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**Investigating the Impact of Mentorship in Leadership Development**

McKenzie V. Roy

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Investigating the Impact of Mentorship in Leadership Development

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University of Southern Maine
LOS 689: Master’s Capstone II
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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of mentorship on leadership development within a large organization. The research provides valuable insights for the organization as a whole; to foster an improved culture and understanding of mentorship for those wanting to grow into leadership roles. While there is a common assumption that mentorship contributes to leadership growth in organizations, a deeper understanding of how specifically mentorship impacts leadership development is needed. Therefore, this study utilizes a qualitative method of inquiry to capture the perspectives of organizational leaders. Investigating the experiences of leaders allows those to gain a deeper understanding of the commonalities in career development and growth.

*Keywords*: mentor, mentee, leadership, leadership development, growth, organization, formal, informal, effective mentorship
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Introduction

Purpose

There is a general consensus in leadership scholarship that leadership development is an effective practice to grow emerging leaders in organizations. The potential benefits of mentorship include providing guidance, support, and learning opportunities for developing leaders. However, despite the common assumption that mentorship has an impact on leadership development, an understanding of the impact mentorship has on leadership development within the organization is still inadequate. The purpose of this research is to investigate the many dimensions of mentorship and its effects on individuals’ growth as leaders within the organization.

The objective of this study is to explore the specific ways mentorship influences aspiring leadership development. By examining existing research, conducting research through interviews, and integrating what is uncovered from these interviews, this study intends to identify common themes that contribute to effective mentorship within leadership development. This research aims to uncover valuable insights for both an organization and leadership scholarship, contributing to a better understanding of the impacts of mentorship within leadership development in an organization.

Researcher Perspective

Personally, the significance of mentorship in my own professional journey cannot be emphasized enough. I recall a conversation with a former manager who instilled the importance of having a mentor to guide me in my career aspirations. This former manager made a valuable recommendation that I approach a specific manager to serve as my mentor because to him, we
seemed to be a compatible match. I had to take the initiative to approach this manager and spark up the conversation as a freshman associate.

After finding the courage to approach this well-known manager to become my official formal mentor, we later became good friends. I am extremely grateful for this relationship because my mentor’s guidance empowered me to grow both personally and professionally. My mentor not only helped me practice for interviews, but she would talk through difficult situations that I endured. This bond was built on professional discussions and advice that I hope to pass down if I am lucky enough to be selected as someone’s mentor one day. The lessons learned, the challenges I had to overcome, and the growth that I experienced through mentorship are a testament to why investigating the impact of mentorship in leadership development is so important to me.

Another motivation for conducting research on mentorship in leadership development is the potential for personal and professional growth. As a researcher, I am not just an observer but an active participant. Exploring the impacts of mentorship in leadership development and gaining insights from leadership success stories, I learned through other leaders’ experiences, challenges, and achievements. This process enhanced my understanding of effective leadership practices. Furthermore, by engaging with various leaders within my organization through interviews, I established connections with those who have made significant contributions to our organization, which helped expand my professional network.

Additionally, I expressed interest to know more about the impacts on mentorship in leadership development within my organization for my own personal curiosity. I have had the privilege of learning about leadership at a graduate scholar level over the past three years. I have written hundreds of pages of reflection on myself, read numerous textbooks and articles on
leadership, and have had many open discussions with peers from other industries on their perspectives of leadership. Therefore, I believe it is important that I investigate deeper into how leaders view the impacts of mentorship as it pertains to leadership in my organization’s culture. I foresee a lifelong career within my organization and this study helped provide a clear understanding of a leader’s career progression and how mentorship played a role in its significance.

Who Can Benefit?

Understanding the impact of mentorship on leadership development can provide valuable insights for aspiring leaders within the organization. Individuals who aspire to roles of leadership in this organization can benefit from understanding the impact of mentorship on their leadership journey. This research is designed to offer valuable insights to assist aspiring leaders within the organization. Through an exploration of the mentorship arena, the aim of this research is to present learned insights into the effectiveness, limitations, and gaps within mentorship in the context of the leadership process.

Mentorship not only benefits mentees, but also benefits mentors as well. Mentors gain valuable insights from understanding the impact of mentorship on leadership development. This research aims to help leaders recognize the significance of their role and better understand how their guidance, support, and trust can contribute to the development and success of mentees within the organization. The reciprocal relationship between a mentee and a mentor often generates a win-win as each party can learn from one another.

Lastly, one of the most important benefits of investigating the impacts on mentorship in leadership development is what it brings to the researchers’ organization. This research provides insight to allow the organization to design and implement effective mentorship programs,
INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

improving employee retention and overall organizational leadership competencies. A better understanding on how mentorship can affect leadership development leads to knowledge sharing and collaboration across different levels within the organization. By understanding the impact on mentorship, the organization can utilize this information to promote professional growth and development with employees by allowing the space for a relationship that both employees benefit from. In turn, this improves employee retention by creating a supportive environment where employees feel valued.

This research is important for organizations because once a mentor retires or moves on to another organization, the tribal knowledge is spread to the aspiring leaders of the organization. This research aims to help improve the culture within my organization to showcase a supportive environment by understanding how the impact of mentorship affects leadership development. Overall, this research holds many benefits to mentees, mentors, and my organization.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

What is a Mentor?

For centuries, mentoring has had many forms and styles. Despite being around for so long, there is not a consensus around one standard definition (Lee et al., 2020). In simple terms, mentoring is a relationship between two individuals where socialization occurs through relational interactions with others within the organization (Allen et al., 2017). The relationship of the two individuals who are sometimes given official or unofficial titles of a “mentor” or “mentee”.

Pulling from numerous articles, there is a common theme that the functions of a mentor, include: expertise in their field (McDonald & Wilson-Mah, 2022), evolves beyond guidance and support and has a commitment to building trust over a significant timeframe (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004), focuses on the growth in the mentee (Lee et al., 2020), and viewed as a role model for the mentee (McDonald & Wilson-Mah, 2022). The mentor is assumed to be the expert and knowledge sharer and the mentee is assumed to be the person seeking growth and guidance.

