# Online mentoring on the Linked In platform

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**Abstract:**
**Background**: Mentoring is a teaching-learning method that provides guidance and support for the development of knowledge and skills. The term originates from the character Mentor in the Odyssey, who educated Telemachus. E-mentoring emerged from the concept of telementoring, which utilizes computer conferencing systems to support mentoring relationships. E-mentoring can assist with the development of identity and alleviate anxieties caused by career transitions.The purpose of this study is to analyze how e-mentoring occurs on the LinkedIn digital platform.
**Materials and Methods**: The methodology is a qualitative and quantitative survey and questionnaire survey technique. The questionnaire will be applied to people who have already used LinkedIn's professional advice tool as an adviser.
**Results**: The research pointed out that the mentors desire to acquire professional contacts to expand their network and improve their chances of advancing their careers; in addition to understanding opportunities that they should seek to achieve their goals.
**Conclusion:** The study contributes by bringing new data to the discussion on professional counseling conducted through online mentoring on LinkedIn, an important tool during social isolation.
**Key Word**: Mentoring; professional advice; LinkedIn; organizational learning.

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## I.   Introduction

The contemporary world is marked by the era of information technology. Mediated by technologies, professional relationships are increasingly occurring through social networks. (Alves & Mancebo, 2006).

In these, a good filling out of the profile, the production of relevant content, and the exposition of professional life lead to the formation of groups and can reveal the cultural traits of its users. Likewise, companies and managers have also started to adhere to social networks as a form of marketing to help build an image of the organization (Alves & Mancebo, 2006; Bordignon & Bonamigo, 2017).

In today's job market, many citizens feel excluded because they don't have the required skills. A professional development strategy to be used is mentoring. It allows guidance and self-reflection to increase the professional's experience and emphasize their potential (Amber & Domingo, 2017)

Mentoring, from English mentoring, is a teaching-learning modality capable of guiding, supporting, and consolidating the individual in the development of knowledge and skills (Camacho Lizárraga, 2018). The term refers to "Mentor", a character from the Odyssey, commissioned by Ulysses to educate his son Telemachus (Ortega-Miranda, 2019).

When used in virtual environments, mentoring is now called e-mentoring. The idea of e-mentoring initially emerged with the concept of telementoring. This is the use of computer conferencing systems to support mentoring relationships when face-to-face contact is not possible (O'Neill, Wagner, & Gomez, 1996). And that concept holds. A mentor can collaborate both for the development of identity and to ease the anxieties and social pressures caused by career transition phases (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008). In this sense, Linkedin launched in 2018 as a Professional Counseling tool, to connect users and promote knowledge exchange.

Considering this context, the research aims to analyze how e-mentoring occurs on the LinkedIn digital platform. It also aims to discuss the possibilities and practices of mentoring undertaken by counselors and counselees. It also seeks to understand the paths, scenarios, and possibilities of the tool launched by LinkedIn, a platform widely used in the current context of social isolation.

The article is divided into six parts, in which the first contains the introduction, followed by a bibliographic review, methodological aspects, presentation of results, analysis of results, and conclusion.

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## II. LinkedIn as a Social Network

Social networks are spaces for interaction and show cultural marks, help form groups and enable the exchange of information and positioning between people (Begnini et al., 2019). The demand for shared information about your personal and professional profile is growing. This sharing aims to inform companies and individuals, improve techniques and theories of market accessibility and improve interpersonal visibility. Given this scenario, it is believed that networks directly influence the behavior of social actors. This means that their social relationships have a significant impact on the actors' way of interpreting the world (Campos et al., 2016).

The sharing of common values and goals between people or organizations is called a social network (Campos et al, 2016). Social networks allow the construction of a sense of familiarity between certain individuals. They begin to adopt family norms and build cultural and group cohesion, which contributes to the formation of community identity (Begnini et al, 2019).

