

# Mentoring practices and their impact across educational and professional contexts: a systematic literature review

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**Abstract** - This systematic literature review brings together the most recent research on mentoring practices in the workplace and academic settings, with a focus on how they impact organizational outcomes, mentees' growth, employability, and professional identity formation. The review covers a variety of global areas, such as higher education, teacher education, business, health, and digital learning, using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in studies published between 2000 and 2025 personal development. Key factors for success include strong relationships between mentors and mentees, awareness of cultural and environmental issues, structured training for mentors, and the use of emotional and reflective engagement, especially in digital formats. On the other hand, giving the wrong advice can make it harder to stay motivated and keep your job. Despite its comprehensive scope, the review reveals limitations such as lack of longitudinal data and context-specific sampling. It calls for further research on scalable digital mentoring models and long-term impacts. Practical recommendations emphasize improved mentoring approaches, mentor preparation, and organizational support structures. Socially, mentoring promotes integrity, emotional well-being, and inclusion, providing valuable frameworks for designing transformative, inclusive mentoring programs that support student engagement and long-term success.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Higher Education, Teacher Education, Digital Mentoring, Employability, Mentee Development, Coaching, Professional Identity, Mentor Preparation.

**Purpose:** The goal of this systematic literature review is to summarize the most recent findings on mentoring techniques in both professional and educational contexts, emphasizing the effects they have on organizational outcomes, mentee development, employability, and professional identity construction. By providing a thorough synthesis of mentoring approaches across many contexts, such as higher education, teacher education, and digital learning environments, this article significantly advances the area of education.

**Approach, methodology, and design:** Studies published between 2000 and 2025 that are conceptual, empirical, and theoretical are included in the review. Higher education, healthcare, business, teacher education, and digital learning settings are just a few of the global contexts covered by the chosen research, which include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs. Database searches were used to find studies, and thematic synthesis was used.

**Findings:** Mentoring improves mentees' professional identities, academic performance, career preparation, and personal development. The importance of a good mentor-mentee connection, the impact of environmental and cultural elements, and the function of formal mentor training are common topics. Notably, factors including emotional engagement, autonomy support, reflection, and digital formats all operate as mediators in the effects of mentoring. Unfavourable mentoring encounters might lower retention and motivation.

**Limitations and implications of the research:** Numerous studies lack longitudinal follow-up and employ tiny, context-specific samples. Future studies should focus on scalable digital mentoring interventions, cross-cultural disparities, and the long-term effects of mentoring. The review emphasizes the importance of mentoring as a developmental tool in educational contexts by showing how it promotes academic success, the development of professional identities, and emotional well-being.

**Practical implications:** Organizations should establish supportive settings, guarantee that mentoring duties are clear, and implement mentor training programs. The effectiveness of mentoring is increased when it is tailored to the mentee's traits and circumstances. It highlights the significance of mentor preparation, mentees' dynamic agency, and the complex consequences of digital mentoring.

**Social implications:** In a variety of corporate and educational contexts, mentoring promotes equity, inclusiveness, and emotional health. It promotes a feeling of community, increases retention, and aids underrepresented groups. The paper also presents theoretical frameworks that enhance comprehension of mentoring as a transformative and relational process. Its insights increase learner engagement, retention, and future readiness by offering educators, institutions, and policymakers' evidence-based ways for creating inclusive, impactful, and responsive mentorship programs.

**Originality/value:** This review provides an integrated, cross-sectoral perspective on mentoring, emphasizing its complexity and potential. It proposes a conceptual framework uniting mentoring goals, processes, and contextual enablers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has emerged as a key tactic for promoting psychological, professional, and academic growth in a range of fields. It is essential in helping to close the gap between academic understanding and real-world application by providing mentees with professional perspective, emotional support, and structured assistance. Mentoring is becoming more widely recognized for its role in improving employability, promoting resilience, and promoting general well-being, whether in corporate settings, higher education, or teacher preparation programs. Additionally, mentoring fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging by acting as a socialization tool into workplace environments. Despite being widely used, mentoring procedures vary greatly in terms of their conception, objectives, methods of execution, and results. These differences call for a critical analysis of the theories and situations that affect the efficacy of mentoring. This systematic literature review therefore investigates the evolving landscape of mentoring, focusing on its theoretical foundations, research methodologies, patterns of impact, and broader implications for policy, institutional practice, and future research.

