

The Role of Mentoring in Improving Student Discipline: A Systematic Review

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.120700020>

Received: 24 June 2025; Accepted: 26 June 2025; Published: 29 July 2025

ABSTRACT

Student discipline remains a significant concern in educational settings, affecting student learning and overall wellbeing and the entire school environment. This research investigates the significant role of mentoring programs in fostering positive behavioral changes and enhancing student discipline within educational settings.

A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including Proquest, ERIC, Researchgate and SAGE journals utilizing keywords such as "mentoring," "student discipline," "school - based program", "behavior," "conduct," and "mentoring models."

Drawing upon a comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical studies, this paper explores various mentoring models, their theoretical underpinnings, and their demonstrated impact on student discipline. Key findings suggest that well-structured mentoring initiatives, characterized by consistent support, clear communication, and positive role modeling, can significantly reduce disciplinary infractions, improve students' self-regulation skills, and cultivate a sense of responsibility.

The study highlights how mentors provide not only guidance but also a safe space for students to develop psychosocial-emotional competencies, problem-solving skills, and a stronger connection to their school community. While recognizing the complexities of student behavior, this research underscores mentoring as an effective intervention for promoting a more disciplined and conducive learning environment. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of mentoring and to identify most suitable strategies for its implementation across diverse student populations.

Keywords: mentoring, student discipline, behavior, conduct, school-based program, mentoring models

INTRODUCTION

Student discipline is a foundational element for effective learning environments, shaping not only individual academic outcomes but also the overall school climate. Misbehavior, absenteeism, and failure to follow school rules can greatly hinder the teaching and learning process, resulting in lower academic performance, heightened stress among educators, and a decline in overall school climate. Consequently, educational institutions worldwide continuously seek evidence-based interventions to promote positive student conduct and foster a disciplined and respectful atmosphere conducive to growth and development.

These approaches can vary from disciplinary measures designed to prevent future misconduct to more proactive and supportive approaches aimed at addressing the root causes of misbehavior and developing students' self-regulation skills. Among the varied strategies employed, mentoring programs have emerged as a formative intervention, offering a personalized and relational approach to guide students through challenges and promote positive behavioral changes. Mentoring, by its very nature, focuses on building supportive relationships, imparting life skills, and fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility, all of which are critical components in cultivating student discipline.

Mentoring is a formalized process based on a developmental relationship between two persons in which one person is more experienced (mentor) than the other (mentee). The mentor provides support, more specifically career, emotional, psychosocial, psychological, and academic support to promote and facilitate student

success, competence development, and career development (Nuis et al (2023)).

In educational settings, mentoring programs aim to connect students with caring adults who can offer social, emotional, and academic support, thereby influencing their attitudes, behaviors, and life trajectories (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

While the benefits of mentoring for various youth outcomes, such as academic achievement and self-esteem, are well-documented, its specific impact on student discipline remains an area requiring comprehensive synthesis. Existing studies exploring this relationship are varied in their methodologies, populations, and definitions of both mentoring and discipline outcomes. Therefore, a systematic and rigorous review of the available evidence is essential to ascertain the extent to which mentoring interventions contribute to improved student discipline and to identify the characteristics of effective mentoring programs in this domain.

This systematic review aims to comprehensively evaluate and synthesize the empirical evidence on the role of mentoring in improving student discipline within primary, secondary, and tertiary educational settings. By critically appraising the existing literature, this review seeks to: (1) determine the overall effectiveness of mentoring interventions in reducing disciplinary issues and promoting positive behaviors; (2) identify key components and characteristics of mentoring programs that are most effective in fostering discipline; and (3) highlight gaps in the current research to inform future studies and evidence-based practice in educational discipline.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic and comprehensive literature review was undertaken to gather relevant academic sources. The researcher first identified key themes and existing studies. The keyword searches were guided by specific thematic areas relevant to the study. To ensure direct relevance to the topic, a targeted search was conducted on databases such as ProQuest, ERIC, SAGE journals and ResearchGate, employing keywords like "mentoring," "student discipline," "behavior," "conduct," "school - based program" and "mentoring models." This strategy allowed for the effective selection of literature that directly supported the research objectives.

