

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PEER MENTORING ON STUDENT MENTORS' SELF-IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between peer mentoring, students' sense of belonging, and leadership identity at the University of Queensland (UQ). The research builds on existing evidence that highlights the critical role of belonging in student success (Allen et al., 2021) and the development of leadership identity (Eller et al., 2014). Using data from a survey of UQ students, the study aims to determine the impact of participating in peer mentoring roles on these outcomes.

A total of 116 students participated in this study. From the participants, 37 students identified as a mentor in some program at UQ and 79 identified as non-mentors. The survey results indicate that students who serve as peer mentors report higher levels of belonging and a stronger sense of leadership self-identity than their non-mentoring counterparts.

Despite the positive outcomes, this pilot study acknowledges some limitations. Firstly, the statistical significance of our quantitative data will benefit from a larger sample size. Furthermore, considering that building a sense of belonging depends on many factors, we intend to interview groups of mentors and non-mentors to investigate to what extent the participation in peer mentoring programs affected their sense of belonging, followed by a longitudinal study to explore other variables that might influence students' sense of belonging and leadership identity.

In conclusion, this study highlights some significant benefits of peer mentoring in higher education. By promoting a sense of belonging and leadership development, peer mentoring programs can play a crucial role in student success and align with institutional goals to foster a supportive and empowering academic community.

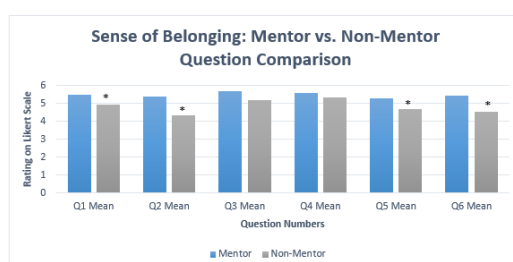


Figure 1: Comparison of Sense of Belonging scores between mentors and non-mentors for each question. Scores are represented on a Likert Scale, with mentors in blue and non-mentors in grey. Asterisks (*) indicate questions where the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. The questions were:

- Q1: When I am with others at UQ, I feel included.
 Q2: I have a close bond with my peers at UQ.
 Q3: I feel accepted by my peers at UQ.
 Q4: I feel accepted by my educators at UQ.
 Q5: I have a sense of belonging.
 Q6: I feel connected with others at UQ.

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