Although the mentor and mentee relationship appear to be hierarchical, effective mentoring relationships can be mutually reciprocal. Mentors and mentees can learn from each other through reflection, gain professional perspective benefits, and acquire new behaviors through discussion (Moerer-Urahl & Creswell, 2004). This reciprocal relationship creates a ripple effect. The concept of the ripple effect is supported by research that found most participating mentors within this study had been involved in a previous mentor relationship as a mentee. This finding suggests that reciprocity influences the decision to mentor others (Moerer-Urhahl & Creswell, 2004). Mentoring is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be ongoing over time and lasting if those involved wish to maintain the relationship.
A common theme in research on effective mentoring is the responsibility of mentors to foster an environment of acceptance and safety (Bell, 2000). Bell (2000) furthers this idea by emphasizing that effective mentors, those who are great communicators, avoid judgmental tones and attitudes. Instead, effective mentors demonstrate acceptance through attentive listening. As Bell (p.52) states, “Great mentors who are effective at communicating acceptance don’t speak as if they’re testing a protege being judgmental or acting as a parent. Great mentors show their acceptance through attentive, dramatic listening. While listening is their goal, they make it the priority; they don’t let anything distract”. An effective mentor is someone who could establish trust, acceptance, and listens to understand.

**History and Importance of Mentoring**

Historically, mentoring can be traced back to Greek mythology, however, there has been increased interest in the twentieth century, and actual research in the last fifteen years (Appelbaum et al., 1994). The economic and structural changes over the past several decades motivated socialization and mentoring research, which caused an interest in studying mentorship (Allen et al., 2017). Allen et al., pinpoints a time in history to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s by stating:

...more women began entering the workforce. To illustrate, the participation of women in the workforce was 34% in 1950, 51.5% in 1980, and increased to 57% in 2014 (bureau of Labor statistics, 2014). As the number of women in organizations rose and employment opportunities improved, the development of mentoring relationships was considered crucial to their socialization and advancement. Similar arguments were
made regarding the importance of mentoring for the career development of racial/ethnic minorities (Allen et al., 2017, p. 325).

Mentorship emerged as a necessity in the workplace, primarily due to the ever-changing landscape of organizations, new demographics of associates entering the workforce, and growing opportunities of employment within an organization. Those who previously were not a part of the workforce required support and guidance of mentors to be successful in their professional careers.

The inception of mentorship programs gained traction in the 1990’s, from organizations initiating mentorship to tailor specifically for the unemployed (Russell & Adams, 1997). Russell & Adams (1997) noted that organizations aimed to instill confidence, transfer knowledge, and equip the unemployed with skills to enter the workforce. The goal was to assist individuals in becoming successful, contributing members of the working class. The concept for mentorship programs emerged from a desire to support others in adapting to the landscape of today’s ever-changing professional environment that benefits both individuals and organizations.

Although the study of mentorship is still quite new, Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell (2004) notes that minimal research has been conducted on exploring the “reinvesting in others” because of a mentoring relationship. The studies and literature today focus on what the mentee gains from the experience in an organizational context in which mentoring exists (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). This means there are mounds of untapped potential in the history and discovery of what mentorship is to an organizational environment. This untapped potential has left scholars throughout the 20th century to devote their energy to examine mentoring and legitimize it as a field of inquiry (Lee et al., 2020). It is important to note when mentoring became significant to organizations, but it is also beneficial to focus on what it can do as well.
Types of Mentoring

Mentoring is a vast topic and can include many different types of mentoring which include, reverse mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, psychosocial mentoring, virtual mentoring, and more. The two types of mentoring that this study focuses on are informal and formal mentoring within an organization. Wanberg et al (2006), perfectly describes the difference between the two. Wanberg et al. (2006) states:

Formal mentoring relationships differ from informal mentoring in several fundamental ways. First, the relationships are initiated differently. Informal mentoring relationships develop because of mutual identification and interpersonal comfort. In contrast, formal mentoring programs match individuals as part of an employee development process, and the two individuals must then strive to get to know one another. Formal and informal mentoring relationships also differ according to the timing and structure of the relationship (Wanberg et al., 2006, p. 411).

From this text, it appears that a formal mentor relationship is prescribed with intention and execution, whereas an informal mentor relationship can appear organically and be decided by the two individuals at their own pace.

In their 2022 study, McDonald & Wilson-Mah (2022), described that their participants indicated that they were positively affected by an informal mentorship relationship. It was evident that there is a tendency to look for informal mentorship relationships where people who are experts in the field are able and available to offer guidance and advice (McDonald & Wilson-Mah, 2022). Another source, Mumford (1995) agrees that most mentor-mentee relationships are accidental (or informal), and disagrees with a formal mentoring relationship by stating, “they do
not arise from formally constructed management development schemes where mentor and learner are deliberately paired” (Mumford, p.6). Mumford (1995) may have felt this way at the time the article was written as mentorship has evolved in organizations over the last couple of decades.

Mentorship may appear abstract, however, numerous studies suggest that the most effective relationships, aiming for personal development, are those in which the mentee takes a proactive role, while the mentor assumes a relatively passive role (Clutterbuck & Devine, 1987). The theory behind this stance is that it helps empower the mentee to drive their own development and can teach self-reliance. In turn, this mutually benefits the relationships, where both parties are engaging in reciprocal learning and sharing with each other.

It is important to note that it is possible for a mentor to have many mentee relationships, each at different stages of development (Hill et al., 2022). Therefore, each mentor-mentee relationship is unique and personalized to cater to the individual’s needs and desires within that relationship. Hill et al. (2022) stress the importance, in the early stages of a mentorship relationship, of a mentee defining their goals within the relationship. This ensures that expectations are clear, allowing for objectives to be measured and achieved for both the mentee and mentor.

For consistency, in this research, the reference to a mentor or mentee relationship implies a relationship within an organizational setting. Some people often refer to mentorship as a form of formal training, coaches in recreational activities, or formal teachers. This study explores the impact of mentorship in leadership development within an organization.