"Social Networking Sites" or Online Social Networks emerged with the development of Web 2.0 and offer platforms that allow the creation of public profiles of individuals/users and the formation of a contact list. And, currently, they assume a fundamental role in the daily life of people and also of organizations. Considering that they are considered important communication and marketing tools for building the organizational image. (Mourão, 2018).

Virtual social networks for personal and professional use exist for different purposes. Professional social networks, the target of this study, allow users to access contacts in fields relevant to their professional interests and that will provide them with useful information (Soares, 2019).

The organization's image is created through the virtual social network. Its use impacts the communication management that companies establish with their stakeholders. It is also possible to state that they enable collaborative work between distant members of the same company (Mourão, 2018).

The professional network LinkedIn proposes the creation and exposure of a professional profile by inserting its owner in an environment of competition and cooperation. In this environment, the creation of ties with other people, in addition to its benefits, brings the possibility of strategic alliances between companies over time (Campos et al., 2016).

Founded in 2003 in the United States of America, LinkedIn is a virtual social network for professionals. And it currently has more than 562 million members in more than 200 countries, making it one of the most well-known and used networks (Soares, 2019).

LinkedIn's mission is "to connect professionals around the world, making them more productive and successful" search and offer job openings (Soares, 2019; Campos et al., 2016).

LinkedIn is a free service where each member, by registering on the site, can connect with thousands of other people in their professional field. The service is based on the concept of a network of contacts of a global nature, in which the individual manages his connections with other people by accepting or not accepting new members in his account, this constitutes the network of contacts of that individual (Soares, 2019; Campos et al, 2016).

Social networks always seek to adapt to the needs of the labor market. One of the alternatives sought for the challenges of the time is the professional guidance system to offer moral support and avoid the feeling of loneliness and isolation, in addition to contributing to the generativity of the adult (Amber and Domingo, 2017).

## III. Professional guidance and mentoring

Career guidance serves different purposes, mainly based on the age and needs of the individual. Guidance relationships imply providing professional, social, and emotional support in a safe environment for self-exploration (Camacho Lizzárraga, 2018).

Professional guidance has, among its objectives, assistance in planning a professional project and reflection on possible careers for an individual based on their personal and occupational characteristics. It also has the role of prompting reflections on interests, needs and work values, specific skills, and personality, among other characteristics (Ottati & Noronha, 2016).

One of the modalities that have become crucial in the organizational learning process is mentoring. Since ancient times, people with more experience have had the responsibility of guiding and instructing less experienced ones (Oliveira Neto and Souza-Silva, 2017).

The origin of idea of mentoring goes back to Ancient Greece, it seems for the first time incorporated in the Odyssey attributed to Homer. In one of its passages, it is described how Odysseus, king of Ithaca, before leaving for the Trojan War, deposited in his friend Mentor the guidance and education of Telemachus, his only son (Ponce Ceballos et al., 2018).

Traditionally, mentoring or mentoring is associated with a "vertical" relationship between a person with greater knowledge and another in learning (Ortega-Miranda, 2019). In the organizational field, mentoring represents a relationship between a more experienced professional (mentor) and a less experienced one (disciple,

mentee, protégé, pupil) to foster, above all, the development of the latter in work practice (Oliveira Neto e Souza -Silva, 2017).

The MENTOR association/National Mentoring Partnership defines mentoring as "a structured and trusting relationship that allows young people to meet with interested people who offer guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the student's skills and character" (Ponce Ceballos et al., 2018).

For Tancredi & Reali (2011, p. 35), the mentoring process considers that "people build their knowledge based on previous knowledge and their personal experiences". Thus, the mentor's knowledge is disseminated from social and interactionist phenomena, the exchange of meanings, and the sharing of experiences in the organizational context itself (Oliveira Neto and Souza-Silva, 2017).