The researcher gathered twenty-one (21) carefully selected sources, published from 2002 to 2024. The literature review focused on scholarly, relevant, and credible sources that clarified the role of mentoring in student discipline. The researched prioritized peer-reviewed articles, empirical studies, and theoretical papers directly addressing our identified themes.

The systematic review focused on studies specifically related to student discipline, while excluding those that addressed career or professional development, as well as topics concerning mental health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic review brings together and critically analyzes current research on how mentoring influences student discipline. The literature explores mentoring as a formative intervention, looking at its broader impact on student life and its specific role in improving student discipline. A key part of this review also presents and examines various mentoring strategies.

The succeeding discussions present the key concepts encompassing these literature reviews. The researcher provides a clear definition of the key words used in the study.

Definition of Student Discipline

Yeban (2023) defines discipline as a system of rules for managing behavior and maintaining order. In a school context, discipline refers to the practices and policies school administrators and staff members implement to manage student conduct. She further elaborates that discipline also means ensuring that people follow rules. This helps create an orderly and controlled environment. It is often guided by specific rules or codes that schools set for their students. But discipline isn't just about rules and punishments. It's also about learning self-

control and developing skills that help you make good choices. It helps students work well with others and aims to help them become better people.

Singh (2023) in his published article entitled "*The Importance of Discipline in Student Life*" elaborated that discipline in students' life attracts all the right things, and students gain success in each field of their life. In a student's life, the discipline is always catered as a guide to focus on their goals. A disciplined life is classified by success, efficiency, and better time management.

In the study conducted by Patel (2023), the participants were asked what they believed discipline in the classroom to be. The responses suggest that discipline holds both extrinsic and intrinsic values at a proportionally equal level. The extrinsic theme was applied to describe discipline as a superficial feature more attuned to classroom management, such as "rules/guidelines regarding time keeping/attendance classroom behaviour and etiquette". However, students also defined discipline as an extrinsic measure reasoned through morals as "listen to each other and to be fair, to show respect by not talking over anybody while they are, stay off phones".

In the research paper "The Dynamic Nature of Student Discipline and Discipline Disparities" by Hammond, Ruiz, Eberhardt, and Okonofua (2023), student discipline is presented not as a static concept, but rather as a dynamic process that changes throughout the school year. It highlights the aspects of student discipline such as fluctuating rates where discipline rates generally escalate for all students from the beginning of the school year, particularly leading up to Thanksgiving break, and also increase following major breaks; widening disparities where the daily discipline rate for Black students increases significantly faster during these periods of escalation, which leads to a widening of racial disparities in discipline; and, predictive nature where the disparities observed in discipline between Black and White students early in the school year can predict where and when these disparities are likely to be most pronounced by the end of the year. The research emphasizes understanding these temporal fluctuations to identify effective intervention points for reducing overall discipline rates and mitigating racial disparities.

In summary, student discipline, as defined by multiple studies, encompasses students' behaviors in obeying school rules, upholding the code of conduct, and exhibiting self-control. Research consistently defines student discipline as students' capacity to follow school rules and the code of conduct, coupled with their ability to be self-disciplined and in control of their actions. It also highlighted that discipline has an important role in student life where it attracts all the right things, and students gain success in each field of their life. It is also notable that some studies have presented the dynamics of student discipline in various aspects such as values formation and student's behavior varies over time.

Definition of Mentoring

One of the school's intervention programs involves mentoring students who struggle with inconsistent behavior and adhering to the school's code of conduct. The existing literature provides a clear definition of mentoring and its components, offering a complete picture of this intervention.

Nuis et al (2023) defines mentoring as a formalized process based on a developmental relationship between two persons in which one person is more experienced (mentor) than the other (mentee). The mentor provides support, more specifically career, emotional, psychosocial, psychological, and academic support to promote and facilitate student success, competence development, and career development.