**Benefits of Mentoring**
After extensive review, no article addresses the disadvantages of mentoring. Almost all the literature assessed has shared the perspective that mentoring offers a plethora of benefits to the individuals themselves as well as the organization in which they work in. A common theme in the reviewed literature is that mentoring for an organization offers: visibility of leaders; alignment of personal, professional, and organizational goals; and shared resources— which all relate to organizational culture (Sheridan et al., 2015). This is also supported by Janssen et al (2016), who agrees that mentoring relationships contribute to organizational knowledge and shared resources. Overall, knowledge sharing within an organization promotes collaboration, learning, efficiency, and employee engagement. This supportive environment benefits both individuals and the organization.

An additional benefit to mentoring is that it naturally guides leaders to self-reflect. Ayoobzadeh & Boies (2020) supports this idea by stating:

Organizations can nurture leaders not only through formal training but also through providing individuals with opportunities to challenge themselves and to self-reflect, as well as through action learning. Mentoring is one of the development practices that help individuals to understand themselves, their competencies, and their identities to (i.e. leader development) and to understand how to relate to others, establish commitments and extend social networks (Ayoobzadeh & Boies, 2020, p. 497).

Mentorship provides leaders with the valuable time and space needed for self-reflection on their personal development. But why is self-reflection important in the context of leadership development? Self-reflection brings to light both strengths and weaknesses, which promotes self-assessment of one’s competencies of their leadership role. Furthermore, it helps leaders have a
clearer sense of self confidence and a deeper understanding of their values and aspirations.

Mentorship creates an opportunity for growth, which is beneficial for not only leaders but also for organizations as a whole.

Mentorship offers an additional benefit, which is to stimulate new ways of thinking. Mentors who nurture critical thinking encourage their mentees to question long-held assumptions and beliefs, enabling them to approach complex problems and concerns with greater innovation (Bass, 1997, as cited in S.A. Quatro et al., 2007). This concept is further supported by Zipp and Olsen (2008), who noted that, ‘good mentors lead students on a transformative journey that reshapes their thinking and actions, exposing them to diverse and varied experiences’ (p.9).

Mentorship cultivates relationships that are formed through trust, which, in turn, is an advantage for organizations. Within the mentor/mentee relationship, it is anticipated that vulnerable conversations will take place, which lead to personal development. Gara and La Porte (2020) highlight the connection between vulnerability and creativity, which emphasize its role in the process of idea development (p.302). This vulnerability within mentorship relationships contributes to an atmosphere where trust operates as a catalyst with direct implications for an individual's attitudes, cooperation, and overall performance (Sharkie, 2009, p.491). Mineo (2014) further explains that trust serves as the adhesive that binds leaders to their followers, ultimately facilitating organization and leadership success. As a result, mentorship is a strategic tool for fostering trust, promotes creativity, and is overall effective for organizations.

Mentor relationships offer individual benefits to both mentees and mentors. For mentees, the benefits may include enhanced psychological well-being, increased achievements, and more positive perceptions (Lee et al., 2020). On the other hand, mentors can also gain from their mentee relationship and experience personal fulfillment, greater life satisfaction, and improved
job performance (Lee et al., 2020). It’s worth noting that the advantages of mentoring are reciprocal and provide fulfillment and growth opportunities for both mentors and mentees.

Organizations are compelled to invest in leadership development to uphold their competitive advantages (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001). Fulmer and Goldsmith (2001) further this by claiming, ‘The foundations of its developmental planning lie within its core business strategies and values of integrity, professionalism, respect for people, long-term focus, and pride without arrogance’ (p. 11). As mentorship is assumed by most as a crucial aspect of leadership development, continuous organizational investment—whether in the form of time and space or through a formal program—becomes pivotal for maintaining competitiveness within the market for retention.

**Ripple Effect**

Below, is an illustration of how a mentor and mentee relationship causes a positive ripple effect beautifully displayed by Galinat (2022) as sourced from T.R. Barlett et al. (2023). The concept is that a drop of water falls into a pool, creating a series of cascading effects. This concept symbolizes how, in any relationship, the mentor influences the mentee, and vice versa. This connection evolves into a meaningful relationship. Networking naturally flows as an outcome of this relationship. As a result of this mentee and mentor interaction, actions are initiated, which can help shape professional opportunities. T.R. Barlett et al (2023) describes that the connections, relationships, actions, and opportunities generated by this mentorship practice creates a potential for professional development. The mentee is assumed to have gained valuable insights from their mentorship, and can, in turn, pour positive change in another persons’ professional journey. Therefore, this mentorship relationship initiates a ripple effect of positivity that benefits both the mentee and mentor.
Why should organizations prioritize fostering a positive mentorship experience?

Research shows that individuals who have had positive mentoring experiences in the past, and who are satisfied with the support they have received, are more likely to become mentors themselves (Walker & Yip, 2018). This positive mentor-mentee relationship sets in motion a ripple effect for positive future relationships. This is reinforced by Wang et al. (2009), who argues that the level of support an individual receives from their mentor correlates with their desire to mentor others.

**Gaps or Challenges**

There are many gaps and challenges that others have come across through studying mentorship. Stadtlander (2021) offers his perspective that there is an alternative to mentorship through positive leadership instead. Stadtlander (2021) states, “Thus, positive leadership provides a variable alternative to mentoring based on hierarchy, fear of penalties for honest mistakes, and other factors that inhibit creativity and destroy initiative in their students” (Stadtlander, p.434).
Stadlander’s (2021) perspective on mentoring may be coming from a formal mentoring system and can easily be challenged by those who consider their mentors as positive leaders. Some mentees and mentors have built their relationship on trust and understanding, therefore Stadlander’s (2021) view can be considered wrong to some.