The mentor is defined as the person, in a relationship network, who offers emotional support, and career support and who serves as a role model. In exchange for this, he develops new knowledge, experiences new experiences, and expands his self-knowledge. The aim is to contribute to the development of identity and professional competence through sponsorship, training, visibility, and preparation, providing advice and friendship (Oliveira Neto and Souza-Silva, 2017; Aguiar et. al, 2019).

In addition to professional support, the mentor is an emotional support and counselor. This concept, however, has evolved and given new meanings. In reverse mentoring, for example, a young and less experienced person becomes the mentor of an older and more experienced colleague, who becomes the mentee. This approach works on the concept of reciprocity. Reverse mentoring has mostly been used in the technology domain within organizations, where millennials have developed many skills that senior employees lack (Gobato and Reali, 2017; Porras, Díaz, and Nieves, 2018).

Since the 1990s, mentoring has become an intervention strategy designed to improve the well-being of at-risk youth (Marino et al., 2020). Mentor and mentee characteristics are divided into demographic and dispositional. Demographic characteristics include age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and education. The mentor's dispositions include: locus of control, self-esteem, affectivity, need for power, need for achievement, altruism, self-confidence, orientation toward learning goals, job and mentee variables include locus of control, need for affiliation, need for autonomy, need for achievement, need for power, self-esteem, attitudes towards learning objectives, high monitoring, high emotional stability, communication, and affectivity. Or, also virtues, such as skills and character skills (Agholor, Nalda and Bárcena, 2017).

Mentoring is strengthened by information technologies (ICTs - which involve computing, microelectronics, and telecommunications) and constitutes an inveterate form of knowledge transmission used in all areas of human knowledge (Ortega-Miranda, 2019). Regarding the context, mentoring can be traditional or virtual. In virtual mentoring (also known as e-mentoring), electronic means (chat, email, Skype and websites) are used as the main form of communication between the mentor and mentee. In the traditional one, the relationship takes place in person, face-to-face (Oliveira Neto and Souza-Silva, 2017).

The relationship between mentor and mentee, when mediated by technology, can be understood as a formal commitment to deliver results. It can happen by e-mail or by a teleconferencing tool (Single and Muller, 2001). This relationship benefits reduces borders and promotes equality between individuals. Online mentoring is an innovative model that mediates teaching relationships and organizations to generate learning, advise and encourage people, reduce borders, and promote equality between individuals (Bierema and Merriam, 2002).
Hamilton and Scandura (2003), add that this relationship can be made exclusively through text and help in vocational guidance, psychosocial practices, and mentoring follow-up. Single and Single (2005) also contribute to the definition by stating that the following should be included among the mentor choice variables: level of educational and professional development, age, and experience.
Both mentors and mentees can initiate and maintain an active role. Thus, geographical obstacles, time, unavailability of suitable mentors, and incompatibilities of status, appearance, and behavior cease to be important (Pfeil, Zaphiris & Wilson, 2009, Kasprisin et al., 2003; Stewart, 2006).
In this way, the exchange of information and online interactions facilitate the creation of impartial environments that enhance e-mentoring relationships. In these, people are more open to sharing their experiences and are more flexible in sharing their experiences. Something that would not happen in a face-to-face meeting (Panopoulos & Sarri, 2013).

## IV. Material And Methods
This prospective comparative study was carried out on patients of Department of general Medicine at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Combined Hospital
The methodology used in this research is a combination of a quali-quantitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach. The quali-quantitative approach consists of collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, while the exploratory approach seeks to explore a topic or phenomenon that is little known or studied. In turn, the descriptive approach aims to describe and analyze the characteristics, behaviors, or opinions of a specific group of individuals.

The survey procedure used was the questionnaire, which is a data collection technique in which respondents respond to a set of standardized questions. The questionnaire had 12 questions, the majority being closed questions with the possibility of justifying the indicated answers.

Data collection was carried out on the social networks WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to obtain responses from people who had already used the e-mentoring process on LinkedIn. The sampling technique used was the snowball, in which the recruited participants help to recruit new participants. A total of 68 responses were obtained during the period from February 2020 to May 2020.

