreation Centre