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*Original Paper*

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of Mentor-Mentee Sessions on Learners' Holistic Development within the Context of Bhutan Baccalaureate Framework at Gelephu Middle Secondary School

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## Abstract

The Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB), introduced in 2020 under the guidance of the Royal Academy, Pangbisa, Paro emphasizes holistic education through a personalized mentoring system that supports learners across five Areas of Development: cerebral, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual. This study investigates the effectiveness of mentor-mentee sessions at Gelephu Middle Secondary School (GMSS), a pilot BB institution. Despite the conceptual strength of the BB framework, implementation at the school level has revealed challenges such as limited mentor training, inconsistent practices, and unclear role expectations. Using a mixed-methods design, the study assesses the perceptions of mentors, mentees, and school leaders to evaluate how effectively mentoring supports student learning, engagement, and wellbeing.

Quantitative data were collected through structured online surveys, while qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically. The findings highlight both positive outcomes and systemic gaps in the mentoring process. While some sessions foster meaningful relationships and reflective learning, others lack depth and alignment with the intended goals of the BB framework. The study concludes with recommendations to enhance mentor training, strengthen institutional support, and improve monitoring mechanisms to ensure mentoring remains a core pillar of transformative education.

**Keywords:** Bhutan Baccalaureate, mentoring effectiveness, holistic education, personalized learning, mentor-mentee relationship, student development, mixed-methods research, educational reform, Gelephu Middle Secondary School.

## Introduction

The Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB), introduced in 2020 under the guidance of the Royal Academy, Pangbisa, marks a transformative shift in Bhutan's education system. Built upon the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava and guided by the vision of His Majesty the King to create a just and harmonious society, this model views education as a holistic, evolutionary process. At the heart of this transformation is the mentor-mentee system, which serves as a central pillar for personalized learning and student development.

Academy, R (2024) Mentoring in the BB framework is not a mere administrative support mechanism, it is a deeply intentional practice aimed at awakening each learner's innate wisdom (ཡེ་ཤེས, *yeshey*), drawing from their unique experiences and guiding them toward balanced growth across the five Areas of Development: cerebral, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual. Within this system, mentors are not

only tasked with supporting academic progress but also with nurturing self-reflection, contextualizing learning experiences, and fostering meaningful connections with students and their families. These mentoring relationships are designed to be dynamic and responsive, ensuring that learning roadmaps evolve in tandem with the learner's journey.

Despite the centrality of mentor-mentee sessions to the Bhutan Baccalaureate model, their effectiveness in actual school contexts remains underexplored. Schools like Gelephu Middle Secondary School (GMSS), one of the 23 pilot BB institutions, have embraced the model by assigning every teacher the role of a mentor. However, many mentors have assumed this responsibility without formal training, leading to challenges in consistency, commitment, and clarity of purpose. As observed in GMSS's own transition journey, teachers expressed reservations and uncertainties when stepping into mentoring roles, raising concerns about their preparedness and the level of institutional support provided.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the implementation and effectiveness of mentor-mentee sessions at GMSS. It seeks to understand how these sessions are shaping student learning, engagement, and wellbeing, and to what extent they align with the intended goals of the Bhutan Baccalaureate. By analyzing the perspectives of mentors, mentees, and school leaders, the research intends to identify both strengths and areas needing support, offering evidence-based insights for enhancing the mentoring process during the BB transition.

## Literature Review

Mentor-mentee sessions have emerged as an increasingly recognized pedagogical and developmental practice in Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB) schools, positioned as a strategic mechanism rooted in framework's emphasis on five areas of development namely: cerebral, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual. These sessions embody a holistic conception of education that integrates intellectual mastery with socio-emotional resilience, ethical grounding, and personal well-being. Research across diverse educational settings consistently affirms that mentoring extends beyond academic instruction to foster broader developmental outcomes. According to Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2025) schools should promote core values that encompass social, emotional, ethical, cultural, and personal growth. Similarly, Career Education and Counselling Division, Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2025) in the Guidelines for School Mentoring Programme (SMP) emphasize supporting the holistic development of mentees across physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions to nurture them into productive and responsible members of a just and peaceful society.

Giang Le, Sok, and Heng (2024) report mentoring facilitates smoother academic transitions, strengthens student engagement, and mitigates stress, thereby contributing to overall well-being. These findings align with the Bhutan Baccalaureate's vision, where cerebral success is inseparable from emotional, physical, spiritual stability and social adaptation. From a professional learning perspective, David and Pitman (2024) conceptualize mentoring as a transformative, reciprocal process that benefits both mentor and mentee. Unlike supervisory relationships that often emphasize oversight and accountability, effective mentoring nurtures deeper, individualized support. Niazy, Huyler, and Carpenter (2023) extend this argument, showing that structured mentoring significantly enhances professional integration and improves instructional quality among educators, a factor directly relevant to BB schools' emphasis on teacher development as a driver of student growth.

Eisenschmidt and Odor (2018) highlight the significance of emotional collegial support, framing mentoring as a collaborative process grounded in trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Similarly, Sak (2024) identifies meaningful support is defined as encouragement, facilitation, and reflective dialogue which is foundation to sustaining productive mentor-mentee relationships. This process encompasses encouragement, help, protection, collaboration, assessment, reflection, and facilitation. Carvalho, Garoufallidou, and Pinto (2025) further underscore that well-designed mentoring fosters empathy, respect, tolerance, solidarity, and mutual understanding as evidenced in both focus group discussions. Crisp, Baker, Griffin, and L. G. (2017) complement these perspectives by demonstrating that targeted mentoring interventions can help bridge achievement gaps for students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds by providing tailored learning experiences.