Quantitative results were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative results were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves identifying, categorizing, and interpreting patterns and themes in collected data.

The first three questions of the questionnaire sought to list the profile of respondents, while the next nine questions sought to understand how people develop mentorships via LinkedIn. These questions addressed topics such as the adequacy of information in the mentors' profiles, how the mentors helped the mentees, subjects of interest to the mentees, the number of consulted mentors, the search for previous information from the mentors, and how the virtual meeting with the selected mentor took place.

Thus, the methodology used in this research sought to understand how the counseling tool is used by users and to develop analyses on the mentoring possibilities undertaken by counselors and counselees on the LinkedIn social network, through a combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach, a survey by questionnaire and content analysis.

## V. Result

Through the 68 responses obtained in the application of the questionnaire, it can be seen that 75% of the public is female while 25% is male. Age ranged from 19 years old to 69 years old, as can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Age versus percentage.

| Age | Percentage |
|---|---|
| 19-29 | 46,5 |
| 30-40 | 32 |
| From 41 | 21,5 |

Source: survey data (2020).

Regarding the age variable, the study corroborated the information provided by the research by Sanchez and Sanchez (2020). According to the authors, the social network LinkedIn is more popular among professionals aged between 25 and 40 years old, and the social network has about 16,902 members, students or former students, having a large number of contacts in the academic or productive area.

Social networks have become a web of relationships that connect at different levels and dimensions, it is not a linear network. It is characterized by independent people who relate to each other according to their interests and areas (Coutinho, Azevedo & Nobrega, 2020).

According to Gasparini (2016), the five most prominent areas on the platform are technology, education, health, telecommunications, and management. Respondents to this survey work in the areas of health (3.6%), technology (7.1%), education (10.7%), industry (21.4%), and management (57%). It should be noted that the number of respondents from the management area can be explained by the fact that the survey was shared on the researchers' social networks. What may have influenced the sample obtained.

For Juer, Santos and Santos (2009), mentoring has three functions: career guidance, psychosocial aspects and the role of the mentor model. And for the functions to be adequately fulfilled and a formal and informal relationship to be established between the parties, it is fundamental that the mentee knows the profile of the mentor. Only then is it possible to establish a relationship between the two.

In this sense, people were asked about the information present in the profile of the mentors they had already found via LinkedIn. According to 35.7% of the interviewees, skills, competencies and the main subjects of the person who intended to provide mentoring were described, 28.6% reported that only the main subjects that could help were described, 28.6% reported that they were described only skills and competences and 7.1% stated that there was no description.

About this subject, the interviewees justified their answers as follows:

> "I talked to my mentor and he knew a lot more than he described in his profile. It was a big name in my field. [...]. I even thought, "Wow, he's a genius in his acting career, but he didn't describe some skills that, in my view, are fundamental". He knows?" – Andre.

> "So, the guy I spoke to helped me a lot, but it was down to luck. He had only described his skills. And he understood pretty much everything within a company." – Ana.

For Castillo-de Mesa & Gómez-Jacinto (2020) each LinkedIn profile portrays the professional identity so that people promote themselves and highlight their skills and strengths to the detriment of the not-so-positive aspects. This way of acting demonstrates the way users connect on social networks, as much information does not match the career desired by the individual.

On this subject, we sought to discuss how the mentor helped the mentee. About 7.1% of the people pointed out that it did not help according to the profile description, 28.6% stated that they received help with more topics beyond those described in the profile and stated that more skills and abilities should be mentioned and 64, 3% reported that they helped according to the profile completed in the professional counseling tool.