A gap that is fascinating was Janseen et al.’s (2016) perspective on mentoring in the United States v. other countries. Janseen et al. writes, “Americans tend to see mentoring to advance proteges’ careers. In line with this, sponsorship of the protege may be viewed as an appropriate mentoring function in the United States. But may be seen as a form of favoritism in European cultures” (Janseen et al., p.265). This perspective was eye opening because not every culture views the benefits of mentoring as a positive for fair advancement. Other cultures may view mentorship as favoritism, nepotism, and an unfair practice in an organizational setting.

Lastly, Lee et al. (2020), warn researchers to consider exploring mentoring in various organizations beyond collegiate mentors or explore mentors not focused on leadership development to extend an understanding of how mentoring impacts the mentor. This is because mentors of different ages or types of organizations with different mentoring can describe other experiences of growth and development (Lee et al., 2020) and may limit the understanding of mentorship.

**Summary**

As discussed, the existing scholarly literature offers substantial information about what a mentor is, the types of mentoring, the history of mentoring, and the benefits of mentoring. However, the topic of the impact of mentorship in leadership development remains under-explored. Therefore, this research contributed to existing scholarship and helped close the knowledge gap. By investigating the impact of mentorship in leadership development, the goal
of this research is to contribute to the study of leadership development and to assist emerging leaders with skills and guidance to prepare them for future leadership roles within my organization.
Chapter 3

Research Methods

Types of Research

This research investigates the impact of mentorship on leadership development by utilizing a qualitative methodology approach as the chosen method of inquiry. Within the scope of qualitative research, this study focuses on narrative research as the primary method. Narrative research is designed to explore individuals’ lives by bringing to life their recounted experiences into a narrative chronology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Utilizing qualitative research, specifically narrative research, was the most appropriate method of inquiry for this investigation. By conducting interviews with individuals and learning about their personal experiences, explorations of the effects of mentorship on individual leadership within the organization are pursued. This provides valuable insights based on leaders’ personal experiences. The interviews captured their unique perspectives and recalled how mentorship influenced their own personal leadership journey. As anticipated, I uncovered common themes that highlight the impact of mentorship on leadership within my organization through storytelling.

Through conducting interviews and identifying commonalities within everyone’s lived experiences, effective strategies for leadership within the organization were pursued. These strategies can potentially help foster leadership development on aspiring leadership within the organization. This study is twofold: to benefit aspiring leaders within my organization and to captivate existing knowledge for the betterment of my organization.

Conducting the Study
To initiate the research process, a meeting was scheduled with a Human Resources (HR) representative from the organization. During this meeting, the study’s objectives were presented, emphasizing the importance of maintaining participant anonymity as well as conducting interviews in a professional manner. In addition, inquiries were made regarding any existing protocols, and any concerns or questions from the organization were addressed. The primary goals were to establish trust within the organization and among participants by involving an HR representative and to adhere to research protocols.

Formal consent from each participant was obtained by providing an official consent form. This document detailed the study’s objectives, procedures, and the commitment to maintain confidentiality. The significance of consent was acknowledged and ensured that everyone was fully briefed on the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. Open communication about the research intentions, strategies and overall purpose was maintained to set a positive tone, validate the study’s credibility, and encourage participation for the improvement of the organization.

Before each recorded interview, participants were presented with the organization’s definition of mentoring, coaching, and sponsorship. This step ensured that each participant shared an understanding of these terms through the lens of the organization. According to the organization, mentoring is defined as: “Someone who advises you. Mentoring is abstract. A mentor does not watch every day play but is there to provide guidance based on anecdotes and tips. Anyone in a position with experience desired by the mentee who can offer advice and support. They support the mentee through formal or informal discussions about how to build skills, qualities, and confidence for career development. They also help craft their mentees career vision”. A clear understanding of the definition of mentorship was crucial for the contextual understanding necessary for this study’s purpose.
Once permission was obtained from both the Institutional Review Board and the organization to conduct this study, a standardized email to 15 leaders with the organization was sent. This email included the intent, strategy, and purpose of the study’s research. The eligibility criteria for participation in this study include having associates directly report to them as well as having a minimum of five years of tenure within the organization. The intent behind these criteria was to include individuals who have achieved leadership positions considered exemplary by the organization. Additionally, it was important to gather insights from those who directly influence the lives of others within the organization. Table 1 exhibits the characteristics of the participants involved in the study. Out of twelve participants, five are male, and seven are female. Eleven out of the twelve participants have over five years of leadership experience, while one participant has less than five years of leadership experience. All participants in the study have at least five years of tenure within the organization and have associates who report directly to them.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of Participants</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 years leadership experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5+ years leadership experience</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After a minimum of 12 individuals expressed interest in participation, 60-minute virtual meetings were scheduled for each participant. The choice of virtual meetings stemmed from the organization’s current hybrid environment, aiming to provide ease and convenience for
participants. This method also facilitated recording meetings, allowing for reference to participants' responses when needed.

To perform qualitative research that is aimed to explore the impacts of mentorship on leadership development, it was crucial to pose open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their experiences and perspectives, fostering a holistic understanding. To prepare participants for their interviews, a list of questions was sent in advance, to help participants feel comfortable and prepared for their responses. The idea around this method was to avoid impromptu answers and foster thoughtful and intentional responses rather than providing quick responses that were not as thought out.

At the end of each interview, a concluding question was posed to each participant: ‘Could you provide three words that immediately come to mind when you think of mentorship in the context of leadership development?’ This question was not disclosed to participants in advance. The purpose was to retrieve immediate and instinctual responses, following reflection on their mentorship experiences. Once all three-word choices from participants were collected, a word cloud generator tool was used to create a visual representation. See Table 5 for visual.