Despite these promising outcomes, the literature reveals several limitations that bear directly on mentoring effectiveness. David and Pitman (2024) caution that program success is contingent on sustained mentor commitment, strong institutional support, and the capacity to adapt to evolving educational challenges. Portillo, Barba, and Bass (2019) identify mismatches between mentors and mentees as a recurrent barrier, noting that such misalignments can erode trust and reduce engagement. They also highlight methodological weaknesses in existing research, including the absence of control groups and insufficient mentor training, which limit the robustness of findings. A critical issue is the absence of standardized mentorship models and consensus on best practices (David & Pitman, 2024). This variability in design and implementation produces inconsistent outcomes and hinders the replicability of effective approaches. For Bhutan, where the Bhutan Baccalaureate's model seeks to embed mentoring within a coherent developmental framework, the lack of Bhutan Baccalaureate specific evidence exacerbates this challenge. When mapped against the BB's five areas of development, currently; there is no existing studies carried out to understand the impact of mentor-mentee sessions by any BB schools. The predominance of studies from Western or urban contexts limits the transferability of findings to Bhutan's distinct, educational environments especially in BB settings. Thus, this points to the need to carry out research that to understand Mentor-mentee sessions in the context of Bhutan Baccalaureate to authentically realize in practice.

### **Problem Statement**

At Gelephu Middle Secondary School (GMSS), the mentor-mentee system introduced through the Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB) framework, was designed to provide mentees with individualized support for the holistic development across the five Areas of Development: cerebral, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual. While this approach holds great promise, students' experiences reveal inconsistencies in how mentoring is being delivered and perceived. Although mentors at GMSS received a few initial orientation sessions from the Royal Academy, many still lack the deep understanding, clarity, and confidence. As a result, mentees often encounter mentoring sessions that feel are superficial, disconnected from their personal learning needs, or limited in impact. This misalignment between the intended goals of the BB mentoring system and the actual mentees' experience raises critical concerns about its effectiveness.

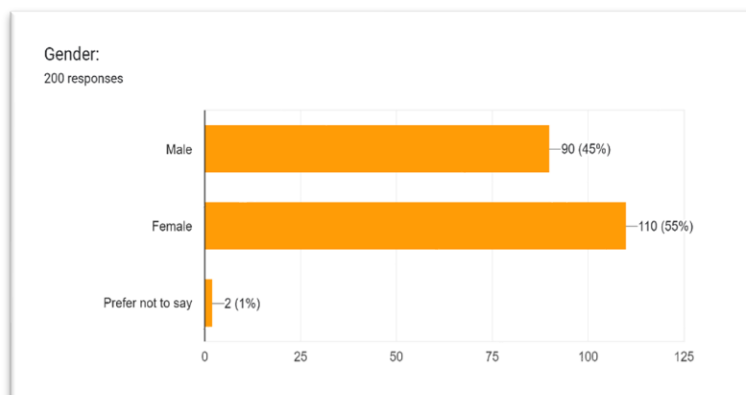
### **Objectives:**

- Evaluate the effectiveness of mentor-mentee sessions at Gelephu Middle Secondary School under the Bhutan Baccalaureate framework.
- Identify key factors contributing to the success of mentor-mentee sessions at GMSS.
- Examine the current challenges and opportunities in the implementation of mentor-mentee sessions at GMSS.
- Provide context-specific recommendations for improving the structure and delivery of mentor-mentee programs.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to corroborate meaningful insights from data. Specifically for the quantitative method, the online survey questionnaire was run to gather numerical data related to mentor/mentees' demographics, motivations, and perspectives on mentor-mentee relationships. The quantitative method focused on descriptive statistics to assess key elements. These data identified trends and general attitudes among the mentors and mentees using Jamovi software. In qualitative method, an open-ended response from semi-structured interviews was carried out and analyzed using thematic analysis. Following, integration of both quantitative and qualitative data was triangulated ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the survey results.

### **2.1 Participants**



The study was conducted with 200 student participants from Classes VII to X of Gelephu Middle Secondary School. The age distribution of the respondents, as depicted in the pie chart, indicates that the majority fall within the adolescent age range, which aligns with the typical age group of students in these classes. Notably, 14-year-olds made up the largest portion at 20.5%, followed closely by 15- and 19-year-olds, each comprising 20% of the sample. Students aged 16 and 20 accounted for 16% each, while the remaining age group were represented in much smaller proportions. This distribution highlights that the core respondents were in the mid-teenage bracket, reflecting the actual composition of Classes VII to X. The demographic spread ensures that the findings of the research are grounded in the perceptions and experiences of middle and secondary school students, making the data particularly relevant to understanding educational and developmental outcomes in the context of the Bhutanese school system.

## 2.2 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for this study employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative instruments to gain a comprehensive understanding of the mentor-mentee program's impact. A structured survey questionnaire was administered, comprising six sections (A–F), each containing five items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This instrument was designed to capture students' perceptions of various aspects of the program, including its influence on learning, emotional well-being, developmental outcomes, and overall effectiveness. To ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument, responses were analyzed using Jamovi software, yielding high Cronbach's alpha (0.878) and McDonald's omega (0.886) values, both indicating strong scale reliability. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data, allowing students to share personal experiences and insights in their own words. These interviews focused on identifying meaningful mentor-mentee interactions and perceived developmental growth across academic, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual dimensions.

## 2.3 Reliability Analysis

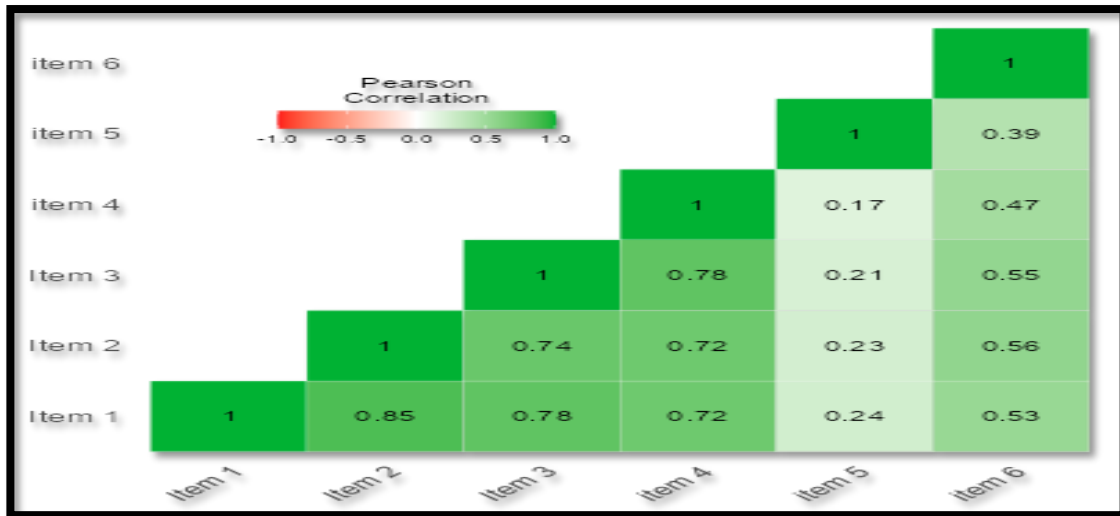
The questionnaire is divided into six sections (A, B, C, D, E, and F), each comprising five items measured on a Likert scale. For the purpose of reliability analysis, the responses to the five Likert-scale questions within each section are aggregated to compute an average item score. This average score represents the composite measure of the respective section and is used to assess internal consistency through reliability metrics using Jamovi software.