### 1. RESEARCH ON MENTORING THEMATIC TRENDS

Mentoring is categorized in recent literature into academic-focused versus employability-focused approaches, formal and informal structures, and traditional face-to-face and developing digital modes. While informal mentoring develops naturally through common interests or impromptu professional encounters, formal mentoring usually adheres to a structured institutional framework with appointed mentor-mentee pairings. The use of digital mentoring, including online and remote modalities, has grown dramatically. While it provides more accessibility and flexibility, it can also make it difficult to build lasting relationships. Employability-focused mentoring prioritizes professional networking and job preparedness, while academic mentoring focuses on knowledge assistance and skill development. The changing understanding of mentorship as moving away from a one-directional, hierarchical knowledge transmission model toward a more mutual, dynamic, and developing one is highlighted by important research (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999; Nabi et al., 2025). This redefinition acknowledges the agency of both mentor and mentee, framing mentoring as a co-constructed relationship that adapts to diverse educational and organizational settings.

### 2. VARIATIONS IN CONTEXT

Diverse practices influenced by sector-specific needs and objectives are demonstrated by mentoring in digital education (AuCoin & Wright, 2021), healthcare (Scandiffio et al., 2024), and higher education (Nuis et al., 2024). Mentoring is frequently combined with academic advising and career counselling in higher

education to help students develop their self-awareness, independence, and employability. Healthcare mentoring, in contrast, places a strong emphasis on clinical competency, professional acculturation, and the use of digital tools. It also offers structured programs that promote ongoing education and self-assurance in challenging situations. With its rapid growth since the pandemic, digital mentoring allows for remote guidance through online platforms and virtual tools, improving access for students who are geographically dispersed or marginalized. However, it also presents challenges in terms of engagement, trust-building, and interpersonal connection.

### **3. AGENCY AND MENTEE ROLES**

Four dynamic mentee roles—initiator, explorer, responder, and receiver—were presented by Hunskaar et al. (2025). These roles each reflect unique ways that mentees interact with their mentors during structured conversations. The range of agency displayed by mentees during the mentoring process is reflected in these roles. While the 'explorer' delves deeper into problems, testing theories and critically analysing them, the 'initiator' actively guides the discussion and looks for direction. While the "receiver" adopts a more passive stance, taking advice without actively challenging or adding to it, the "responder" responds to mentor prompts and inputs. According to this framework, mentoring is not a one-sided transfer of knowledge but rather an interactive, collaborative conversation. It emphasizes that effective mentoring outcomes depend not only on mentor competence but also on how mentees participate, use tools, and assert their own agency during the interaction.

### **4. COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL RESULTS**

It has been demonstrated that mentoring greatly enhances mentees' psychological health, particularly when solid interpersonal ties are formed (Dreer, 2021). It cultivates a sense of belonging, validation, and emotional support—all of which are critical for long-term motivation and self-assurance. Improved critical thinking, goal-setting, and self-reflection are examples of cognitive benefits (Nuis et al., 2024). Mutually beneficial and emotionally sensitive mentoring relationships support mentees in overcoming obstacles, building resilience, and expanding their self-awareness. However, there may be negative consequences from misaligned expectations, poor communication, or low mentor engagement. Poor mentoring quality has been linked to emotional detachment, a decline in trust, and a higher likelihood of dropping out or disengaging from educational or professional tracks, according to studies like Hu et al. (2024).

### **5. REMOTE AND DIGITAL MENTORING**

Because of its flexibility, scalability, and accessibility, digital mentoring is becoming more and more popular (AuCoin & Wright, 2021). It makes mentoring more inclusive and responsive to modern needs by allowing institutions to link professionals or students across institutional and geographic boundaries. Digital tools that are both synchronous and asynchronous, like messaging apps, learning management systems, and video calls, offer new ways for mentors and mentees to communicate. But there are drawbacks to these platforms as well, especially when it comes to the depth of interpersonal connection, establishing trust, and maintaining engagement. The emotional intimacy that frequently defines successful in-person mentoring may be hampered by mentors and mentees' inability to maintain presence and rapport in a virtual environment. In order to make up for this, digital mentoring necessitates deliberate planning, improved communication techniques, and the incorporation of relational technologies.

