"My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor": A Reading Mentoring Program

Janvielle V. Rosal, Lyoid C. Hunahunan, Ryan L. Oranza

Surigao Del Sur State University-Tagbina Campus, Tagbina, Philippines

How to cite this paper: Janvielle V. Rosal | Lyoid C. Hunahunan | Ryan L. Oranza ""My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor": A Reading Mentoring Program" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and

Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-4, June 2019, pp.1556-1562, URL: https://www.ijtsrd.c om/papers/ijtsrd25 136.pdf



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Christensen, Schneider, and, Butler (2011) stated that some parents or guardians often have no opportunities to create 45 an ongoing relationship with their children's schools; in fact, they often have no communication with the schools at all.

To bridge this gap, many schools adopted mentoring programs especially for disadvantaged children. These programs have been reported to have numerous benefits: friendship arise between seniors and young people; they have the rewarding experience of being part of a school and of being appreciated for their efforts. Teenage students value these 'alternate parents' who provide them more time and personal attention. Teachers appreciate the help and find seniors to be less critical of teachers and schools than parents (Powell, 1997).

Mentoring or tutoring as other authors call it, is defined as a sustained relationship between a youth and an adult. Through continued association, the adult provides necessary support, direction, and assistance as the younger person goes through a difficult period, faces new challenges, or works to correct earlier problems. More specifically, in situations where parents are neither available nor able to provide responsible guidance for their children, mentors can play a critical role (Dennis, 1993).

However, though there are many benefits, risks and challenges in mentoring are also apparent. Much of these may stem from the overall infrequent use of mentors in

ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of the College of Teacher education students as reading mentors to the struggling grade 7 students of Barobo National High School. The study is descriptive in nature utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data. The study concluded that the mentoring sessions benefitted the reading mentors academically, helped develop their self-esteem and capability, and support felt was sufficient. Moreover, reading mentors found some mentees' attitude negative. From these experiences and perceptions of the mentors, it was further concluded that the reading program has strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This led to the recommendation that the two institutions should work collaboratively to sustain and fortify its strengths and opportunities while addressing the weaknesses and threats that may deter the success of the program.

Keywords: humanities-language, descriptive method, mentoring, program, reading, school-based Scientific

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the developmental years of a child, both research and common sense dictate that adult supervision and support are necessary to help children navigate their way towards adolescence and beyond. Many children, however, do not just have an adult to interact with and provide care and assistance they need especially in school works.

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classrooms and students' (as well as instructors') unfamiliarity with the mentoring process and the relationship that would likely be established. Moreover, questions of expertise, experience, and power can complicate what appears to be straightforward expertnovice interaction (Smith, 2007).

Karcher (2009) implied that adolescent mentors may experience burnout when working with academically at risk mentees. Although mentors reporting higher social interest chose more challenging mentees – the more academically and socially at risk youth—which is good; the more academically at risk their mentees were, the greater the decline are the mentors' connectedness. Moreover, mentors' absences contribute to declines of self-esteem; "physical" mentors' absences when chronic and unexplained, can make their mentees feel ugly.

Like any other schools, Barobo National High School has its share of reading proficiency problems among its students. In school year, 2018 – 2019 alone, 93% of its almost 500 grade 7 students were diagnosed to have frustration reading level. This poor reading level has affected the academic performance of these students across different subjects taken. This scenario prompted Surigao del Sur State University – Tagbina Campus to extend its hand to the said secondary school through a reading enrichment program called *My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor* reading program. In this extension program, 102 first year students from the college of teacher education of the university acted as mentors too the chosen 102 grade 7 students who are struggling in reading. The program started in January 2019 and ended in March 2019.

Admittedly, "My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor", however, as a remediation program was confronted with various challenges which somehow deterred its optimal success. Thus, in order to improve the conduct of the program, there is a need to evaluate it in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Hence, this paper is conceived.

2. Research Methodology

This study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The evaluation of the program in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are captured through the perceptions and experiences of the mentors.