Later in this study, you will encounter a visual representation of the word cloud. The purpose of incorporating this word cloud is to visually represent the significance of each word. The size of each word within the cloud corresponds to its overall weight in importance, with a larger word reflecting more frequent responses and smaller words indicating less frequency. It is essential to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers in this word cloud; rather, the size of each word reflects the number of responses it received. As a researcher who is a visual learner, it was important to utilize a word cloud approach to illustrate the importance of each word in the leadership context within the organization.
Processing Interviews

As stated earlier, each 60-minute interview was recorded and transcribed. Throughout the interview, notes were taken on key points raised by each participant. The chosen strategy for processing interviews involved thematic analysis, and the following steps were followed:

1. After conducting each interview, the recording and transcription were saved and labeled Interview #1, Interview #2, and so forth to maintain participant confidentiality.
2. Each transcription was reviewed to ensure all interviews were accurately transcribed.
3. Familiarization with each interview was achieved by reading and rereading to identify thematic evidence.
4. Coding was applied to segment text, highlighting specific themes, ideas, and concepts.
5. Similar themes and codes were grouped into categories, forming themes and patterns.
6. Recurring themes were compared and contrasted, leading to conclusions drawn from participants’ experiences.
7. An online word generator was used for the final question, providing a visual representation of description of what mentorship means to the leaders in the organization.

By following each step, a comprehensive understanding of leadership perspectives in the organization, within the context of the impacts of mentorship on leadership development, was achieved.
Chapter 4

Results

To analyze common themes within the participants' responses to the interview questions, the researcher grouped the participants' answers into thematic categories. These categories encompass eight key themes pulled from the interview data when investigating the impact on mentorship in leadership development, which include: personal mentorship experience, impact on professional growth, qualities and attributes of effective mentorship, alignment with company values and goals, career and leadership aspirations, transfer of knowledge and experience, engagement with mentors and balancing feedback, and mentorship role. Table 2 shows the specific questions that generated responses contributing to the findings outlined below.

Table 2

*Interview questions grouped into themes.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q#</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have you ever had a mentor, if so, could you describe your experience with mentorship, including whether it was formal or informal?</td>
<td>Personal Mentorship Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you approach mentoring others the same way your previous mentors have? What did you change if so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can you share specific instances where mentorship has directly contributed to your professional growth and development as a leadership within the company?</td>
<td>Impact on Professional Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How has mentorship influenced your development of leadership skills, and could you provide specific examples of this impact?</td>
<td>Qualities and Attributes of Effective Mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What, in your opinion, are the key qualities and attributes to effective mentorship, specifically in the realm of leadership?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In what ways has mentorship enhanced your understanding of the company’s values, culture, and long-term goals?</td>
<td>Alignment with Company Values and Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What role has mentorship played in shaping your career and leadership aspirations, and can you share any experiences related to this?</td>
<td>Career and Leadership Aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles during your mentorship relationships, and how did you navigate or overcome them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How do you believe mentorship contributes to the transfer of knowledge and experience between leaders within the company?</td>
<td>Transfer of Knowledge and Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Can you describe your approach to engaging with past and current mentors and how you balance the guidance and feedback you received with your own leadership style?</td>
<td>Engagement with Mentors and Balancing Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Are you a current mentor? If so, to how many individuals?</td>
<td>Mentorship Role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher then reviewed the responses from the common themes and categorized them into sub themes, which leads to the many varying results on how mentorship has impacted leadership development.

Table 3

*Sub themes generated from interview responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme from Questions</th>
<th>Sub themes from responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Mentorship Experience</td>
<td><em>Formal v Informal Mentorship</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Frequency and Nature of meetings</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mentees role in Mentorship</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Professional Growth</td>
<td><em>Risk Taking</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Feedback</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Leveraging Relationships</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Adaptability and Perspective</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities and Attributes of Effective Mentorship</td>
<td><em>Experience and Career History</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Commitment and Investment</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with Company Values and Goals</td>
<td><em>Development and Support</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cultural Understanding</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Knowledge Sharing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Leadership Aspirations</td>
<td><em>Feedback and Encouragement</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Challenges</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of Knowledge and Experience</td>
<td><em>Transfer of Knowledge</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Consistent Check Ins</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Mentors and Balancing Feedback</td>
<td><em>Staying Connected</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Balancing Feedback</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Embracing Growth</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship Role</td>
<td><em>Number of Mentees</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Approach to Mentoring</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Expectations and Productivity</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tailoring Mentoring to Individual Needs</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 and 5 present data collected in response to the final undisclosed question, ‘Could you provide three words that immediately come to mind when you think of mentorship in the context of leadership development?’ From this question, a total of
twenty-one words were used by participants to describe mentorship in the context of leadership development. Words highlighted below were mentioned by more than one participant along with how often the word was used. The most common responses from participants were honesty (6 times), trust (6 times), and caring (4 times). The alignment of these key themes, outlined in the Literature Review further their significance in effective mentoring practices and behaviors.

Table 4

*Word Cloud data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Words Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actionable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness-building</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Genuine</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: 21 Words Used**
Figure 1

Word Cloud
Chapter 5
Discussion

Personal Mentorship Experience

Participants have had experiences with both formal and informal mentorship arrangements. It is important to note that most formal mentorships were established via a formal program or course they have previously taken. When asked about a formal mentorship experience, Participant # 6 shared:

“When I had a formal mentor, I felt like I had to do it. It didn’t have the intended impact that I would hope it would have. The informal mentorship has had more impact for me because they’re more organic and they’re less prescribed.”

Participant’s responses tend to favor the informal mentorship experience due to the nature of the relationship. Based on participant’s responses, the most impactful mentorship relationship was an informal relationship. This finding was not a surprise because McDonald & Wilson-Mah (2022) also found from their study that participants indicated that they were positively affected by an informal mentorship relationship. Participant #12 stated:

“[Favored] probably the more informal ones, because we just built such a trusted relationship that they become like a go to person in certain situations.”

The majority of participants noted that they met often with their mentors, usually quarterly and would discuss development, updates to the business, growth opportunities, asking for advice based on their mentor’s experience, building confidence, as well as building a trusting relationship. It was noted more than once that it is important to create a sort of cadence when meeting with a mentor so that the relationship does not fall to the
INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

wayside. Connecting frequently with a mentor and utilizing their time wisely was also spoken by several participants.

When asked, “Do you approach mentoring others the same way your previous mentors have”, Participant #12 shared:

“I think the biggest thing is just that I expect them to drive the agenda.”

