



## STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF LECTURERS AS MENTORS IN SELF-DEVELOPMENT

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E-ISSN : 3109-9777

Received: November 2025

Accepted: November 2025

Published: Desember 2025

### Abstract :

*Student self-development encompasses cognitive, emotional, social, and professional development, essential for facing academic and social challenges. Lecturers play a central role as mentors in this process. However, mentoring in higher education is often suboptimal and informal. This study aims to understand students' perceptions of the role of lecturers as mentors in self-development. The research method used was descriptive qualitative, using in-depth interviews with three students at the University of Muhammadiyah Aceh who had participated in lecturer mentoring activities. The results showed that students viewed lecturer mentors as guiding figures who provided both academic and emotional support. Lecturers were seen as participating in increasing students' self-confidence, learning motivation, and critical thinking skills. However, lecturer involvement in mentoring remains variable and not formally structured. Therefore, a more focused mentoring system is needed to strengthen the relationship between lecturers and students so that they can support holistic student self-development.*

**Keywords :** Mentoring; Student Self-Development; Student Perceptions of the Role of Lecturers

### INTRODUCTION

Student perception is the interpretation of an individual or the student themselves regarding objects in their environment. Student perception is the direct view or response of the student themselves, which they assess from their perspective of various objects, whether objects, information, or other things that exist around the student themselves. A person's perception or attitude towards a particular object consists of three main components, namely cognitive, affective, and conative. In the context of education, especially in assessing lecturer performance, student perception is generally measured through two main aspects, namely the cognitive aspect and the affective aspect (Arinda, 2025).

A phenomenon occurring at various universities demonstrates a gap between students' expectations of lecturer guidance and the reality they experience in the field. Some students feel that lecturers focus too much on academic aspects and pay too little attention to non-academic aspects, such as soft skills development, character building, and guidance in designing life and career goals. On the other hand, some students acknowledge that lecturers' support and guidance are very helpful in building their self-confidence, discipline, and interpersonal skills. This demonstrates the role of lecturers in developing students' non-academic character through an integrated academic and non-academic approach (Kholifatun & Harpina, 2024).



According to Gladiana et al. (2024) this difference in perception is important for further research because students' perceptions of the lecturer's role as a mentor can influence the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship and the success of the student's overall self-development process. If the lecturer is able to take on the role of mentor well, then the student will not only develop academically, but also become a mature individual and ready to face challenges outside the campus world. This shows that students feel that the lecturer is not only a teacher of material but also provides emotional and academic support that influences motivation and self-esteem.

The definition of perception is presented to avoid misinterpretations about its meaning. Lecturer competence is one factor that can motivate students to learn. A student can fail due to a lack of motivation. Learning outcomes will be optimal if there is appropriate motivation. In line with this, student learning failure should not be simply blamed on the student, as it is also possible that the lecturer is not successful in providing motivation that can stimulate student enthusiasm and active learning (Damanik & Irawan, 2021).

Students' perceptions of the role of lecturers as mentors are not objective realities, but rather subjective constructs based on their personal experiences, expectations, and beliefs. The perception process consists of three stages: reception (students receive signals about the lecturer's behavior, for example, willingness to meet outside of class hours), organization (grouping these signals, such as perceiving the lecturer as caring), and interpretation (assigning meaning, such as concluding the lecturer is worthy of being a mentor). Perception is generally defined as a cognitive process in which individuals select, organize, and interpret information or stimuli from their environment to create coherent and relevant meaning for themselves (Ritonga et al., 2021).

Several key factors influence students' perceptions of the mentoring role of their lecturers (Wibowo & Zebua, 2020). First, factors within the recipient (student) such as past experiences with authority figures, personal needs for guidance, and personality characteristics (self-confidence). Second, factors within the object (lecturer) include the lecturer's non-verbal behavior (such as openness and friendliness), professional competence, and willingness and availability of time for personal interaction. Third, situational factors include the overall academic atmosphere (whether the campus culture encourages informal interaction), institutional policies on mentoring, and prevailing norms within the department. The complex interaction between these three factors ultimately determines the quality of student perceptions and, subsequently, the success of the mentoring relationship. The relationship between lecturer and student is one that involves interaction, participation, socializing, and increasing knowledge. This also provides students with a deeper understanding of the lecturer, not only their identity but also the knowledge gained from interactions with the lecturer. Therefore, communication between students and lecturers is not only during class hours, but students can also meet lecturers anywhere according to mutual agreement (Lestari, 2022).