### **6. TRAINING AND PREPARATION OF MENTORS**

Appropriate mentor training that fosters relational and reflective skills in addition to teaching mentoring techniques is essential for effective mentoring. Successful mentor preparation programs are dialogic in nature, encouraging interaction and co-construction of knowledge, and are based on theoretical frameworks like adult learning theory, sociocultural learning, and transformative learning, according to studies (Maxwell et al., 2024; Thornton, 2025). These programs work best when they are context-sensitive, longitudinal, and customized to meet the demands of particular professions. They frequently incorporate experiential elements that assist mentors in internalizing and putting mentoring principles into practice,

such as role-playing, peer discussions, and feedback loops. Additionally, training needs to cover power dynamics in mentoring relationships, emotional intelligence, and cultural competency.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several theoretical lenses inform mentoring research, offering insight into the psychological, social, and developmental mechanisms that underpin effective mentoring relationships:

- **Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory:** This theory emphasizes the importance of addressing three fundamental psychological needs for growth and optimal functioning: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Mentees' intrinsic motivation, engagement, and well-being are improved by mentoring relationships that meet these needs. For example, a mentor who supports self-directed thinking and affirms a mentee's abilities helps the mentee feel competent and independent.
- **Bandura's Social Learning Theory:** According to this theory, learning happens through modelling, imitation, and observation. Mentees gain knowledge through guided practice, feedback, and observation of mentors' actions. As a role model, the mentor affects the mentee's attitudes, values, and professional standards in addition to their skill set.
- **Attachment Theory:** This theory, which has its roots in developmental psychology, has been modified to explain adult mentoring relationships. Psychological safety and resilience are fostered by stable mentoring relationships that are marked by trust, emotional availability, and dependability. Such stable attachments encourage mentees to take chances, explore difficulties, and think back on their growth.
- **Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning and Communities of Practice:** According to this sociocultural theory, learning is viewed as social interaction. Through mentoring, mentees can progressively join professional communities as full members, enabling legitimate peripheral participation. Thus, as mentees absorb common behaviours and values, mentoring aids in the development of identity.
- **Mezirow's transformative learning theory** places a strong emphasis on critical reflection as a means of achieving significant changes in one's personal and professional life. Mentees' worldviews can change as a result of mentors who challenge preconceptions, encourage dialogue, and offer a secure environment for introspection. This can result in increased self-awareness and flexible thinking.

All of these theories are combined to explain how mentoring affects mentees' ability to control their emotions, develop cognitively, acquire new skills, and create a professional identity. By combining these viewpoints, mentoring can be understood holistically as a multifaceted, intricate process that is rooted in the sociocultural, relational, and psychological spheres.

## III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Mentoring greatly improves mentees' academic performance, skill development, and psychological resilience, according to a thorough review of the chosen literature. It has a profound effect on mentees' capacity for introspection, goal-setting, and the development of a strong sense of self and career purpose. Research continuously shows that mentoring improves academic retention, clarifies career path, and boosts confidence during job changes. Positive results are consistently predicted by the strength and Caliber of the mentor-mentee relationship, which is marked by empathy, trust, and respect for one another. Additionally, mentees use reflection as a key mediating process to incorporate feedback, make sense of their experiences, and improve their employability (Nuis et al., 2024). Mentoring that takes into account different cultures and identities has been shown to encourage fairness and inclusivity in multicultural settings. Structured mentoring programs help people stay on track and reach their goals, while informal mentoring relationships encourage people to be spontaneous, open up emotionally, and form long-lasting bonds.

#### IV. CHALLENGES AND GAPS:

Even though the benefits are clear, there are still a number of problems. A lot of studies don't apply to a wide range of situations because they only look at small groups of people in a single institution or profession. Because there are no clear definitions or concepts, implementation and outcome measurement are not always consistent. There aren't many longitudinal studies that look at the long-term effects of mentoring after the initial educational or early career phase. Also, there isn't enough research on how well virtual mentoring works, especially when it comes to emotional connection and the presence of a mentor in remote settings. Mentoring for groups that are underrepresented or marginalized often doesn't have a clear plan, which could lead to unfair access or the continuation of existing inequalities.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This review confirms that mentoring is a useful and effective way to help people in both school and work settings. It helps people grow emotionally and develop their identities, as well as do well in school and in their careers. But for mentoring to be as effective as possible, it needs to be done using frameworks that are based on theory, culture, and structure. Future research should try to fill in the gaps in methods, look into what causes changes in mentoring relationships, and come up with ways to include all types of mentees in their work.

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