This particular response stood out to the researcher because it was a common theme with other participants. When a mentee drives their development, it is easier for the mentor to help guide the mentee in the direction they would like to take. Therefore, it is important for the mentee to have a clear sense of direction and goals for their development. Furthermore, this approach teaches the mentee open communication and collaboration and helps foster reciprocal working relationships. This finding also aligns with Clutterbuck & Devine (1987) who stated that an effective mentorship relationship, one where the aim is for personal development, is when a mentee takes a proactive role to drive their own development.

Impact on Professional Growth

A major theme in participant’s responses regarding how mentorship contributed to their professional growth was the open and honest feedback from their mentors. This feedback played a crucial role in helping them navigate through difficult situations. They highlight instances where they sought their mentor’s advice and use them as ‘sounding boards’ to improve their approach in addressing specific situations effectively. This skill indirectly teaches the mentee how to leverage the relationship and use their mentors as ‘thought partners’ based on their experiences within the organization, therefore, having an impact on their professional growth. This finding resonates with Moerer-Urdahl &
Creswell (2004) who emphasize that a mentor’s role extends beyond guidance and support but highlights the importance of building trust over time.

Participant #1 shared a phrase quoted by his mentor: “Ships are safest in the harbor, but that’s not what they’re made for”. This quote resonated with him, as it speaks to the importance of taking risks, embracing growth, and pushing boundaries as a leader. This lesson has left an impact on this leader’s career. Encouraged by his mentor, Participant #1 ventured beyond his comfort zone, tackling tasks that challenged him personally and professionally. As a result, he credits his mentor for inspiring him to broaden his horizons and to embrace new challenges. This impact ultimately contributed to his growth as a leader.

Another crucial aspect of mentorship in leadership development is the opportunity it provides to gain fresh perspectives on oneself. Participant #7 shared:

“I’ve had other mentors that have simply given me the awareness of where I need to build my brand with key stakeholders within the organization where I was blind to previously and allowed me an opportunity [to see differently].”

This demonstrates how a mentor can offer insights that a mentee might not have considered on their own. Drawing on experience, mentors can offer viewpoints on various situations and skill sets, which in turn, helps broaden the mentee’s perspective on a situation. This finding aligns with McDonald & Wilson-Mah (2022) who note that a mentor is viewed as an expert in their field as well as a role model for the mentee. Through collaborative conversation, mentees are empowered to broaden their horizons, become more self-aware, and navigate through their leadership journey with a better sense of clarity and confidence.
Qualities and Attributes of Effective Mentorship

When participants were asked their perspective on key qualities and attributes that contribute to effective mentorship, the major themes of responses were open to listening and understanding, honesty, care, trust, providing feedback, and being direct. Other responses that stood out to the researcher were: mutually beneficial, courage to ask questions, being vulnerable, willingness to coach and be coached, understanding of objectives, vested interest in others, passion for development, and to lead by example. Although there were many responses to this question, the answers remained consistent in highlighting the importance of continuous learning, interpersonal communication, and genuine support as fundamental attributes to effective mentorship.

In addition, participants highlighted the significance of a mentor possessing a career history within the organization of interest to the mentee. Having a mentor who is familiar with the organization’s dynamics, including its politics and culture, is crucial. This aligns with McDonald & Wilson-Mah (2022) who describe a key attribute of effective mentorship as possessing expertise in their field.

Participant #7 expands:

“I think in no particular order of importance, having someone that has their own stature and career history within the organization that you can tap into their experiences, understand where there’s skeletons in the closet form a political perspective, and understand where their sacred cows to avoid.”

This aligns with the traditional mentor-mentee dynamic, where the mentor is assumed to be an expert and knowledge sharer and provides guidance to the mentee that is seeking growth. Due to the mentor’s deeper understanding of the organizational
environment, possessing a career history within the organization is a key attribute to effective mentorship.

**Alignment with Company Values and Goals**

When the researcher asked how mentorship has enhanced their understanding of the company’s values, culture, and long-term goals, the responses from participants varied. The researcher observed that participants tended to struggle to answer this question right away, and some did not understand the correlation at all. Some responses were positive and in agreement that mentorship plays a part in understanding these objectives, not all agreed with this. Participant #5, for instance, did not agree that mentorship has enhanced her understanding of the company’s values and goals.

However, Participant #4 response differed by saying:

“The more people you talk to, like having a variety of mentors by generation, sexual orientation, and gender, you get a sense of what the culture really is. It is less about the vision statement and more about what the people are actually talking about. You get a feel if it's authentic or words on paper. Watching the leaders talk the talk is what our values and culture are. Mentorship can give you a quick view of it. The expectations and how people interact, expand on the vibe on what it's like.”

Based on Participant #4’s perspective, along with the fact that not all participants agreed that mentorship has enhanced their understanding of the company’s value’s, culture, and long-term goals, one can infer that a mentor does not always sit down directly with a mentee and explain the culture but demonstrates it through their actions. This perspective is also shared by Participant #12 who shared the following:
“I think it’s more about aligning with my values and goals. I would say most of our leaders who are in the organization are already aligned to the company. So, just in their own actions and you know, watching them, how they handle situations, and how they show up in a meeting. But, in order for a mentee, mentor relationship to work, you have to have some sort of aligned values as a couple in order for that relationship to work.”

Based on the following responses, the researcher concludes that there is a correlation between mentorship and understanding the company’s values, culture, and long-term goals, although not always in a direct manner. Participant #4 emphasized the importance of exposure to diverse perspectives through mentorship, suggesting that observing various individuals can provide insights into the nature of the company culture. Similarly, Participant #12 highlighted the importance of aligning values between mentors and mentees, indicating that mentorship is most effective when values and goals are aligned.

This suggests that mentorship serves as a peek into the window of the culture and values alignment within the organization. While some participants may not immediately recognize the impact mentorship has on a company’s values, culture, and goals, others acknowledge the influence that mentorship can have with these objectives. Therefore, mentorship appears to function as a vehicle for knowledge transfer in leadership development. This conclusion supports T.R. Barlett et al.’s (2024) ripple effect theory, showcasing how a mentorship relationship can initiate a cascade effect on a company’s values, culture, and goals.