Mentoring is a concept widely used in education and organizations to

describe the relationship between a more experienced person and someone who needs guidance in their personal development (Darugan et al., 2022). According to Lumbantoruan (2023) mentoring is a developmental relationship between a more experienced individual (mentor) and a less experienced individual (mentee), focused on providing support in career and personal development. This definition emphasizes that mentoring is not limited to the technical aspects of learning but also encompasses psychological and emotional aspects. The mentoring process involves a person providing guidance, either in a group or individually, with the aim of educating, directing, and providing counseling. It requires more experience and familiarity for the mentor (Makasengku et al., 2022).

In general, the duties and responsibilities of a lecturer as a mentor are grouped into two main functions, as proposed by Zakiah and Sirait (2022) career function and psychosocial function. Tasks related to the career function include providing guidance on study and career directions, recommending internship or research opportunities, providing sponsorship (representing and supporting students before third parties), and providing specific coaching for professional skills. Meanwhile, the psychosocial function focuses on the personal development of students, which involves tasks such as serving as a professional role model, providing emotional and motivational support, and facilitating friendships and acceptance in the academic environment. In practice, the lecturer mentor is responsible for creating a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable discussing their academic, personal, and professional challenges (Mubarok et al., 2025).

Furthermore, mentoring aims to provide emotional support that can foster self-confidence, motivation, and resilience in facing various challenges during their education. Abdullah (2020) emphasize that mentoring serves as a means of transferring knowledge, skills, and values gained not only from formal lectures but also from the mentor's practical experience. In other words, mentoring opens up space for students to learn more broadly, including from the mentor's own real-life experiences. This makes the mentoring process more relevant and applicable to students' lives, both in the academic world and beyond.

Self-development is defined as a continuous and planned process in which individuals actively take the initiative to enhance their knowledge, skills, and potential to achieve greater personal and professional goals (Sekar & Kamarubiani, 2020). There are several key aspects to student self-development. The cognitive intellectual aspect includes improving critical thinking skills, problem solving, and mastery of academic disciplines. The personal emotional aspect includes increasing self-awareness, stress management, and emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, the socio professional aspect involves developing communication skills, leadership, teamwork, and establishing a professional identity and ethics relevant to job market demands (Arifudin et al., 2020). Changes and development of a person's behavior can be achieved through a deliberate, regular, and planned educational pattern. Education is not only seen as a means of preparation for future life, but also for the present life experienced

by individuals in their development towards maturity (Husnul, 2021).

Lecturers are a crucial factor in establishing quality higher education institutions. The presence of qualified educators is an absolute requirement for the presence of a quality educational system and practice. The crucial role of lecturers in shaping the quality of higher education institutions is crucial. The presence of qualified lecturers is considered a primary prerequisite for creating a quality educational system and practice. Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping human development and survival. In this context, the role of lecturers as teachers, researchers, and community service workers in higher education institutions is crucial in increasing student learning motivation. Student learning motivation plays a crucial role in learning activities in higher education, as motivation is influenced by the goals to be achieved through learning (Wahyudin et al., 2024).

The role of lecturers, not only as material transmitters but also as mentors and motivators, is crucial in shaping students' character and developing their adaptability. This supports the theory that positive learning experiences contribute significantly to students' intrinsic motivation and academic satisfaction. The importance of lecturers' active role in creating a supportive and motivating learning environment, which focuses not only on knowledge transfer but also on developing students' interpersonal and leadership skills, is crucial. Thus, lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and motivation to achieve (Gladiana et al., 2024). Lecturers play a crucial role in developing students' character. The process of character development occurs throughout human life. Lecturers with character will serve as role models for students, fostering good morals. This is the most important thing lecturers must possess before educating students (Nurpratiwi, 2021).

The role of lecturers in higher education essentially encompasses administrative and academic teaching responsibilities, as well as serving as central figures in the process of character building and student motivation. Healthy and mutually supportive interactions between lecturers and students have been shown to increase student self-confidence, encourage independent thinking, and foster commitment to the learning process (Anhar et al., 2025). Academic guidance and emotional support for students. Academic advisors are responsible for helping students identify and expand their interests in their fields of study, providing advice on potential development options, guiding students in setting realistic learning goals, and providing constructive feedback on student progress (Ningsih & Slamet, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to examine more deeply the students' perceptions of the role of lecturers as mentors in self-development.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it aimed to deeply understand students' perceptions of the role of lecturers as mentors in self-development. It aimed not to quantify the data but to explore the meaning of the informants' subjective

experiences (Khalefa & Selian, 2021).

