

## Informal Academic Mentoring in Kalinga State University

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to thoroughly investigate the manifestations, practices, benefits, and outcomes of academic mentoring within the context of higher education institutions. Employing a robust methodology, we conducted an extensive literature review and developed an a priori model, which underwent refinement and validation through a pre-test. The results yield valuable insights into a notably under-researched domain, outlining six manifestations and three recurring themes across practices, benefits, and outcomes. Notably, the study reveals the diverse types of informal academic mentoring. The application of Frequency and Percentage analysis contributes to the generation of meaningful generalizations, aligning with the study's objectives. The findings have the potential to guide university leadership in identifying actionable steps to institutionalize mentoring practices. Moreover, the research recognizes and sheds light on the commendable efforts of faculty members actively involved in mentoring.*

**Keywords:** *Higher Education Institution Academic Mentoring, Informal Mentoring.*

### Introduction

#### Background of the Study

The word “mentor” derives from Greek mythology when Odysseus entrusted the care of his son to his friend “Mentor,” to serve as a guide and teacher while he went to fight the Trojan War [1]. Since then, the concept of mentoring has evolved into a multidimensional interactive process that can be formal or informal and evolves over time according to the needs and desires of the mentor and protégé [2]. Haggard et al. define mentoring as a one-to-one reciprocal relationship between a more experienced and knowledgeable faculty member (the mentor) and a less experienced one (the mentee/protégé). The relationship is characterized by regular/consistent interaction over a period of time to facilitate mentee development [3].

Studies indicate many positive outcomes as a result of mentorship. For instance, when a novice educator is formally mentored by a more experienced and accomplished academician, the novice educator more quickly assumes the full scope of the academic role and is more productive [4]. In different settings, mentoring has contributed to higher career satisfaction and increased organizational morale [5, 6]. Mentored faculty exhibited a strong professional identity and experienced a smoother bridge from practice to the academic environment [5]. In addition, mentored faculty showed increased self-confidence and professional development [9]. It is not surprising that institutions have benefitted from sponsoring faculty mentoring programs by experiencing improved retention rates [5, 8, 9] and increased productivity in the workplace [5, 7].

Many times, educators enter the academic role without a clear idea of the full scope of their responsibilities, or how they can actually achieve them at a level sufficient to become productive academicians. Others have the misconception that teaching is the academicians' primary responsibility. Mentoring relationships can help educators understand the multifaceted roles of an academician, which facilitates achieving success in a timely manner in the areas of teaching, and scholarship, and service. Research demonstrates that careers did not progress as satisfactorily when faculty did not have mentors, compared to those who did [5, 7, 9]. Unfortunately, many new academicians cannot avail themselves of mentoring opportunities, because formal mentoring programs are not commonly practiced in the academic organizational culture.

The purpose of this paper is to determine the manifestations of informal mentoring among academic personnel of a higher education institution. The result of this study may serve as an overview of a model for establishing a formal mentoring program to be generalizable for faculty teaching in a variety of academic institution types and sizes.

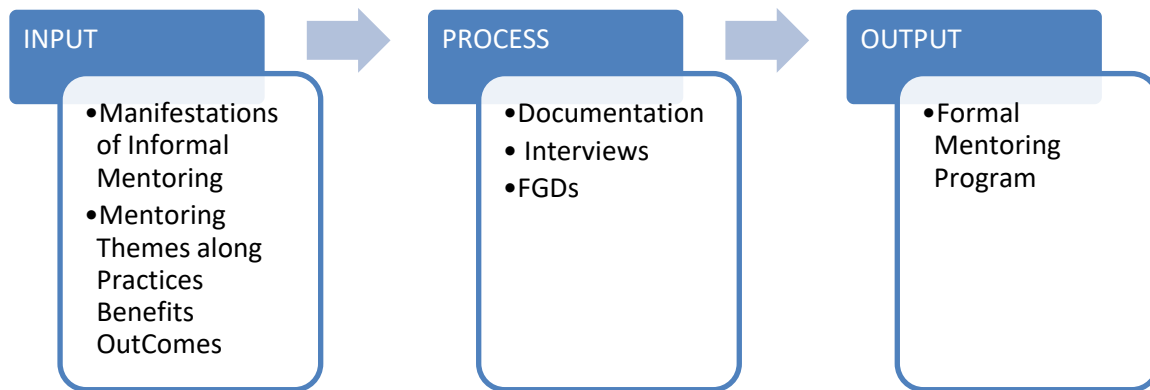
### **Conceptual Framework**

The Social Cognitive Theory, introduced by Bandura (1977), underscores the pivotal role of observational learning and self-efficacy in shaping behavior. In the realm of academic mentoring, this theory posits that mentors can function as exemplary role models, showcasing effective strategies for goal setting, problem-solving, and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000).