**Table 1. Scale Reliability Statistics**

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	3.55	0.571	0.878	0.886

The scale reliability statistics indicate a high level of internal consistency among the items in the scale. The **mean** score of the scale is **3.55**, with a **standard deviation (SD)** of **0.571**, suggesting that most participants' responses were moderately high and relatively consistent around the average. **Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ )** is reported as **0.878**, which is well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. This implies that the items within the scale are reliably measuring the same underlying construct. **McDonald's omega ( $\omega$ )**, which provides a more accurate reliability estimate in cases of non-tau-equivalence, is slightly higher at **0.886**. This reinforces the strong internal reliability of the scale. The similarity between Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega suggests that the assumptions of tau-equivalence are largely met, and both indices confirm that the scale is robust and dependable for research or assessment purposes.

## 2.4 Table 2: Correlation Heatmap



To evaluate the internal consistency and interrelationships among the scale items, both **reliability** statistics and a correlation heatmap were analyzed.”

### Inter-Item Correlations

The correlation heatmap visually depicts the strength of the relationships among the six items in the scale. The correlation coefficients range from **0.56 to 0.85**, indicating varying degrees of positive relationships:

#### Strong Correlations:

- ✓ Item 1 and Item 2 ( $r = 0.85$ )
- ✓ Item 1 and Item 3 ( $r = 0.78$ )
- ✓ Item 2 and Item 3 ( $r = 0.74$ )
- ✓ Item 3 and Item 4 ( $r = 0.78$ )

These strong inter-item correlations suggest that Items 1–4 are measuring a closely related dimension of the construct, likely contributing heavily to the overall reliability of the scale.

#### Moderate Correlations:

- ✓ Item 1 and Item 4 ( $r = 0.72$ )
- ✓ Item 2 and Item 4 ( $r = 0.72$ )
- ✓ Item 3 and Item 6 ( $r = 0.55$ )
- ✓ Item 2 and Item 6 ( $r = 0.56$ )

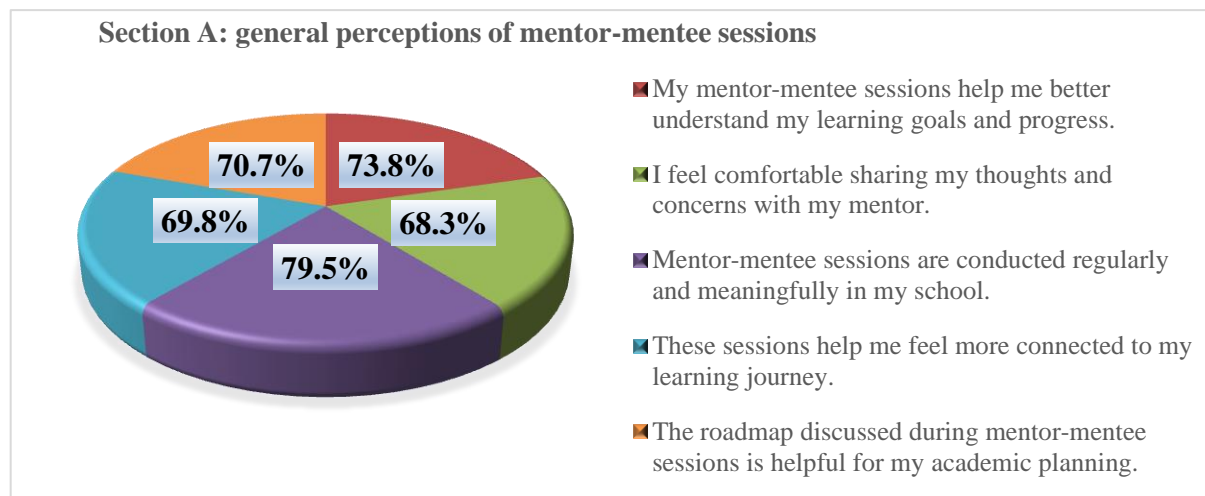
The overall pattern of correlations supports the **high internal consistency** reflected in the reliability coefficients. The clustering of strong correlations among Items 1 through 4 suggests a core group of items that cohesively measure a shared dimension.