The quantitative part lies on the employment of the descriptive survey method in determining the perceptions of the reading mentors. Universal sampling method was used to identify the participating mentors. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the mentors and other participants is also used to identify the problems encountered by the reading mentors, verify their perceptions, and elicit suggestions for the improvement of the mentoring.

The study was conducted in Barobo National High School where SDSSU-Tagbina conducted the aforementioned reading enrichment program. This program serves an extension activity of the University specifically of the College of Teacher Education.

To gather their perceptions, the study used the researchermade questionnaire checklist, adapted from the Mentoring Survey Question Bank (ACEM Mentoring Program). As majority of research on peer mentoring concentrates on theoretical approaches and assessment (Falchikov 2001; Topping 2005), the methodology used to evaluate peer mentoring is usually through evaluative questionnaires, post-event interviews and statistical analysis (Colvin 2007; Brandwein 1985).

From these perceptions and experiences, an analysis of the program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was drawn. This study is anchored on SWOT Analysis Matrix Model of Albert Humphrey. This model has

been used since 1960 by program managers and evaluators to label the efficacy of their programs. The model links the problem. Out from the problem, the model will distinguish two environmental factors namely: internal and external environment. These environments expressed the concept of strategic fit which composed of strengths (characteristics of the program that give it an advantage over others), weaknesses (features that puts the program at a difficulty comparative to others) which were part of the internal factors while opportunities (elements that or program could exploit to its advantage), and threats (elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the program) were part of the external factors. It is important because it can inform later steps in planning to achieve the objective and can be used in any decision-making situation when a desired end-state was defined. It can be used also in creating a recommendation during a viability study or survey.

3. Results and Discussion Perceptions of the Reading Mentors

This part presents the level of perceptions of the reading mentors towards mentoring in terms of academic benefits, self-esteem, capability, and support.

3.1 Academic benefits.

Academic benefits is one of the four parameters being studied as regards the experiences of the reading mentors in reading mentoring sessions. Presented in Table 1 is the level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of academic benefits. The reading mentors asserted that the mentoring sessions helped them understand better some reading texts, improved their speaking skills, improved their listening skills, helped them become creative and resourceful, developed their facilitation skills and abilities, contributed to their academic learning and growth, helped them identify and accommodate different communication styles, improved their questioning techniques, helped them handle challenging and difficult conversations, and allowed them to think more critically.

The reading mentors entirely agreed that the mentoring sessions benefitted them academically with the over-all mean score of 4.19. This supports the claim of Garringer and MacRae (2008) when they indicated that mentoring programs improve academic performance, in general, with significant improvements demonstrated in the subjects of science and written and oral language.

As a mentor, I believe that the reading mentoring sessions	Mean	Level of Perception
1. helped me understand better some reading texts.	4.40	Agree
2. improved my speaking skills.	4.30	Agree
3. improved my listening skills.	4.30	Agree
4. helped me become creative and resourceful.	3.80	Agree
5. developed my facilitation skills and abilities.	4.24	Agree
6. contributed to my academic learning and growth.	4.32	Agree
7. helped me identify and accommodate different communication styles.	4.06	Agree
8. improved my questioning techniques.	3.98	Agree
9. helped me handle challenging and difficult conversations.	4.34	Agree
10. allowed me to think more critically.	4.16	Agree
OVER – ALL MEAN	4.19	Agree

Table1. The level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of academic benefits

of Trend in

3.2 Self - esteem

This is another parameter being studied as regards the experiences of the reading mentors in reading mentoring sessions. Presented in Table 2 is the level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of self-esteem.

As shown in the table, the reading mentors claimed that as a result of mentoring, they felt more confident in dealing with their peers, more worthy because they helped a fellow student, more a contributing part of the school, more respected for the help they can offer, more socially connected in the school than before, better about themselves because of what they can do, and needed because of their willingness to help others.