Career and Leadership Aspirations
When asked about the role of mentorship in shaping their career and leadership aspirations, participants commonly agreed on its significant influence. Specifically, participants found the gift of feedback within the mentorship relationship to have the most impact. Participant #9 said:

“To take any type of feedback that you receive, whether it be negative or positive, and utilize it as a tool. Criticism is a tool for you to build upon and [decide what you] do with it. Mentor people and coach people to develop them to be the next big thing.”

Participant #9’s perspective demonstrates the purpose of mentorship: to embrace feedback as a tool for growth, regardless of if it's positive or negative, and to mentor others to foster their development.

Another perspective on the impact of mentorship as it pertains to career and leadership aspirations is that a mentor can help uncover blind spots or opportunities that would help the mentee grow in their career. Participant #1 felt like he always had an idea of where he was going directionally in his career. This person felt like he had checked the box on what he was doing, and for a while it worked for him. However, he goes on to say how he became very comfortable with where he was at. He never thought he would hold the position that he does today, and this is because of his mentor. His mentor suggested how his position today could benefit his career and develop him as a leader. Participant #4 had a similar experience with his mentor and said that his mentor had fierce conversations with him to learn about where he wanted to be and where he wanted to grow. Participant #4 expands on this:
“She has helped me understand where my biggest opportunities were. She’s the one that kind of pointed out that I have some relationship issues versus skill issues and what regard to taking that next step. She also was the one that helped me understand how to build those relationships and how to patch [them] up by using a lot of her previous experiences.”

In summary, the testimonies of each participant showcase the impact of mentorship in career and leadership development. Participant #9 articulated how mentorship emphasized the importance of embracing feedback. Participants #1’s and #4’s provide additional perspectives on how mentors can uncover blind spots, offer direction, and facilitate professional growth. These demonstrations highlight how mentorship can shape individuals career trajectories and leadership capabilities through the power of guidance, support, and perspective within the mentorship relationship. These attributes of effective mentorship practices coincide with Lee et al. (2020) who note that effective mentorship practice focuses on the growth of the mentee and help supports their development.

When the researcher asked about challenges or obstacles that participants encountered in their mentorship relationships, most participants answered that they did not encounter challenges with their mentors. A common theme was that a formal or prescribed mentor wasn’t the best fit and that those relationships naturally fizzled out based on both parties' interest level and connection. Participant #4 expands on this perspective by saying:

“I don’t want to force an interaction. I think that they should want the interaction. That’s the difference from my perspective on good mentor relationships and
mentorships that I’ve walked away from is just like I don't want a prescribed sort of forced relationship with someone who doesn’t really want to be there. They’re just doing it. The check the box kind of thing.”

This participant later adds that if someone isn’t willing to connect or try, it would be hard to develop trust. This participant felt that good mentorship is not perceived as a forced relationship and should be authentic. Naturally the mentorship relationship will dissolve when the same energy is not reciprocated. Therefore, it can be a challenge in a mentoring relationship if energy and interest levels are not aligned.

**Transfer of Knowledge and Experience**

The researcher asked participants if they believe mentorship contributes to knowledge transfer between leaders within the company, aiming to understand any correlation. A common theme with responses was that mentorship does contribute to the transfer of knowledge within the company. Participant #6 stated that he believes the transfer of knowledge happens without folks even realizing it. By listening to the stories, perspectives, and feedback from mentorship can organically pass down knowledge without explicitly going though step by step on how things are done. Participant # 12 expands on this by saying:

“I think just the sharing of the experiences, you know, different stories really helps. I just think through conversations, slowing down, and having those conversations help transfer that [knowledge].

Participant #6 and #12 shed light on the subtle but powerful ways in which mentorship can facilitate knowledge transfer within the organization. Their perspectives demonstrate how sharing experiences and engaging in intentional conversations can
transfer knowledge. By creating space for dialogue, asking questions, and actively listening to experiences, mentorship becomes an act of organic knowledge transfer. Therefore, consistent check-ins with one’s mentor are crucial, as staying connected in a mentorship relationship facilitates the ongoing learning exchange process. This finding aligns with Walker & Yip (2018) who emphasize the importance of fostering positive mentorship experience within organizations. Individuals who have had positive mentoring experiences in the past are more likely to become mentors themselves.

However, Participant #5 felt that the company has room for improvement in knowledge transfer. She explained, from her perspective, that mentorship has the potential to transfer knowledge and experience between leaders, but not necessarily sure that it yields that particular outcome today within the organization. Participant #9 shares this perspective and believes that effective knowledge transfer often occurs organically. They noted that while many employees have extensive tenure, the passing of ‘tribal knowledge’ relies heavily on having a mentor with experience and insights.

**Engagement with Mentors and Balancing Feedback**

Participants were asked how they balance guidance and feedback that they have received and how they balance this with their own leadership style. Some participants stated that they take bits and pieces of feedback given and often use their mentors as ‘sounding boards’ due to the nature of the different approaches and styles from various mentors. Participant #5 said:

“It prompts some self-reflection of what it is that they are trying to help me with and if it’s different than I would approach it. [I think] what nuggets could I take that I really can maybe mold to a way that feels natural for me? And honestly,
sometimes you're going to get feedback and guidance that isn't natural, and 
that’s also the role of a mentor is to push people a little bit outside of their 
comfort zone isn’t a bad thing. So, mentorship isn’t always about comfort.”

Based on Participant #5’s response, it is the responsibility of the mentee to self-reflect on the feedback given and make the choice themselves if it makes sense for them and their life. Mentorship serves as a vehicle for self-reflection, a shift in perspective, and a safe space to be pushed out of one’s comfort zone to stimulate growth. This finding is supported by Ayoobzadeh & Boies (2020), who note that mentoring helps individuals understand themselves, their competencies, and their identities (i.e. leader development), as well as how to relate to others.