### 3. Results/Finding

#### 3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis on Survey Questionnaire

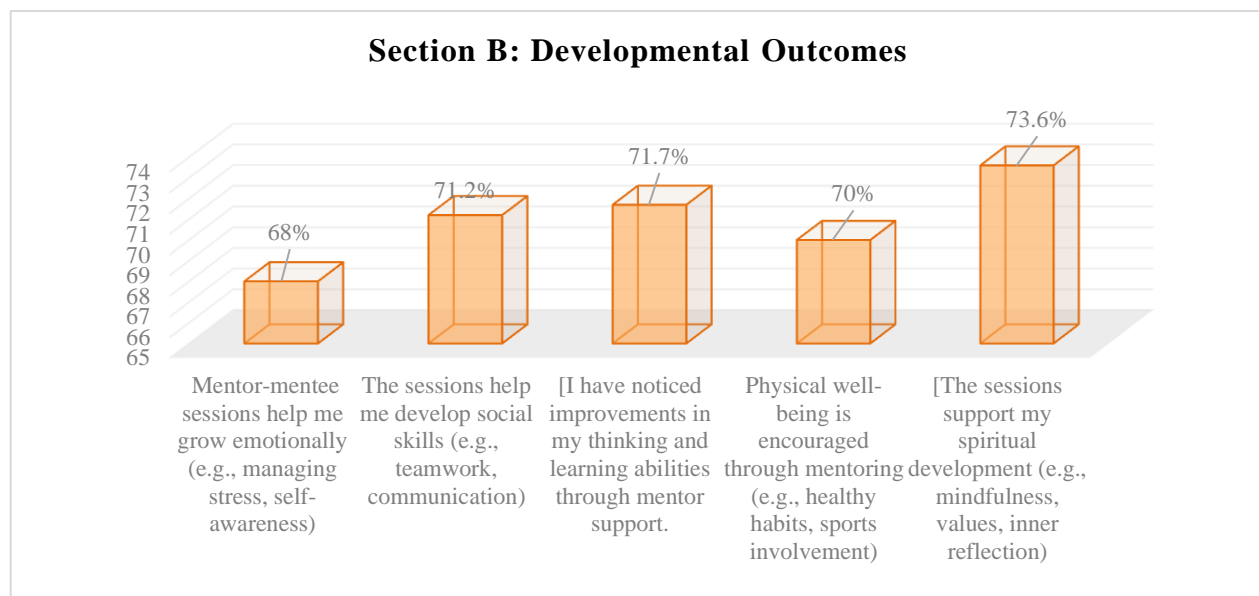
The graphs presented are based on five key statements, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The responses have been aggregated and converted into percentages for clearer comparison and interpretation.

#### General Perceptions of Mentor-Mentee Session



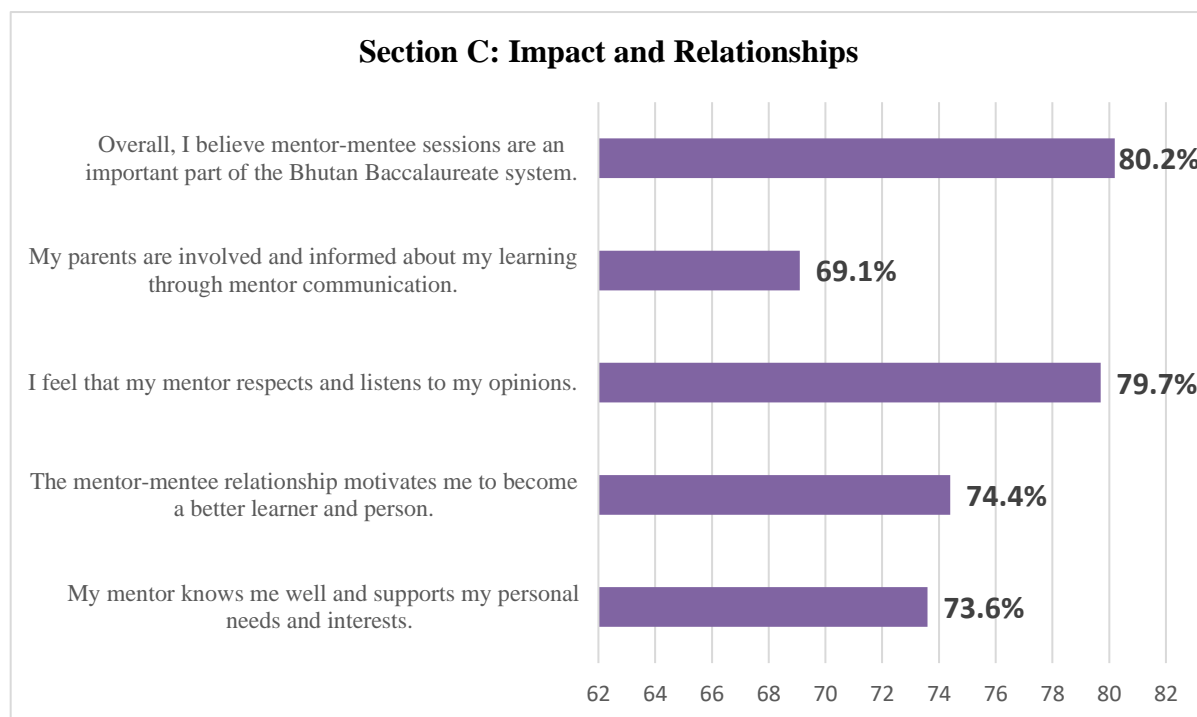
**Figure 1. General Perception**

The pie chart illustrates students' perceptions of mentor-mentee sessions across five dimensions, highlighting the overall effectiveness and areas for improvement in the mentoring process. The highest proportion of positive perception (79.5%) is attributed to the view that mentor-mentee sessions help students better understand their learning goals and progress. This finding underscores the critical role of structured guidance in clarifying academic trajectories and motivating learners. Similarly, 73.8% of respondents reported feeling comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns with their mentors, suggesting that the sessions create a supportive and trusting environment conducive to open dialogue. On the other hand, 70.7% of participants affirmed that the roadmap discussed during these sessions was helpful for their academic planning, reflecting a reasonably strong, though comparatively lower, endorsement of the sessions' contribution to strategic learning organization. Meanwhile, 69.8% indicated that mentor-mentee sessions make them feel more connected to their learning journey, pointing toward a moderate level of emotional and academic engagement facilitated by mentorship. The lowest response rate, at 68.3%, concerned the regularity and meaningfulness of the sessions. This suggests that while students value the mentoring process, the frequency and depth of these interactions may require further strengthening to maximize their impact.