		1.	· · · · · ·
Table 2 The level of	perceptions of the	reading mentors	in terms of self-esteem

As a result of mentoring,	Mean	Level of Perception
1. I felt more confident in dealing with my peers.	4.36	Agree
2. I felt more worthy because I helped a fellow student.	4.48	Agree
3. I felt more a contributing part of the school.	4.28	Agree
4. I felt more respected for the help I can offer.	4.12	Agree
5. I became happier of my life as a student.	4.16	Agree
6. I felt more socially connected in the school than before.	4.02	Agree
7. I got a sense of fulfillment by sharing my knowledge on to others.	4.36	Agree
8. I felt better about myself because of what I can do.	4.24	Agree
9. I gained status among my peers for my mentoring activities.	3.92	Agree
10. I felt needed because of my willingness to help others.	4.06	Agree
OVER – ALL MEAN	4.20	Agree

Moreover, the reading mentors asserted that as a result of mentoring, they became happier with their lives as students, they got a sense of fulfillment by sharing their knowledge on to others, and they gained status among their peers for their mentoring activities.

The over-all mean for the level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of self-esteem is 4.20. This implies that the mentors entirely agree that the mentoring sessions helped boost their self-esteem. This is substantiated by the reading mentors in the FGD:

- 1. I: [Okay how about for self-esteem? Na improve ba ang inyohang self-esteem, as a result of mentoring?] (Okay, how about for self-esteem? Was your self-esteem improved as a result of mentoring?)
 - S7: [0.] (Yes.)
 - I: [In what way ***?]
 - S7: [Kibali kanang managad pud sila pagkahapon, "Hoy ate, magkuan napod ta ha". Kanang ing-ana. Dili na sila maulaw sa akoa mukuan mu pansin.] (In a way that they also greet us in the afternoon, like saying, "Hoy Ate, let's have it again." They are not shy anymore in greeting me.)

2. S8: [Kuan, maboost among confidence Ma'am kay kanang everytime nga i-

appreciate mi nila mas mugana pa nuon mig tudlo kaysa panagsa nga kanang nakuan jud ko sa akong mentee kay kuan man siya mu-appreciate siya nga giganahan siya so, ma-boost pod akong confidence nga mutudlu sa iyaha.] (It boosts our confidence Ma'am because every time that they appreciate our efforts, the more we are willing to mentor them. I really like my mentee because he really expresses his appreciation, so my confidence also enhances in teaching him.)

3.3 Capability

This the third parameter being studied as regards the experiences of the reading mentors in reading mentoring sessions. Presented in Table 3 is the level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of capability.

As a result of mentoring,	Mean	Level of Perception
1. I developed the ability to cope with stress.	3.68	Agree
2. I developed tolerance with others' difficulties.	3.96	Agree
3. I developed new ideas about how to perform my role.	4.28	Agree
4. I learned to manage my expectations.	4.00	Agree
5. I learned more how to socialize and mingle with others.	4.42	Agree
6. I learned how to manage a relationship.	4.18	Agree
7. I learned to comply with difficult school assignments.	3.96	Agree
8. I learned to better balance my school work and personal life.	4.20	Agree
9. I learned how to better manage my time.	4.02	Agree
10. I built confidence knowing I can do the mentoring successfully.	4.08	Agree
OVER – ALL MEAN	4.08	Agree

Table 3 The level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of capability

As reflected in the table, the reading mentors agreed that as a result of mentoring, they developed the ability to cope with stress, developed tolerance with others' difficulties, developed new ideas about how to perform their roles, learned to manage their expectations, learned more how to socialize and mingle with others, learned how to manage a relationship, learned to comply with difficult school assignments, learned to better balance their school work and personal life, learned how to better manage their time, and built confidence knowing they can do the mentoring successfully.