Conversely, the Self-Determination Theory, crafted by Deci and Ryan (1985), hones in on intrinsic motivation and psychological needs as driving forces behind human behavior. In the context of academic mentoring, this theory suggests that mentors can bolster students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby nurturing their motivation and active engagement in the learning process (Ryan, 1985).

On a different note, the Attachment Theory, formulated by Bowlby (1969), delves into the significance of early emotional bonds between individuals. This theory proposes that a secure and supportive mentor-mentee relationship can cultivate a sense of safety and trust, ultimately fostering students' exploration, learning, and academic success (Eby et al., 2003).

Similarly, the Transformational Leadership Theory, presented by Bass (1985), underscores the positive impact of leaders who inspire and motivate their followers to attain higher levels of performance and personal growth. In the context of academic mentoring, this theory suggests that mentors exhibiting transformational leadership qualities, such as charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, can wield a significant influence on students' academic achievement and personal development (Wang, 1985).



### Objectives

This research aims to scrutinize faculty interactions to ascertain the presence of mentoring within Kalinga State University. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Investigate whether mentoring among faculty members is evident in KSU.
2. Identify recurring themes related to:
  - a. Practices
  - b. Benefits
  - c. Outcomes

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute valuable insights and understanding to the academic community, specifically within the context of Kalinga State University (KSU). By examining faculty interactions and delving into the presence of mentoring, the study addresses several crucial aspects:

1. **Institutional Enhancement:** Understanding whether mentoring is manifested among faculty members at KSU provides the institution with valuable information to enhance its academic environment. If mentoring practices are identified, the study can contribute to institutional strategies for further strengthening mentorship programs. By recognizing the significance of mentoring, the university can align its goals and resources to further support and institutionalize effective mentoring practices.
2. **Faculty Development and Recognition:** The study's findings can offer insights into the prevailing mentoring practices, benefits, and outcomes. This information is instrumental in designing targeted faculty development programs, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth. Acknowledging and understanding the contributions of faculty engaged in mentoring is crucial. The study may highlight the efforts of mentors, contributing to a culture of recognition and appreciation for faculty members who actively participate in mentoring roles.
3. **Best Practices Identification:** The identification of recurring themes along practices, benefits, and outcomes provides an opportunity to pinpoint best practices in mentoring. This can serve as a guide for faculty and institutional leadership to adopt effective mentoring strategies.

This study therefore holds significance for the improvement of the academic environment, professional development of faculty, enhancement of student outcomes, identification of best practices, and strategic planning at Kalinga State University. It has

the potential to foster a supportive and enriching academic community that prioritizes mentorship as a key component of its educational mission.

#### Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is confined to the specific context of Kalinga State University (KSU), focusing on faculty interactions with a particular emphasis on the manifestations of mentoring. Geographically, the examination is limited to KSU, and the study includes faculty members across various academic departments and disciplines. It delves into both formal and informal mentoring structures, aiming to identify recurring themes related to practices, benefits, and outcomes. The study operates within a defined time frame, capturing a snapshot of the current state of faculty interactions at KSU.

However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Generalizability of the findings to other institutions may be restricted due to the study's exclusive focus on KSU, and the subjectivity inherent in perceptions of mentoring practices may not encompass the full spectrum of individual experiences among faculty members. The study may not comprehensively cover all influencing factors, such as institutional policies or external influences, and the temporal constraints of a specific time frame may limit the capture of long-term trends or changes over time. Additionally, resource limitations, including time, budget, and access to certain data, may impact the depth of the examination. The dynamic nature of academic environments poses a challenge, as the study may not capture rapid changes or emerging trends beyond its designated period. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into faculty interactions and mentoring within the specified parameters of KSU.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In both workplace and personal life, individuals seek to develop skills, continually learn new things, and welcome challenges on a regular basis. This naturally takes a degree of devotion, and life can often get in the way of self-improvement efforts. Having a mentor or somebody who can help guide, advise and teach you through a problem or towards a goal – is one way to stay on track.