Regarding how the mentor helped the mentee, the interviewees justified their answers as follows:

> "I think there had to be more in the profile of the person who mentored me. He understood at least 10 more subjects than what was described. He helped me correct my resume, referred me to contacts and suggested topics for me to publish on LinkedIn and get the attention of recruiters " – Bruna

> "He helped me align my business idea and told me about suppliers and partners in the area of the company I wanted to open - a food distributor. [...]. We also talk about my business plan - Carol

According to Mourão (2018), social networks involve the creation of a public or semi-public profile of their users and thus allow the creation of a list of contacts and connections with other users. Proper filling out of the profile is essential, whether for offering free mentoring services or for job opportunities.

This is important because, according to Aguado et al. (2019), 93% of recruitment companies reviewed the profiles of their candidates on social networks and 43% reconsidered their decision based on data registered and shared by users on the networks. Not only that, but some companies claim that some users end up having more opportunities than others due to the degree of development of their profile on the virtual platform.

Regarding the subjects that the interviewees would like to know about their areas of expertise when using the professional counseling tool, several themes emerged. According to 7.1% of respondents, knowing a more experienced mentor's perception of their career desires and aspirations is important.

About 10.7% seek to know the mentor's opinion about the practices of employers in the area they want to work in, 14.3% want to know what to read to keep up-to-date in their area of work, 28.6% of respondents seek opportunities and career guidance to achieve their goals and 39.3% want to refer professional contacts to add to their network and improve their career possibilities.

> "When you're out of the market, what you need most is contact with companies, a referral from someone. This person is also a woman and she understands my stuff. She referred me and the other week I was working" – Daia.

> "I just dropped out of the fourth college. And before starting the next one I thought it was a good idea to use LinkedIn. That guided me, you know? Maybe accounting isn't what I want. Now I need to find out." – Elena

Such results can be supported by the study by Castillo-de-Mesa & Gómez-Jacinto (2020). They claim that in all social networks, the more connections users have, the greater the social capital. That is, connectivity and interactions define positions, degree of leadership and influence. Thus, the more connections, the greater your engagement on LinkedIn. Likewise, Sánchez and Sánchez (2017) state that online platforms are seen as facilitators of collaborative work and increase the possibilities of communication between people with similar career interests.

LinkedIn is one of the main tools for establishing relationships with stakeholders and these interactions can add value for everyone involved (Mourão, 2018). Thus, when asked about how many mentors they had already talked to in the platform's professional counseling tool, the respondents stated that: they spoke with only one professional (53.6%), with two (21.4%), with three (14, 3%) and with five or more people (10.7%).

> "A mentoring program is expensive. Have you seen these mentoring group vacancies advertised on social media? Guys, unbelievable. When the notice came from LinkedIn about this, I thought: Why not? I spoke with 6 professionals for free. One from the production area, three were managers and two were business owners" – Fabi

Of these, 42.9% sought prior information about the professional counselor through news, blogs, etc. And 57.1% did not seek any prior information and started the conversation without knowing more information.

About seeking or not seeking prior information, Borko (2004) claims to be an important step because, when contemplating the mentor's trajectory, it is possible to understand ideas, experiences and skills related to the professional context.

> "I didn't have time to prepare the material. I went unprepared. But he should have prepared a slide at least with points he wanted to talk about. We forget everything at the time. The guy was excellent and I don't think I took advantage of everything I could" – Gabriela.

> "I didn't know her and I read everything I could about her career. All posts and even followed on other social media. It met perfectly what I expected" – Ana

When respondents seek professional advice, 14.3% point out that they first look for the specialty of the possible advisor and prepare material for the mentor to help and advise according to their skills and abilities. About 25% draw up plans for results with what they expect from the counseling conversations, 25% try to present some information so that the mentor can contribute with texts or slides and 35.7% just talk and see what the professional can offer.

> "I made a goal plan (laughs). She said she had never seen it done. But I thought it was the best way to enjoy the 2 hours we had scheduled" – Carol.

> "We never know what to expect from someone on social media. So I went without a script. And it was cool. It didn't help much in what I expected, but we exchanged a lot of experience. " – Fabi.