The level of perceptions of the respondents in terms of capability is 4.08. This implies that their capabilities have improved as a result of mentoring. Some reading mentors pronounced their improvement in the FGD:

- 1. S3: [Kanang kuan Ma'am, kanang oral. Kanang ma-kuan, ma-kanang dali rako maka maka sa kanang dali rako ma kuan sa social Ma'am ba kanang maka-interact sa ilaha. Kay tungod sa mentoring maka di nako dali maulaw Ma'am, and others.] (*I can interact with them easily Ma'am. Because of mentoring, I do not get shy easily.*)
- S15: [Kuan Ma'am kanang makatabang ka sa kanang sa uban kanang makatabang ka sa ila.] (You can help with others Ma'am.)
 S13: [Aside pod Ma'am kanang naa pod kanang mas mafriend pod namo or naa pod mi ma makighalobilo gani sa lain.] (Aside from that, we can also make friends or we can mingle with others.)
 SS2: [Sa mga bata.] (With other children.)

3.4 Support

Support is another parameter being studied as regards the experiences of the reading mentors in reading mentoring sessions. Presented in Table 4 is the level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of support. The reading mentors said that during the mentoring sessions, they were offered guidance and knowledge through orientation on the goals and expectations of the program components and processes, and have been given access to the resources they require to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities. They received help from their instructors when they need it, their questions were answered and their difficulties addressed, their progress on the skills they covered with their mentees was monitored, and helpful feedback were given on how to be more effective. They were also motivated to mentor because they were appreciated by their parents/guardians, were confident because they know they could share their personal thoughts with their co-mentors, were confident because of the school authorities on this program, and their efforts were appreciated by their instructors, partner-teachers, principal and above all their mentees. There are, however mentors who expressed that sometimes, they are hesitant to go to mentoring as scheduled due to unavailability of financial resources to defray their traveling expenses.

Nonetheless, the over-all mean of the perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of support is 4.11. This implies that the respondents generally feel supported in the duration of the mentoring sessions. Rightly so since in receiving this support, mentors felt more qualified to teach (Derrick, 2015).

During the mentoring sessions, I can say that		Level of Perception
1. I was offered guidance and knowledge through orientation on the goals and expectations of the program components and processes.	4.08	Agree
2. I have been given access to the resources I require to fulfill my mentoring responsibilities.	3.94	Agree
3. I received help from my mentoring teacher when I need it. 6.6470	4.20	Agree
4. My questions were answered and my difficulties addressed.	4.12	Agree
5. My progress on the skills I covered with my mentee was monitored.	4.18	Agree
6. Helpful feedback were given on how to be more effective.	4.02	Agree
7. I was motivated to mentor because I was appreciated by my parents/guardian.	4.08	Agree
8. I was confident because I know I could share my personal thoughts with my co-mentors.	4.30	Agree
9. My efforts were appreciated by the teachers/instructors.	3.94	Agree
10. I was confident because of the support of the school authorities on this program.	4.26	Agree
OVER – ALL MEAN	4.11	Agree

Table 4 The level of perceptions of the reading mentors in terms of support

3.5 Problems Encountered by the Reading Mentors

This part presents the problems encountered by the reading mentors in terms of mentoring schedule, mentee's attitude, academic pressures, reading materials, and others.

It also presents the interpretation and discussion for the problems met.

3.5.1 Mentoring schedule

Mentoring schedule is one of the areas explored for possible problems met by the reading mentors. Presented in Table 5 are the problems encountered by the reading mentors in terms of mentoring schedule.

As reflected in the table, there are four problems identified by the mentors in terms of mentoring schedule. However, each of the problems is closely interspersed with one another. Time is affected by either the absenteeism or availability of the mentors or mentees. These problems were pronounced during the focus group discussion.

Table 5 Problems encountered by the reading mentors in terms of mentoring schedule		
Problems Encountered by the Reading Mentors in Terms of Mentoring Schedule		
Time		
Absenteeism of mentees		
Availability of either mentor or mentee		

Mentees, on the other hand, should be carefully selected so as not also to waste the time of the mentors. Aside from that, there should also be consistency of the mentoring schedule.

Time, being one of the problems of the reading mentors is supported in the work of Ehrich, L., Hansford, Ehrich, J. (2011). They cited that lack of time is the most commonly noted problem by mentors.