Mentoring in the workplace is an established partnership between colleagues for the purposes of learning and growth. Mentoring has the power to accelerate self-development, career progression, and overall confidence. It is therefore pretty surprising that only 37% of professionals [8,9] have one, particularly as so many successful people praise and recommend mentorship.

Finding a mentor has been advocated as a career and personal development practice. In 2020, more individuals than ever want a mentor, and more organizations are trying to provide mentoring in the workplace [8] as a learning and development initiative. The benefits of mentoring are vast, for both the person being mentored, the person doing the mentoring, and the organizations they work at. Countless studies have been carried out on the positive effects mentoring can have, from confidence, to mental health, to promotion likelihood.

This dynamic is known as 'informal mentoring', as it often comes about from the mentor taking a liking to the mentee and taking them 'under their wing', rather than a formalized relationship. There is a lot to be said for informal mentoring, and many successful people refer to these kinds of relationships as helping them get to where they are today. The issue with informal mentoring is that it's often exclusive and elitist, with people choosing to mentor individuals they see themselves in and not doing anything for diversity in the process. These kinds of relationships also rely on sheer luck a lot of the time. Many successful entrepreneurs stated that they were "in the right place at the right time" when they met a crucial person that took a chance on them.

The benefits of mentoring in any setting are wide-ranging. From developing leadership to supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives. Mentoring in the workplace will also impact people's personal development, can positively support mental health and improve employee retention. Another benefit for organizations offering mentoring in the workplace is recruitment opportunities. Studies have shown that 79% of millennials see mentoring as crucial to their career success [12].

As a result of these biases, mentoring in the workplace needs to be established as 'formal mentoring' in order to give employees equal opportunity to develop. A formal program is when an organization intentionally sets up a mentoring program in which they actively match mentors and mentees and support the relationships to develop long-term.

Finally, Mentoring is one of the oldest and best-known practices for creating healthy, thriving societies – the first mention of the word "mentor" is from Ancient Greece, hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. And successful societies use it to this day – Maya Angelou mentored Oprah Winfrey, Steve Jobs mentored Mark Zuckerberg. Virtually all success comes from experience passed down to the next generation [11].

## **METHODOLOGY**

In complement to the comprehensive literature review, exploratory interviews were conducted as a pivotal step in shaping the research objectives. The choice to interview KSU academic personnel stemmed from their direct involvement in the subject under investigation. Subsequently, a research framework was developed to gain a priori insights into the constructs to be explored.

Embarking on a heuristic inquiry into mentoring, the researchers initially employed an inductive process during face-to-face meetings with participants. Each individual shared personal experiences, be they positive or negative, in either being mentored or mentoring others, elucidating the significance of these encounters. Through collective reflection and dialogue, the research team identified recurring concepts and ideas, clustering them into three overarching themes: practices, benefits, and outcomes. These themes formed the foundational basis for extensive literature reviews, with ongoing refinement of categories occurring over several months through exploration of research literature across databases such as Academic Search Elite, CINAHL, ERIC, PUBMED, Google, and Google Scholar. The search terms included a wide array of relevant terms, reflecting the multifaceted nature of mentoring.

Through these process, questionnaire was developed based on the identified recurring themes and concepts. Specifically targeted at faculty members who had firsthand experience with mentoring, the study garnered responses from 67 KSU faculty members through interviews. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a thorough analysis, utilizing the Cronbach alpha, yielded an acceptable reliability score of .73.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first addressing the manifestations of mentoring among faculty members, and the second identifying mentoring themes encompassing practices, benefits, and outcomes. To facilitate data collection, the researchers sought permission from authorities and cooperation from respondents. Physical distribution and collection of questionnaires took place when feasible; alternatively, online platforms such as Google Forms and social media were utilized to reach respondents who were not accessible in person.