**Figure 2. Developmental Outcomes**

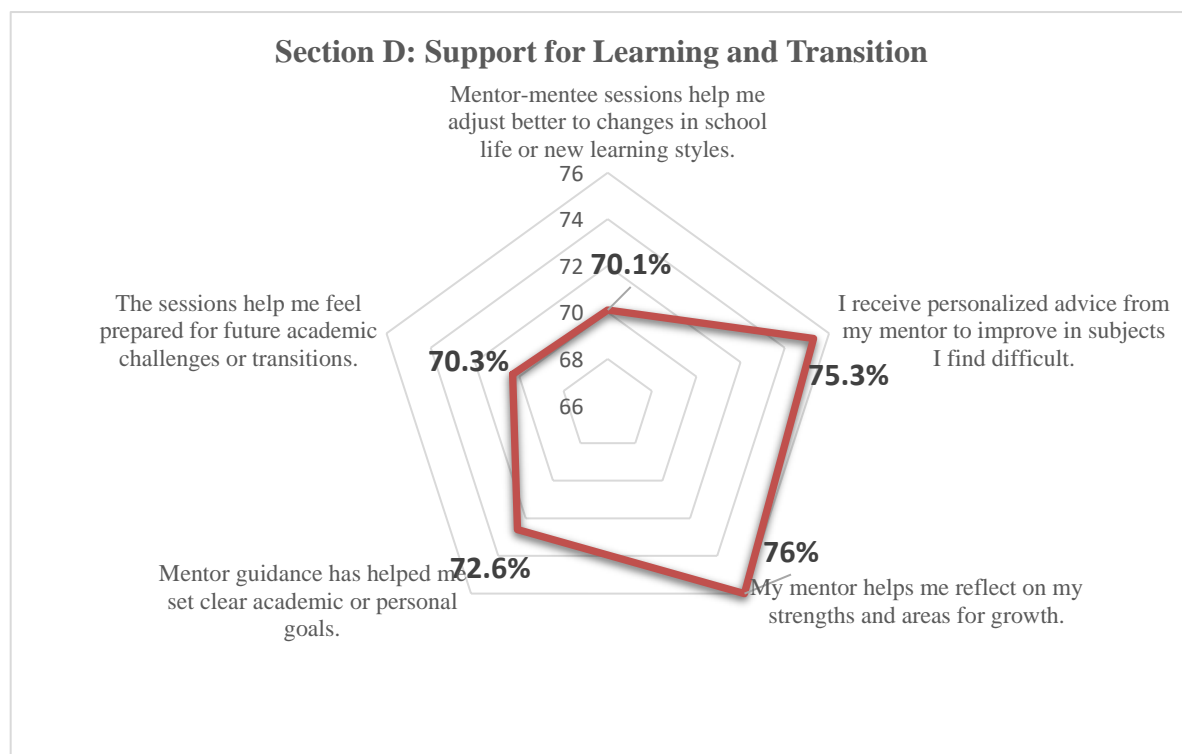
The figure 2 reveals that the mentor–mentee sessions are perceived as largely positive, with outcomes ranging between 68% and 73.6%, but the impacts vary across developmental domains. The highest rated outcome is spiritual development (73.6%), suggesting that sessions are most effective in nurturing mindfulness, values, and inner reflection. This emphasis, however, raises questions about whether cultural or contextual factors have influenced the prioritization of spiritual aspects over other equally important domains. Similarly, cognitive development through mentor support (71.7%) and social skills enhancement (71.2%) also ranks high, reflecting the program’s effectiveness in promoting teamwork, communication, and improvements in learning and thinking. In contrast, emotional growth (68%) and physical well-being (70%) scored the lowest, signaling critical gaps in mentoring practices, particularly in equipping students with stress management, resilience, self-awareness, and healthier lifestyle habits. These findings suggest that while the program successfully supports intellectual, social, and spiritual domains, it falls short of balancing emotional and physical development both of which are essential for adolescent well-being and holistic growth. For practical improvement, mentoring programs need to place greater emphasis on integrating structured emotional support and physical wellness activities while maintaining strengths in cognitive and spiritual development to achieve a more balanced outcome.



**Figure 3. Impact and Relationships**

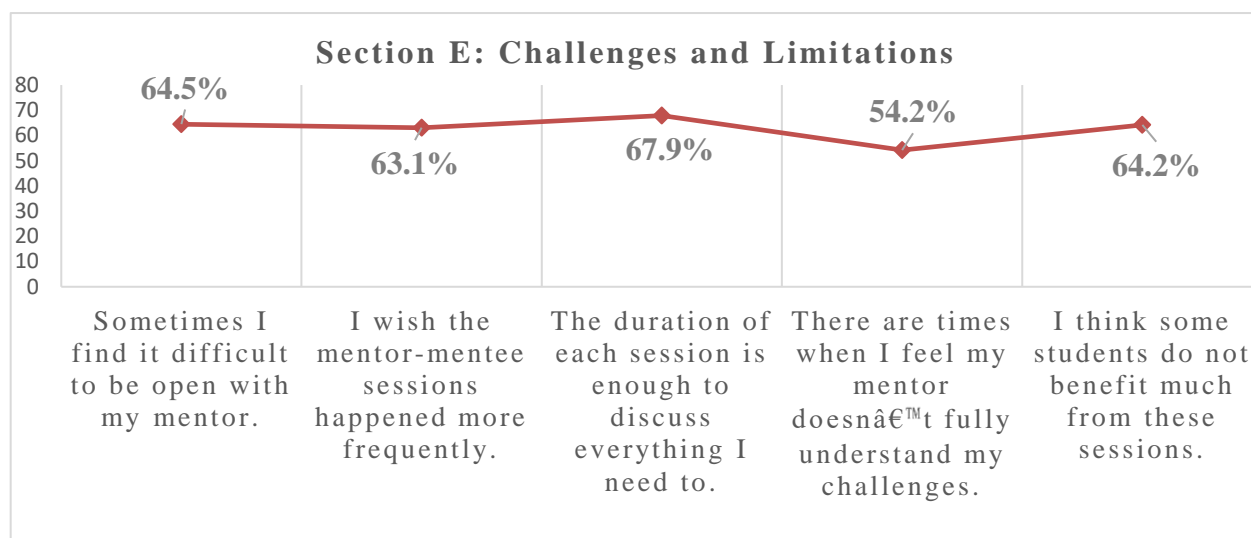
The findings from Section C: Impact and Relationships provide strong evidence of the positive influence of mentor–mentee interactions within the Bhutan Baccalaureate system, while also identifying areas that need further attention. The highest rating (80.2%) clearly shows that students recognize these sessions as a vital component of their academic journey, suggesting that mentorship has become an integral pillar of support in their learning process. Equally significant is the 79.7% of students who feel their mentors respect and listen to their opinions, which highlights the presence of trust, open dialogue, and emotional safety in these relationships factors that are crucial for student confidence and engagement. Motivation (74.4%) and personal support (73.6%) also score relatively high, pointing to the effectiveness of mentorship in not only guiding academic growth but also nurturing individual needs and holistic development. Despite these positive outcomes, the comparatively lower percentage (69.1%) regarding parental involvement signals a communication gap between mentors and parents. This suggests that while students benefit directly from mentorship, parents may not be equally engaged or informed, which could limit the overall support system surrounding the student. Strengthening this link would ensure a more collaborative approach, aligning mentors, students, and parents toward shared educational goals.