3.5.2 Mentees' attitude

The mentee's attitude is another area explored in this study. Problems encountered by the reading mentors in this area are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Problem encountered by the reading mentors in terms of mentees' attitude		
Problems Encountered by the Reading Mentors in Terms of Mentees' Attitude		
Mentee's evasion		
Mentee's willingness		
Mentee does not focus		
Always playing		
Not serious		

One of the problems is the act of mentees' evasion in the mentoring sessions. This was prominently mentioned during the FGD:

S1: [Naay one time nga iya kung gidaganan. Kanang niadto ra ko sa ila tapos niingon, miingon iyahang classmate nga wala siya. Pero nakit-an nako siya nga nag kuan, nidagan padong sa oval. Kibali, murag iya kung gi-gilikayan. 'Nya, niingon aw ambot pero grabi jud ko ka kuan sa iyaha kanang grabe ko ka ka kanang buotanay ko sa iyaha pero ambot lang nganong iya kong gidaganan.]

(There was one time when my mentee ran away from me. I went to her classroom then her classmates told me that she's not around. But then I saw her running towards the oval. She meant to escape me. Then her classmates said they don't know. I just can't understand, I am so kind to her but she ran from me.)

As can be gleaned from the responses, there were mentees who resisted help extended to them. This is not a new thing since some other authors like Colvin and Ashman (2010) remarked that students also expressed resistance when they indicate that sometimes mentors pestered them too much when they did not need help. One reading mentor commented on this on the FGD:

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S17: [Kanang naa man gyuy uban Ma'am nga mga studyante nga kanang muingon sila nga nah di naman mi kinahanglan pa mag kuan mi mentoran kay kuan daw sila abtik na daw sila, kinahanglan pa ug.]

(There really are some students who say that they don't need mentoring anymore because they are already good, no need to.)

Reflected also on the table as one problem regarding mentees' attitude is the mentees' willingness or lack of it. One reading mentor remarked on this during the FGD:

S2: [Akoa ang ang willingness niya maam. Kay panagsa bisag naa siya, bisag free siya pero mu ana siya nga "Dili sa ta karon te kay kapoy." Muana tapos muana ko nga "Ah sige ugma rakan ta kay kuan kay ana."]

(For me Ma'am is my mentee's willingness since, sometimes, even if she is present, even when she is free but she tells me, "Not now please because I'm tired." So I just also tell her, "Let's have it tomorrow then...")

Based on the response, it can be claimed there are mentees who are not willing to be mentored. As such, this should be put into consideration when conducting another mentoring session in the future.

Another problem shown in the table is that the mentee does not focus his/her attention in the mentoring sessions. One reading mentor remarked in the FGD that:

S4: [Kuan siya kanang pag naa koy e-diskas, usahay kanang maminaw siya sa uban bitaw. Kanang iyang utok, kanang murag wala siya nagfocus sa sa kanang sa amoang lesson.]

(When I have something to discuss with her, she sometimes listens to others. It appears that her mind is not focusing on our lesson.)

From the response, it can be assumed that mentoring sessions may be sometimes frustrating to mentors due to negative mentee's attitude. This should also be considered when selecting mentees in the future.

Young as the mentees are, it is only natural for them to play. This, however, can interfere with the mentoring sessions. As time is important for both mentor and mentee, play must sometimes be postponed after mentoring sessions. In the FGD, one mentor said:

S5: [Kuan pod Ma'am, kanang sige ra'g dula bitaw Ma'am. Ang iyang hunahuna Ma'am kay kanang gikan siya nag dula Ma'am tapos apasun nako mura bitaw'g dili kaayo siya ganahan mu kuan kay naa pa siya sa dula.]

(He is always playing Ma'am. His mind is on his play. When I fetch him from play, it seems that he doesn't like to be mentored because he still wants to play.)