The approach to data interpretation involved the use of frequency and percentages, enabling the researchers to derive meaningful generalizations from the collected data. This meticulous and multi-faceted methodology not only ensured a robust exploration of mentoring at KSU but also laid the groundwork for insightful findings that could inform the broader academic community.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Manifestations of Informal Mentoring

Manifestations	Frequency	Percentage
Peer Mentoring	21	31.34%
Traditional Mentoring	13	19.40%
Group/Team Mentoring	10	14.93%
Reverse Mentoring	12	17.91%
Constellation Mentoring	9	13.43%
Kinship Mentoring	2	2.99%
Total	67	100%

The study reveals that peer mentoring is ranked 1 with 21 cases. Peer mentoring is more accessible to potential mentees simply because there are more peers available than experienced mentors. It is important to note that the peer mentor may not have as much experience as the other types of mentors. However, they can listen to the problems of the mentees in great detail, relate to what the mentee is going through, and provide support/advice from a personal level.

In traditional mentoring, a more experienced mentor typically focuses on the development of a less experienced mentee to help navigate their career, serve as a trusted and respected advisor, or provide support and advice. Thirteen or 19.40% of the respondents considered traditional mentoring as rank 1.

The third rank with 17.91% is reverse mentoring. Reverse mentoring is when a junior team member establishes a professional relationship with a senior team member, exchanging knowledge, skills, and understanding. With reverse mentoring, senior leaders can learn data and technology skills from younger team members, many of them digital natives, to advance their skills and improve outcomes for the organization. Reverse mentoring manifested as a result of the pandemic. As higher education institutions were forced to face the challenges of ensuring the continuity of educational services and opted for mostly virtual educational platforms, senior faculty members had to seek the help of younger faculty to help them navigate the virtual platforms.

Surprisingly kinship mentoring is the least manifested type of mentoring with only 2.99 percent.

### 2. Mentoring Themes along Practices

Practices	Frequency	Percentage
Conducting Group Research	21	31.34%
Collaborative Extension Projects	6	8.96%
Multi-disciplinary Research	20	29.85%
Advocating for and guiding the mentee	7	10.45%
Exchanging frequent feedback from Mentee to Mentor	5	7.46%
Collaborative Instructional Activities	8	11.94%
Total	67	100%

The study underscores that engaging in research is a predominant practice within mentoring circles, with 61.19% of respondents identifying it as a significant aspect of their mentoring experiences. This generalization is derived from the cumulative frequency of responses related to indicators such as conducting group research and multi-disciplinary research. Historical data extracted from the KSU Research Journal further corroborates this finding, revealing that a substantial portion of published research is collaborative, aligning with the composition of research teams.

Notably, the study sheds light on a perceived weakness among faculty—their limited engagement in research activities. One respondent articulated how mentorship played a pivotal role in her confidence-building process for research endeavors, recounting the impactful experience of being included in a research project by a respected professor. The sentiment expressed reflects a shared commitment among faculty members to reciprocate such mentorship opportunities in the future.

- ‘I was surprised because this well-respected professor approached me and asked to include me, a new faculty, in her research...I really learned a lot from her, and if given the chance, I will also do the same.’

The focus on research is understandable because research is a major mandate of the university and a major final output that determines the performance not only of units and programs but of the university as a whole which is evaluated during accreditation, certification, and other monitoring mechanisms. But the ultimate reason for any research undertaking is it is a requirement for a professorship.

Peer mentoring groups claim that research is the main focus of their group. It started with one peer member with research experience joining them. This member also introduced the idea of enhancing their undergrad and master’s thesis as research topics.

The emphasis on research within mentoring aligns with the university's mandate, where research serves as a critical benchmark for evaluating performance during accreditation, certification, and other monitoring mechanisms. Beyond institutional requirements, the study suggests that pursuit of professorship serves as a fundamental motivator for research undertakings.

In the realm of peer mentoring groups, the study reveals that research is a primary focus, spurred by the involvement of a member with research expertise who introduced the idea of refining undergrad and master's theses into research topics.