**Figure 4. Supports for Learning and Transitions**

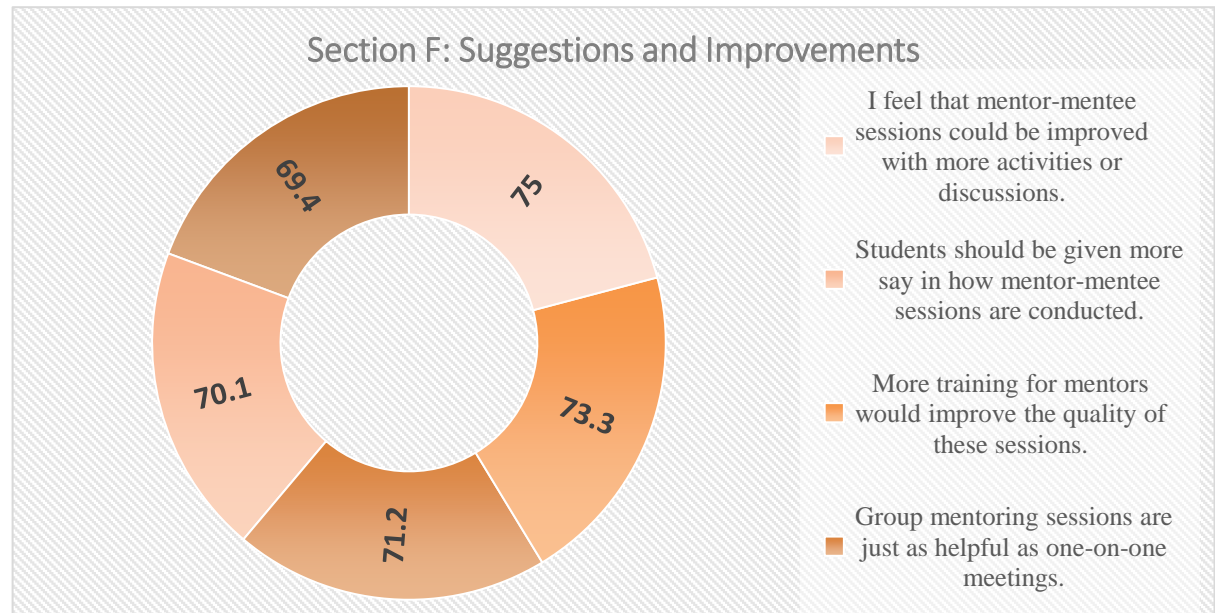
The data in figure 4 on Support for Learning and Transition provides a comprehensive understanding of how mentor–mentee sessions contribute to students’ academic preparedness, adaptability, and personal growth within the Bhutan Baccalaureate system. The highest-rated indicator (76%) reveals that mentors play a crucial role in helping students reflect on their strengths and areas for growth, signifying the effectiveness of mentorship in fostering self-awareness and guiding personal development. Close to this, 75.3% of students agree that they receive personalized advice from mentors to improve in subjects they find difficult, highlighting the value of tailored academic support in addressing individual learning challenges. These findings emphasize that the mentorship model is not limited to general guidance but extends to specific, targeted interventions that strengthen both academic and personal competencies. Additionally, 72.6% of students report that mentor guidance has helped them set clear academic or personal goals, indicating that mentorship actively contributes to goal-setting and long-term planning, which are essential for student direction and motivation. However, comparatively lower scores are seen in students’ perceptions of preparedness for future academic transitions (70.3%) and their ability to adjust to new learning styles or school life through mentoring (70.1%). While still positive, these results suggest that although mentorship is impactful, there is room for strengthening its role in equipping students to navigate broader transitions and adapt to changing educational demands. Taken together, the data illustrates that mentor–mentee sessions provide substantial benefits in academic guidance, self-reflection, and personalized support, but to maximize their effectiveness, greater emphasis should be placed on transition readiness and adaptability training. This indicates that while the current mentoring practices are highly effective in building student confidence and academic success, expanding their focus to future preparedness and resilience in changing learning contexts could significantly enhance the overall impact of the Bhutan Baccalaureate mentoring system.



**Figure 5. Challenges and Limitation**

The data above provides important insights into the constraints faced within the mentor-mentee program, highlighting areas that need improvement to maximize its effectiveness. The highest-rated concern (67.9%) indicates that students feel the duration of each session is insufficient to cover all their needs, pointing to time constraints as a major limitation that restricts meaningful dialogue and guidance. Similarly, 64.5% of respondents report difficulty in being open with their mentors, which suggests that despite the positive aspects of the program, a significant number of students may still struggle with trust, comfort, or communication barriers. Another 63.1% wish that the sessions occurred more frequently, underscoring the demand for more consistent interaction to build stronger relationships and provide timely support. Interestingly, the lowest score (54.2%) reveals that many students feel their mentors do not fully understand their challenges, raising concerns about gaps in empathy, awareness, or contextual understanding that could limit the depth of support provided. Additionally, 64.2% of students perceive that some of their peers do not benefit much from the sessions, suggesting that the impact of mentorship may not be uniform and could vary depending on individual needs, mentor approaches, or the quality of engagement. Taken together, these findings highlight that while the mentoring framework is valued, its effectiveness is hindered by issues of limited time, insufficient frequency, communication barriers, and uneven levels of mentor understanding. For the program to reach its full potential, there is a need for longer and more frequent sessions, improved mentor training in empathy and active listening, and strategies to create a more open and trusting environment where all students feel heard and supported.