Participant #1 utilizes his mentors as ‘sounding boards’ when faced with a difficult situation. Each mentor that he has uses a different approach and he keeps them in his corner because he doesn't want the same thought process all the time. Participant #1 furthers this by saying:

“I want to be challenged in different ways. I want to understand how they would go about it.”

The responses from Participant #5 and Participant #1 emphasize a couple of ways a mentee can leverage their mentor’s feedback. As Participant #5 articulated, mentorship serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and growth, challenging mentees to step outside of their comfort zones. Meanwhile, Participant #1’s experience highlights the importance of seeking diverse perspectives by using his mentors as ‘sounding boards’ with unique approaches. Therefore, mentorship serves as a powerful tool for providing guidance and
feedback, empowering mentees to navigate challenges with confidence and clarity, which in turn, helps the mentee embrace growth.

**Mentorship Role**

While the primary focus of this study centered on participants’ experiences being mentored in their careers, the researcher also investigated whether they had reciprocated as a mentor to others. Nearly half of the participants who reported mentoring others, had no more than five mentees, indicating a smaller circle. Additionally, some participants, such as Participant #7, described themselves as informal mentors to individuals who seek their advice on a case-by-case basis, demonstrating a flexible but personalized approach to mentorship. This finding resonates with Hill et al. (2022), who stresses the personalized nature of each mentor-mentee relationship, tailored to the individual’s needs and desires within that dynamic.

The researcher also wanted to investigate whether participants mirrored the mentoring styles of their previous mentors. Interestingly, participant responses ranged in their approach. Some participants acknowledged that they do mentor others the same way their previous mentors have, others emphasized tailoring their mentorship style to suit the individual needs of the mentees. Participant #7, for example, talked about his approach by stating:

“I’m very purposeful at the onset of the relationship to understand what it is they’re looking to accomplish. And then helping kind of craft my mentoring to that.”

Participant #7’s thoughtful approach highlights the strategic nature of effective mentoring. By initially understanding the mentee’s objectives, Participant #7
demonstrates a proactive, yet personalized approach to mentorship. This is a great strategy because it helps foster a connection between mentor and mentee that is personal yet effective.

This approach coincides with Participant #12’s response that she expects her mentees to drive the agenda. Participant # 12 said:

“*It’s really hard to mentor somebody unless they want my information on how I treat people. How do you lead this or how do you lead that? But if you really want me to say and how it connects to you, I have to understand you a little bit in order to do so.*”

Therefore, the researcher has identified that there is not a specific playbook to effective mentoring. If the mentee understands where they would like to go, is open to feedback, and owns their development, the mentorship relationship should be effective.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

As highlighted by Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell (2004), minimal research has been dedicated to investigating the concept of “reinvesting in others” stemming from mentorship relationships. Consequently, there remains additional opportunity for exploration into the multifaceted nature of mentorship across various organizational environments. This study, while valuable, is confined to a single organizational setting, which limits the understanding of a broader impact of mentorship in leadership development. In turn, there is an absence of comparative analysis across different organizational perspectives. Given these factors, there remains a need for future research to have a broader approach to investigating the impact of mentorship in leadership development, aiming for a deeper understanding.
For future research, it is suggested to expand the participant pool and consider a quantitative method of inquiry. Utilizing a survey with structured, multiple-choice questions could yield more clear and effective responses. Unlike the qualitative approach, which allows for personal narratives and interpretations, a quantitative approach could facilitate easier comparison and contrast of responses provided to the researcher.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the impact of mentorship in leadership development within a specific organization. It is evident that participants favored an informal approach to mentorship in their career development. Their insights highlighted the importance of reciprocity, being prepared, and the invaluable lessons of feedback and trust. Moreover, the importance of active listening in shaping mentees’ career trajectories was also emphasized. While this study has shed light on these crucial aspects, there remains an opportunity to further explore a deeper understanding of mentorship’s influence on leadership development. As this topic continues to be studied, it remains clear and true that mentorship has a major impact on the development of leaders and will remain ongoing throughout human history.
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References


INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT


We hereby recommend that the thesis of McKenzie Roy entitled *Investigating the Impact of Mentorship in Leadership Development* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies.

___Elizabeth Goryunova_______ Thesis Advisor (signature)

__________________________ Second Reader (signature)

Accepted

__________________________ Department (signature)
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Have you ever had a mentor, and if so, could you describe your experience with mentorship, including whether it was a formal or informal arrangement?

2. Can you share specific instances where mentorship has directly contributed to your professional growth and development as a leader within the company?

3. What, in your opinion, are the key qualities and attributes that contribute to effective mentorship, specifically in the realm of leadership?

4. How has mentorship influenced your development of leadership skills, and could you provide specific examples of this impact?

5. In what ways has mentorship enhanced your understanding of the company’s values, culture, and long-term goals?

6. What role has mentorship played in shaping your career and leadership aspirations, and can you share any experiences related to this?

7. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles during your mentorship relationships, and how did you navigate or overcome them?

8. How do you believe mentorship contributes to the transfer of knowledge and experience between leaders within the company?

9. Can you describe your approach to engaging with past and current mentors and how you balance the guidance and feedback you received with your own leadership style?

10. Are you a current mentor? If so, to how many individuals?
11. Do you approach mentoring others the same way your previous mentors have? What did you change if so?

12. (Question not provided ahead of time) Lastly, could you provide me with three words that immediately come to mind when you think of mentorship in the context of your leadership development?
Biography of the Author

McKenzie Roy is a graduate student in the Master of Leadership Studies program at the University of Southern Maine. McKenzie’s undergraduate education was also at the University of Southern Maine, where she earned a B.S. in Business Management. Prior to obtaining her B.S., McKenzie earned an Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts from Southern Maine Community College. McKenzie has over five years of experience in the grocery industry which has been fueled by her love of cooking. McKenzie also enjoys reading, gardening, taking care of her chickens and dogs, and spending time with her fiancé.