Reeves (2023) in his published article defined mentoring as a reciprocal relationship that involves the transfer of knowledge and sharing of experiences between two individuals: a mentor and a mentee. The mentor, typically more experienced, guides and supports the mentee, who seeks to grow professionally or personally.

Cambridge dictionary clearly defines mentoring as the act or process of helping and giving advice to a younger or less experienced person, especially in a job or at school.

The literature largely agrees that mentoring is a reciprocal process of knowledge and experience exchange

between a mentor and mentee. Mentoring sessions are centered on developing the student personally, emotionally, psychologically, and psychosocially.

Mentoring Models and Interventions

Mentoring models and interventions in student discipline focus on guiding students towards positive behavior, developing self-regulation skills, and fostering a sense of responsibility. They prepare formative approaches to address the root causes of misbehavior and build stronger relationships within the school community. The succeeding studies have presented the different mentoring models and interventions in addressing the student's misbehavior in school.

Toms and Stuart (2014) in their study entitled "*Mentoring Strategies for Decreasing Suspensions of Students with Behavioral Disorder*", have shown that behaviors such as disobedience, inappropriate language, disrespect, defiance, disruption and excessive noise are the most frequent reasons for office referrals. One specific mentoring model that has been used to decrease student's disruptive behavior is Check In Check Out (CICO). CICO is a type of mentoring program used for both elementary and secondary levels. Students "check-in" with a mentor at the beginning of the day to review behavioral goals and "check-out" at the end of the day to reflect on their progress and receive feedback. Check in/check out improves and establishes daily home-school communication and collaboration, improves student organization and motivation.

Schnautz (2014) shared that the results of his study entitled "*The Effects of School-Based Mentoring on Student Achievement for Junior High School Students*", indicated that the ISAGE (Incentives for Students Achieving Great Expectations) program showed significant effects in the number of student's discipline referrals along with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Math scale scores. The study did illustrate, however, that there was a statistically significant relationship between school-based mentoring and student discipline, along with TAKS Math scale. These findings provide preliminary evidence that school-based mentoring programs, such as the ISAGE program, may have a positive impact on students who are placed "at-risk."

Karcher (2008) in his research on, "*The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE): A Randomized Evaluation of the Effectiveness of School-Based Mentoring*," provides a significant contribution to understanding school-based mentoring (SBM) programs. The study found small, but positive, main effects of SBM on certain youth outcomes. These included self-reported connectedness to peers, self-esteem (global and present-oriented), and social support from friends. Notably, the study did not find significant effects on academic measures like grades. This highlights that while SBM can foster social-emotional growth, its direct impact on academic performance may be more limited or require different program designs. The study underscores that while SBM holds promise, its effectiveness is not uniform. It emphasizes the importance of: 1) careful program design, tailoring programs to specific age and gender groups, 2) realistic expectations, understanding that SBM may primarily impact social-emotional outcomes rather than direct academic improvement, and 3) avoiding potential negative effects, recognizing that poorly implemented programs or programs not suited for certain youth may not be beneficial. Overall, the SMILE study provided valuable empirical evidence on the nuances of school-based mentoring, contributing to a more informed understanding of its potential benefits and limitations.

In conclusion, the mentoring models and interventions examined in this systematic review provide a thorough exploration of their impact on student well-being. The focus is particularly on student discipline, emphasizing the value of supportive relationships in encouraging positive behavioral changes over punitive approaches. Empirical studies demonstrate the effectiveness of these models in decreasing disruptive behavior, strengthening social-emotional competencies, and boosting overall engagement in school.

Effects of mentoring in student discipline

This paper explores the effects of mentoring on student discipline, highlighting how such interventions contribute to reducing behavioral issues, improving emotional regulation, and promoting a culture of respect and personal growth within schools.

Judd (2017) in her study entitled "*Impacts of Mentoring Program on At-Risk Students*" examines how mentoring programs can reduce barriers leading to lower academic success among at-risk students. It highlights that consistent, encouraging support through adults can positively influence student behavior and academic outcomes.