### **Suggestions and Improvements**



**Figure 6. Suggestion and Improvements**

The data in graph reveals a generally constructive but critical stance from respondents regarding the current structure and execution of mentor-mentee sessions. Across all five statements, the majority of responses fall within 69.4% to 75% range suggesting that while participants recognize the value of the program, there is clear room for improvement. Notably, Statement five advocating for more time to plan future goals garnered the highest level of agreement, highlighting a pressing need for sessions to be more forward-looking and individualized. Similarly, strong responses to indicator 1 and 3 indicate that mentees believe mentor effectiveness could be enhanced through additional training and more engaging, activity-based interactions. While there is moderate support for increasing student involvement in structuring the sessions indicated in indicator 2, the slightly lower enthusiasm suggests possible uncertainty or lack of confidence in how that input would be implemented. The responses to indicator 4, explores the effectiveness of group versus individual sessions, reflect a neutral to positive sentiment, implying flexibility but also signaling that group mentoring may not fully substitute one-on-one engagement for all students.

### 3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Analysis of participant responses to this open-ended interview question revealed several recurring themes, each varying in frequency and qualitative depth. The most prominent theme was **improved confidence**, which emerged with very high frequency and was consistently referenced across emotional, social, and academic contexts. Respondents attributed a notable increase in self-assurance to specific mentor interactions, suggesting that mentoring played a significant role in fostering holistic personal development. The theme of **general gratitude** was also prevalent, with many students expressing appreciation for their mentors. However, these acknowledgments were often broad and lacked specific examples, indicating affective value but limited narrative detail.

**Time management** and **mentor's personal support** were reported with moderate frequency. Time management was commonly associated with improvements in academic performance and physical well-being, such as better sleep or reduced stress. Personal support from mentors was highlighted in contexts involving grief, low self-esteem, and psychological distress, suggesting that mentors served as important emotional anchors. Another moderately recurring theme was **peer bonding**, with participants describing close, familial relationships within the mentoring context frequently referring to their mentors and fellow mentees as "brothers and sisters" or part of a "family." Finally, **mindfulness practices** emerged with low frequency but were described as particularly impactful. Participants who

mentioned them reported that these practices had a calming effect and contributed positively to their emotional regulation and mental clarity. It is indicated by the table below:

**Table 3. Thematic Analysis**

Themes	Frequency	Observations
<b>Improve confidence</b>	Very High	Seen across emotional, social, and academic domains
<b>Time management</b>	Moderate	Often linked with academic and physical well-being
<b>Personal support</b>	Moderate	Mentors helped students deal with grief, low self-esteem, or stress
<b>General gratitude</b>	High	Many students expressed appreciation without giving details
<b>Peer bonding</b>	Moderate	Students referred to mentors and mentees as “brothers and sisters” or “family”
<b>Mindfulness</b>	Low but impactful	Students found them calming and beneficial

The participants described a wide range of positive developmental outcomes. Academically, approximately 60% of the respondents reported that the sessions led to improved study habits, structured goal setting, better time management, and noticeable improvement in weaker subjects. One participant remarked, “The session helped me to perform well in weak subjects, build confidence and concentrate well in class,” while another noted, “Setting goals for my marks helped me academically.” Emotionally, around 50% of students shared that the mentoring process helped them gain greater control over their emotions particularly anger while also enhancing their confidence and sense of resilience. For instance, one student stated, “Emotionally my mentor has always been very supportive of my goals,” and another shared, “I have become more confident with the way I carry myself.” In terms of social growth, roughly 45% of participants indicated improved communication skills, stronger peer relationships, and greater ease in public or group settings. As one student put it, “I overcame my fear of talking to people now I’m friendly and happy,” and another added, “Helped me communicate with people in a friendly way.” Physical well-being, mentioned by about 30% of the respondents, was linked to participation in sports, mindfulness exercises, and healthier lifestyle habits. Examples include, “It had stopped me from eating a lot of junk food,” and “Helped me grow as a person physically by playing sports and doing mindfulness.” Finally, approximately 15% of participants reflected on their spiritual development, describing enhanced self-awareness, engagement in prayer, and alignment with personal values. One student said, “I started to be a spiritual person, learning prayers, and reflecting on my values,” while another observed, “Spiritual improvement through goal setting and self-awareness.” Collectively, these responses illustrate the mentor-mentee sessions’ broad and multifaceted impact on students’ personal growth.

#### 4. Discussion

The triangulated analysis of both the survey questionnaire and interview responses reveals a largely positive yet nuanced picture of the mentor-mentee program’s effectiveness. Quantitative data from Section A of the questionnaire indicate that most students perceive the sessions as beneficial in terms of understanding learning goals, consistent implementation, and feeling connected to their academic journey. However, the qualitative interview data enrich this understanding by highlighting specific outcomes such as improved study habits, goal setting, and concentration in class particularly in weak subjects demonstrating a strong alignment between structured academic guidance and students’ lived experiences. Similarly, while survey responses suggest that students feel somewhat comfortable sharing with mentors and acknowledge emotional and social development at moderate levels, the interviews offer deeper insight, revealing high emotional support, increased confidence, and significant peer bonding. These findings confirm that although trust and emotional safety may not be universally strong (as suggested by lower ratings for feeling comfortable sharing), the impact on those who do feel supported is substantial. Furthermore, the theme of improved confidence consistently mentioned in

interviews across academic, social, and emotional domains emerges as a central benefit, reinforcing the motivational aspect highlighted in Section C of the survey.

Moreover, data from Sections B and D of the questionnaire align with interview themes around physical and spiritual development, though to a lesser extent. While the survey shows that students moderately agree with physical well-being and spiritual development benefits, interview narratives add context, describing participation in sports, reduced junk food consumption, mindfulness practices, and enhanced spiritual awareness. These findings suggest that while these domains are less emphasized or uniformly experienced, their effects are meaningful for those who engage in them. The interviews also revealed themes like time management, personal support, and mentor-mentee relationships being described as familial elements that are only indirectly captured in the survey through indicators of mentor attentiveness and student motivation. Particularly in Section D, where most students report moderate to high agreement on personalized support, self-reflection, and goal-setting, the interviews validate and humanize these findings by highlighting specific mentoring conversations that helped students through emotional difficulties or academic hurdles. However, the lower percentage of “strongly agree” responses across several indicators points to an opportunity to deepen the program’s consistency and personalization. Thus, the integration of survey and interview data not only confirms the multi-dimensional benefits of the mentoring system under the Bhutan Baccalaureate but also identifies areas—such as trust-building, deeper personalization, and increased parental involvement—where strategic improvements could amplify its overall impacts.