According to Coutinho, Azevedo and Nbrega (2020), the higher the level of interaction on the social network, the easier it is to find people who facilitate paths that develop skills and competencies. Through mentorships, it is possible to express an interest in learning and sharing one's experience, mentors being a support that users did not obtain in their trajectories. (Franzoi and Martins, 2020)

In the last decade, the fluidity of knowledge has been discussed. It is a concept that discusses a new and interconnected society, in continuous interaction with information and an intense flow of knowledge. The changes that have occurred in society in the cybernetic age, the inclusion of technology and the identification of connections as learning activities begin to modify learning theories for the digital age (Ortiz and Correa, 2020).

The use of digital platforms has been intensified, especially during the quarantine. The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has caused profound changes in education and the labor market in several countries around the world. One of the alternatives to deal with this was the adoption of videoconferencing to mediate relationships between people (Khatib, 2020).

The use of digital mentoring tools gained even more strength in this context. The use of these tools is a counterpoint to the study by Belo and Accioly (2015) which states that 79% of mentoring took place preferably through a personal conversation.

About how the counseling process was developed, 25% of the interviewees stated that they agreed on a time and the conversation took place via video call, 35.7% carried out the mentoring in writing arranging a time for the conversation and 39.3% carried out the counseling in writing subject to availability of both.

> "I went on a life on her Instagram and when she opened up for questions I asked about three questions and she talked about all of them. So, it was by appointment and by video, right?" – Hilda

> "It was via WhatsApp. People were talking as they went. I have a busy life and so does he. But it yielded a nice conversation" – Daia

"We agreed to talk at night and we talked for one non-stop. He told me about her life and I told him about mine. In the end, she asked questions and said to study haha. The next day, at the same time, we spoke again. It was peaceful" - Ana

For Reali, Tancredi and Mizukami (2010) online mentoring occurs more independently on platforms. Although experience and a formal level are required, anyone can do this online. According to Khatib (2020), the interaction between people via videoconferencing environments has opened up new opportunities for improving people's careers.

## VI. Conclusion

According to Franzoi and Martins (2020), the concept of mentoring has evolved. Currently, it is constituted as a learning alliance and partnership between mentor and mentee who reflect, learn and develop synergistically through social networks. That is the definition of e-mentoring.

The survey pointed out that the mentors' profiles described the main skills, competencies and subjects that could be addressed. This information helps the mentees, considering that the interviewees do not look for more information than what is mentioned in the mentor's profile.

Regarding what the mentees sought, it can be observed that gaining professional contacts to expand the professional social network is an important factor. Likewise, those seeking mentorship also want to improve their career possibilities and understand the best options for achieving their goals. The study found that mentoring via LinkedIn can take place in writing or video by appointment or according to the availability of those involved. About the possibilities of mentoring, it was noticed in the study that they can understand: guidance and career reorientation, tips on business, suppliers and partners and also personal conversations.

In theoretical terms, this study contributes by bringing insights into the development of mentoring through the use of online platforms (e-mentoring). In particular, in the case of the service offered by LinkedIn. The study demonstrates that, although this is a professional development tool, it is also used as a way to establish contact with professionals in the field in which the professional works. In the case of LinkedIn, this is free of charge and the process is similar to face-to-face mentoring.

The study contributes in practical and social terms by demonstrating the possibilities of using a free tool. Since this works thanks to the voluntary work of some professionals who make a little of their time available in addition to guiding and expanding the network of contacts of people who cannot afford a traditional mentoring service. In addition, people no longer have geographic barriers that prevent them from consulting a professional they admire, as this can be done online using information technology.

The research has limitations. We can mention: a small number of people responded to the survey even with wide dissemination. The justification informally received was that people had never used the tool, but would seek more information to start using it.

Another point to be considered is that most of the researchers were from the management area, as the research was published on the social networks of the researchers, who are from this area. As a research insight, a survey of the reasons that lead people to seek online professional mentoring can be carried out and satisfaction with the service can be discussed.

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