Conversely, collaborative instructional activities, such as syllabus and instructional material preparation, emerged as challenges for faculty members, particularly in major subjects. The reliance on senior faculty for guidance, especially regarding institutional formats and syllabus requirements, underscores the collaborative nature of these instructional tasks.

Sadly, the conduct of extension projects is low in the mentoring practices of the academic community. According to the respondents, the extension activities are prepared and coordinated by extension chairs, they just join the activity when it is time to conduct. When asked why there seems to be a low interest in extension activities considering that it is a mandate of the university. The answer was ...” Indeed, it is equally important that it is why we make it a point to meet our extension targets but honestly, the efforts and time consumed in the implementation of extension activities are not commensurate to the benefits that the faculty derives from it.”

3. Mentoring Themes along Benefits

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Improved sense of professional Identity	11	16.41%
improved sense of community	10	14.93%

increased faculty retention	9	13.43%
increased self-confidence in professional development	7	10.45%
improved faculty morale	6	8.96%
higher career satisfaction	8	11.94%
Promote cooperation	7	10.45%
Promote Collaborative work	9	13.43%
Total	67	

Respondents of the study offered their perspectives on the benefits of mentoring:

“I think it is useful to have a number of people who serve different needs, and it helps people develop a sense of belonging, it helps people develop a sense of, ‘I can problem solve, I can figure out whom I need to talk to or what I need to do next in order to address whatever issue is going on in my life.’”

“I feel like there’s somebody who is an expert in every area of my life. There’s big intersectionality with all parts of my identity. So that’s very important because I may not understand all the aspects of all the things that I am, but at least somebody knows enough about one aspect.”

“I love this idea about the constellation of mentors ... part of my role as a mentor is connecting them to other people. And that’s such an important role because often I may not be the right person. ...”

By modeling collaboration and demonstrating it, and then promoting it and facilitating it, I see that as an important part of what we do, absolutely.”

“Knowing that senior faculty members are available when you need them helped in my decision to stay in the university.”

#### 4. Mentoring Themes along Outcomes

Outcomes	Frequency	Percentage
Orientation and Socialization to the Academic Community	10	14.93%
Growth of future leaders	12	17.91%
Development of research skills	21	31.34%
Development of teaching skills	8	11.94%
Development of Service Skills	7	10.45%
Development of Collaborative Organizational Culture	9	13.43%
Total	67	100.00%

The study reveals six outcomes of informal mentoring at the university. The development of research skills is ranked 1 with 31.34% and the development of service skills is ranked six.

It must be noted that the development of research skills is a positive outcome for the university. This is because Kalinga State University is categorized as a research university based on CMO 46 S. 2012. Under this typology, the university must meet research targets that would sustain its category as a research university.

It is evident that the positive outcomes of mentoring stretch far beyond personal development for the people involved in the partnerships. Mentoring in the workplace has



huge benefits for the organizations themselves, including development of Collaborative Organizational Culture and replenishment of future leaders.

## Conclusions

Informal academic mentoring is manifested in six types namely peer mentoring, traditional mentoring, group/team mentoring, reverse mentoring, constellation mentoring, and kinship mentoring.

It is also revealed that mentoring has many benefits and contributes to improved faculty morale, higher career satisfaction, and increased self-confidence in professional development. Respondents claim that mentored faculty to better navigate the academic environment and more easily transition to new roles and responsibilities resulting in them being promoted more quickly. It is also observed that institutions with mentoring contribute to increased retention and an improved sense of community and professional identity.

The study further reveals that a work environment where collaborative and reciprocal peer and co-mentoring are present results in a rich, satisfying, and rewarding career experience for both mentor and mentee. It ultimately moves the profession and the institution forward.

## Recommendations

The impact of mentoring on faculty career development, organizational culture, and leadership development in education cannot be denied.

The result of this study may motivate the university to establish ‘formal mentoring’ Program in order to give employees equal opportunity to develop. This means that the university will intentionally sets up a mentoring program in which they actively match mentors and mentees and support the relationships to develop long-term.

An action that can be accomplished is institutionalization of mentoring programs in the university. The institution may consider the inclusion of mentoring activities into faculty workloads. This sends a strong message of acceptance by both administration and faculty. Plus, faculty receive acknowledgement and credit for time spent mentoring other faculty.

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