Claro and Perelmiter (2021) in their study presented that findings provide evidence for a small to moderate positive effect of mentoring on the emotional well-being of youth. Additional analyses focusing on specific emotional constructs indicate that mentoring has a small negative effect ($d = 0.20$) on negative affect, a medium negative effect on internalizing behavior ($d = 0.45$), and a medium positive effect on self-esteem ($d = 0.45$). For children, success in school requires more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Thus, mentoring may be one approach to developing the necessary protective factors that can lead to greater success.

Valdebenito, et.al (2018) highlighted in their study suggests that school-based interventions are effective at reducing school exclusion immediately after, and for a few months after, the intervention. Some specific types of interventions show more promising and stable results than others, namely those involving mentoring/monitoring and those targeting skills training for teachers. Implications for policy, research, and practice arising from the results of this study are discussed.

Converse and Lignugaris/Kraft (2009) investigated the impact of a school-based mentoring program on at-risk students' office referrals, unexcused absences, and school attitude. Students who participated in the mentoring program had statistically significant reductions in office referrals and statistically significant improvements in school attitude. Based on an analysis of mentor interview responses and log entries, mentors were divided into "viewed positively" mentors and "questioned-impact" mentors. Viewed positively, mentors reported fewer office referrals, met more consistently with mentees, reported more relaxed mentoring sessions, and shared food and played games more often with their mentees than "questioned-impact" mentors.

Meyerson (2013) in his meta-analytic review on "*Mentoring Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Problems*," investigated the effectiveness of mentoring programs specifically targeting youth who are experiencing mental health challenges, including those with formal diagnoses. Mentoring programs designed for youth with emotional and behavioral problems showed a small-to-moderate positive effect across a range of youth outcomes. This level of effectiveness is comparable to other meta-analyses of intervention effectiveness. The review concludes that these specialized mentoring programs are viable candidates for serving as alternative or adjunctive interventions to improve the current mental healthcare service delivery system. In essence, Meyerson's research highlights that mentoring can be a valuable tool for supporting youth with emotional and behavioral problems, and that specific program design elements can further enhance its positive impact.

Raposa et al (2019) in their study "*The Effects of Youth Mentoring Programs: A Meta-analysis of Outcome Studies*," presented a comprehensive review of 70 outcome studies on intergenerational, one-on-one youth mentoring programs published between 1975 and 2017. The meta-analysis found that mentoring has positive effects across five broad outcome categories: school, social, health, cognitive, and psychological outcomes. This suggests that mentoring can contribute to holistic youth development. It further points to specific program characteristics and design choices that can enhance these effects, particularly the move towards more targeted and skills-based approaches to complement the foundational element of a strong mentor-mentee relationship.

Another meta-analytic review conducted by DuBois, et al (2002) on the "*Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth*," examined 55 evaluations of youth mentoring programs to assess the overall impact and identify factors influencing its effectiveness. The key findings include the effectiveness of mentoring programs was significantly enhanced when they utilized a greater number of both theory-based and empirically supported "best practices." This suggests that simply having a mentor is not enough; the program design and implementation play a crucial role. Another factor contributing to increased effectiveness was the formation of strong, high-quality relationships between mentors and youth. This emphasizes the relational aspect as central to positive outcomes. It emphasized that program quality, the strength of the mentor-mentee relationship, and targeting specific populations are crucial for maximizing the benefits and avoiding potential negative outcomes.

The literature largely agrees that mentoring positively impacts student discipline, leading to better behavior, improved academic performance, changes in student value systems, a reduction in school expulsions, and notable improvements in school attitudes. Another factor contributing to increased effectiveness was the formation of strong, high-quality relationships between mentors and the mentees. Some studies have also indicated that the school-based mentoring program should be well-designed, properly put into practice, and regularly evaluated.

Role of mentoring in improving student discipline

While we have a strong grasp of how mentoring benefits at-risk students and helps with various challenges, including discipline, we also recognize the vital role mentoring plays in student discipline, highlighting its effectiveness in promoting behavioral change, enhancing student engagement, and supporting overall well-being.