The last problem reflected in Table 6 is that the mentee is not serious. This could be trying on the part of the mentors who take their responsibilities seriously. Some of them pronounced in the FGD that:

S14: [Kuan Ma'am, kanang mag-answer gani siya sa question, kumplementuhan rakag answer dili tarungon ba. Pabasahon nimo, daliay ra kayo. Tapos pag discussan pod nimo bisan unsa nay buhaton nimo, pag answer gihapon, di gihapon tarungon.]

(When my mentee answers questions, it is just for mere compliance, not taking it seriously. You let her read, she finishes immediately. Then, if you discuss it with her, no matter how you do it, when she answers, she still doesn't take it seriously.)

From the responses, it can said there are mentees who cannot say plainly that they do not want to be mentored. Their actions just show it off. However, not all mentors have problems with their mentees. One mentor remarked in the FGD that:

S8: [Akoa Ma'am, wala may problema kay kuan man siya willing to learn man siya tapos kanang everytime nga muadto ko sa room, naa man siya permi kay dili man siya dinula. Seryos ra siya permente sa iyang studies.] (I have no problem with my mentee Ma'am because he is willing to learn. Then, every time I went to his room, he is always there since he is not into playing. He is always serious with his studies.)

Based on the pronouncement, it can be claimed that though there are negative mentees' attitudes experienced by the mentors, not all mentees are negative. There are still those who take the mentoring sessions seriously.

3.6 SWOT Analysis

Based on the perceptions and experiences the mentors expressed, the researchers were able to deduce the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the conduct of the reading program *My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor*. Presented on Table 7 is the SWOT analysis based on Albert Humphrey's SWOT Analysis Matrix Model. The model linked the problem which is the conduct of the reading program *My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor*. Out from the problem, the model distinguished two environmental factors namely: internal and external environment. The internal factors included the three strengths of the program, and out of these strengths, three weaknesses were also drawn. On the other hand, the external factors also included three opportunities and three threats. All these internal and external factors will then be considered in planning to achieve the objective and will be used in any decision-making to improve the program.

-	Table 7 SWOT Analysis of "My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor" Reading Program			
	My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor Re	eadiı	ng Program	
Str	engths of Trend in Color	We	aknesses 🖉	
\succ	The program helps the recipient school to improve the	>	The program needs ample amount to	
	reading proficiency of its students who are identified to have	þ	defray traveling expenses and materials in	
~	poor reading skills. Developmen	t 🚬	the conduct of the mentoring program.	
≻	The program helps the mentors (CTE students) to develop their academic performance, self-esteem and capability.	>	Some CTE students demonstrate hesitance	
\triangleright	The program provides an opportunity for the mentors to fill		to participate in the mentoring program due to travel expenses.	
Ĺ	in the lack of help and assistance the mentees get from their	\succ	The schedule of the mentors are sometimes	
	family at home especially in reading , thereby creating a	US.	in conflict with mentoring schedule due to	
	brotherly bond and relationship with each other while	-	various activities in the University that are	
	benefitting both parties academically and socially.	>	held during the schedule of mentoring.	
Op	portunities	Thr	reats	
≻	The program creates a linkage and partnership between	≻	Not all recipients are receptive of the	
	Surigao del Sur State University and its beneficiary school –		program and the help extended to them.	
~	Barobo National High School.		Some demonstrate little or no interest at all	
>	The program opens door for the CTE students to be recognized by the authorities of the beneficiary school which	≻	and willingness to be mentored. The weekly travel of the mentors poses	
	may create a leverage for them for future employment.	-	danger like road mishaps and other	
\triangleright	The program helps the school in increasing academic hours		hazards.	
	of the mentees especially during times when teachers are	\succ	The schedule of the students and the school	
	busy attending to school-related activities which decrease		are in conflict with the mentoring schedule.	
	their contact hours with their students.		5	

4. Conclusion

Drawn from the findings above, it can be deduced that *My Ate, My Kuya, My Mentor* as a reading mentoring program brought forth benefits to the mentors. This has also greatly benefitted the mentees. The program has also opened wider opportunities for both the partner institutions. There are however some weaknesses and threats that challenge the program implementation. These need to be addressed in order to better improve the program with both parties working collaboratively.

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