#### *4.1 Limitations*

Based on the analysis of the survey and interviews, several clear challenges and limitations in the mentor-mentee program have come to light. While many students find the sessions helpful for understanding their learning goals and improving their academic performance, some still feel unsure about how effective these sessions really are. A common issue is that not all students feel comfortable opening up to their mentors, which shows that more effort is needed to build trust and emotional safety. Although the sessions are regular and structured, not everyone feels that the time is used meaningfully or that the advice is fully personalized. Many students also feel that the roadmap and guidance provided do not always match their individual needs. In addition, some students shared that the sessions don’t benefit everyone equally suggesting that mentoring is not always consistent. Parental involvement was another weak area, with many students saying their parents are not very engaged in the process. Furthermore, while the program supports emotional, academic, and even spiritual growth for many, areas like physical well-being and social skill development are not as strong or consistent. From the interviews, it’s clear that some students have very positive experiences especially with gaining confidence, time management, and feeling supported but others gave only general feedback without specific examples. This suggests that the quality of mentoring varies. Overall, the main challenges include lack of deep trust, uneven mentoring quality, limited personalization, and weak involvement from parents. To make the program more effective, mentors need more training, students should be more involved in shaping the sessions, and schools should focus more on making sessions truly personal and inclusive for all.

#### *4.2 Suggestions/Recommendation*

To maximize the full potential of the mentor-mentee program and address existing challenges, a multi-pronged approach is necessary, one that strengthens mentor capacity, deepens personalization, promotes emotional safety, and capitalizes on holistic development opportunities. Firstly, **enhanced mentor training** must be a central priority. While the current program shows evidence of fostering academic progress, motivation, and emotional support, it also reveals that some students feel hesitant to open up or feel misunderstood. This calls for strategic professional development for mentors, not only in academic coaching but also in **emotional intelligence, active listening, trauma informed mentoring, and culturally responsive communication**. Mentors need tools to build deeper rapport with diverse learners and to respond sensitively to students’ emotional and psychological needs. Continuous reflection and peer support among mentors can also create a stronger mentoring culture within schools.

Secondly, the program should invest in **more individualized and differentiated mentoring practices**. Although a majority of mentees express moderate to strong agreement that the sessions are useful, the relatively lower number of “strongly agree” responses suggests that personalization is not yet consistent. Sessions must go beyond general check-ins to include **tailored academic guidance, personal goal setting, and tracking of individual progress**. Integrating mentee’ voice by allowing mentees to co-design session format can improve engagement and promote learner agency

Thirdly, **session frequency and duration** should be reviewed and adapted based on student needs. While many students do not necessarily desire more frequent sessions, others indicate that current sessions may not be long enough for deep reflection and planning. A flexible scheduling approach could be adopted, where students with higher needs or facing transitions receive additional support. Simultaneously, a **hybrid model** combining both one-on-one and group mentoring could ensure efficiency while maintaining personalization.

A key area of untapped potential lies in the domains of **physical well-being and spiritual growth**. While currently under emphasized, participants feedback suggests that when these aspects are addressed through sports, mindfulness, value-based discussions, or reflection, they have a strong positive impact. Schools should therefore embed more **structured opportunities for physical activity, mindfulness practice, and spiritual reflection** into the mentoring framework. These elements support the Bhutan Baccalaureate’s holistic development philosophy and could benefit a broader range of learners if made a regular part of mentoring. Another pressing challenge that needs strategic attention is **parental engagement**. The data reveals that communication with parents remains modest, limiting the ability to form a strong home-school support system. Schools should formalize channels for mentor-parent communication, such as periodic progress meetings that share student goals and milestones. Greater parental involvement not only reinforces student learning at home but also builds trust in the system. The interviews revealed a significant strength in the mentor-mentee relationship students often described their mentors and peers as family. This **strong sense of belonging and community** is a powerful opportunity. Schools can build on this by fostering **peer mentoring systems, or community service projects** where mentorship goes beyond individual sessions and becomes a lived value within the school culture.

#### *4.3 Future Research*

This study was mainly based on self-reported data collected through questionnaires and interviews from only 200 number of participants only from Gelephu Middle Secondary school. Future research could benefit from using a larger and more diverse samples from multiple BB schools to gain broader insights. Additionally, incorporating primary data from mentors, parents, and teachers could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mentor-mentee program. Expanding the scope to include different educational contexts and longitudinal data would also help in capturing the long-term impact and effectiveness of mentoring on student development.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The mentor-mentee program under the Bhutan Baccalaureate system has proven to be a vital platform for fostering students’ academic, and personal development, with students expressing overall positive perceptions regarding its role in goal setting, emotional support, and personal growth. The research findings, drawn from both surveys and interviews, demonstrated that the sessions have helped many students improve their confidence, study habits, and self-reflection skills. However, challenges such as occasional discomfort in mentor-mentee communication, uneven personalization of support, limited parental involvement, and underdeveloped areas like physical and spiritual well-being signal a need for further improvement. While many students benefit meaningfully, the lower rates of strong agreement in survey responses indicate that the program’s full potential has yet to be consistently realized across the student body. Nonetheless, these limitations also present opportunities as the students have shown a willingness to engage more deeply, express a need for more future-oriented planning, and value mentoring relationships. Therefore, by strengthening tiered mentor training, incorporating more student voice in session planning, increasing parental engagement, and emphasizing holistic practices such as mindfulness and physical wellness, the program can grow into a more impactful and inclusive system. Ultimately, this research affirms that the mentor-mentee model is a powerful educational tool, but its

continued success depends on refining its implementation to better meet the diverse needs of all learners.

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