Karcher, et al. (2002) provide evidence that school-based developmental mentoring programs effectively enhance middle school students' connectedness to school and parents. This increased connectedness, fostered through improvements in social skills, self-esteem, and consistent mentor interaction, serves as a vital pathway leading to more positive academic attitudes and potentially broader academic achievement. The study underscores the importance of the relational aspect of mentoring and highlights its utility in fostering a sense of belonging for students within their educational environment.

In the study conducted by Saranya, et al. (2022) on “*The Role of a Mentor in Students’ Personal Growth, Academic Success, and Professional Development*”, revealed that based on the overall results of the data gathered, it showed that students are greatly influenced by the mentorship which has a great impact on their personal, academic, and professional development. These results of this study imply that the mentor can help individuals develop assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, and problem solving skills, which creates a significant impact on the holistic development of an individual.

Another study conducted by Namutebi et al (2018) on “*Student Mentoring and Discipline in Ugandan Universities: The Case of Central Region*” reveals that the more students are mentored, the more their indiscipline is eliminated. The study highlighted that student mentoring is one of the remedies that can help combat student indiscipline in a significant and sustainable manner. This suggests that increasing student mentoring decreases student indiscipline more significantly in public universities. This suggests that universities can combat student indiscipline more significantly when they focus more on promoting formal than informal student mentoring.

In the study of Kariithi, et al (2022), the findings show that there was positive and significant correlation between students’ discipline and mentorship interventions. Based on these findings, it is evident that mentorship interventions influence students’ discipline in the study area. Although indiscipline among students could emanate from influences in the school environment, mentorship interventions in the same environment reined in on such indiscipline. As posited by the personal construct theory, constant exposure to mentorship in schools could influence the behavioral choices of students as well as indiscipline levels due to changes in the value systems of students. Interventions around these school-based behavior change interventions should thus be strengthened to holistically enhance students' indiscipline in the schools studied.

Jefferson (2022) in his study confirms that parents and teachers perceive a school-based mentoring program has a significant impact on a student’s self-esteem. In addition, the parent focus group responses and teacher and administrator interviews point toward a similar theme in regard to a student’s self-esteem and class participation, revealing students’ lives have improved significantly due to engagement with a school-based mentoring program. Findings of the study include stronger attendance, lower discipline referrals for at-risk students, significant impact on a student’s self-esteem and class participation and improved academic outcomes.

In summary, the literature highlighted that mentoring plays a significant role in improving student discipline and in the formation of the students. It creates a positive relationship between the school and the parents. It combats indiscipline among students and helps individuals develop assertiveness, independence, self-

actualization, and problem solving skills, which creates a significant impact on the holistic development of an individual.

CONCLUSION

The researcher synthesized twenty-one (21) empirical journal articles in the areas of student discipline, mentoring, school-based program, mentoring models and interventions, effects of mentoring and the role of mentoring in improving student discipline. The systematic review emphasized that mentoring as one of the interventions in improving student discipline can be implemented in school to combat indiscipline among students and create a safe and conducive learning environment. Thus, the researcher concludes the following recommendations:

Develop a comprehensive mentoring program that is based on identifying the mentoring model to be used and the theoretical underpinnings in such a model.

Create a pool of mentors who could assist the students who have been engaged in disciplinary infractions and provide training for the mentors.

Develop learning modules on the different areas of the mentoring program such as self-awareness, self-discipline, decision making, valuing oneself, creating positive relationships, and on following and understanding the school's code of conduct.

Create an evaluation tool that will measure the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

To conclude, this systematic review underscores the necessity of comprehensive school-based mentoring programs for promoting students' holistic growth and tackling issues such as indiscipline. It is crucial that program implementers, or mentors, receive proper training to deliver the comprehensive support their mentees need. Evaluating the mentoring program thoroughly, along with collecting mentee feedback on their experiences, is essential for determining whether the mentor-mentee relationship successfully achieves the intended goals of the mentoring program.

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