According to Somantri (2005) qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and so on, holistically and through verbal descriptions. Therefore, this study focuses on interpreting students' experiences during their mentoring relationship with their lecturers.

This research was conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Aceh, because this institution implements a mentoring system between lecturers and students that is relevant to the research focus. The subjects in this study were three students who had or were currently participating in mentoring activities with academic advisors or mentor lecturers. The informant selection technique used purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on certain considerations in accordance with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2020).

Data collection techniques are the methods or procedures used by researchers to obtain relevant and accurate data in accordance with research objectives. This technique includes various methods used to collect information, both in the form of primary data (directly from sources) and secondary data (from existing sources). Data collection techniques in this study include in depth interviews conducted in a semi structured manner so that researchers can explore students' perceptions in depth about their experiences in the mentoring process with lecturers, non participant observation researchers observe direct interactions between lecturers and students in the mentoring context without being directly involved, documentation researchers collect documents such as mentoring guidelines, activity reports, or academic records that support data from interviews and observations.

Research ethics is a set of norms, values, and moral principles that researchers must adhere to throughout the research process, from planning and implementation to reporting research results. The goal is to maintain scientific integrity, respect the rights of research subjects, and ensure that research is conducted responsibly and without harm to any party. Researchers uphold the principles of research ethics by obtaining informed consent from each informant before interviews, protecting the informant's identity, and using data solely for academic purposes.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Student's Understanding of the Role of Lecturers as Mentors**

Based on the interview results, all respondents demonstrated a fairly good understanding of the meaning and role of a lecturer as a mentor. Students generally view mentors not only as figures who function to impart academic knowledge, but also as guidance figures who can provide direction, encouragement, and support in facing challenges during the lecture period. Respondent RN, for example, described mentors as figures who *"not only provide knowledge, but also become a place to confide, a place to ask for direction in life, and someone who can provide realistic perspectives and emotional support"*. This statement indicates that RN views mentor lecturers as figures who have an emotional

closeness with students, where the interaction is not limited to the academic context alone, but also encompasses personal and psychological aspects.

Meanwhile, respondent NS stated that a mentor is *"someone who can be a source of questions and advice regarding studies and life direction"*. Although NS admitted to not having direct experience with a lecturer acting as a mentor, NS understands that the ideal function of mentoring is to provide comprehensive guidance for student self-development. Meanwhile, respondent NCF believes that a mentor should be able to *"guide and support students, not only regarding studies but also in personal and career matters"*.

The understanding of these three respondents indicates that students are aware of the importance of the lecturer's role as a holistic mentor. Therefore, it can be concluded that students understand the role of the lecturer mentor as a figure who has a broad influence on their development, both cognitively, emotionally, and socially. This understanding aligns with the view of Lumbantoruan et al (2023) who asserted that mentoring relationships encompass two primary functions: career and psychosocial. The career function involves academic guidance and career direction, while the psychosocial function encompasses emotional support and strengthening students' self-identity. Research findings show that students tend to experience greater benefits when lecturers are able to fulfill both of these functions in a balanced manner. Lecturer guidance is a key element that helps shape students' academic experiences. Regular interaction with supervisors not only provides necessary academic guidance but also supports students' professional and intellectual development. Lecturers who provide quality and supportive feedback can increase students' self-confidence and motivation to push the boundaries of their knowledge (Andriani et al., 2024).

### **Student Perceptions of Lecturer Competence, Interaction Quality, and Level of Involvement**

Based on the interview results, students generally have a positive view of their lecturers' academic competence, but still feel that the quality of their interactions and involvement in the mentoring process is uneven. Respondent RN described some lecturers on his campus as having good teaching skills and being easy to engage in discussions with. According to her, lecturers who play an active role usually not only deliver material but also provide motivation and personal attention. RN believes that such lecturers have a significant influence on students' self-confidence. He stated, *"There are lecturers who are very patient, often giving me insights and encouragement so that I feel confident"*. This shows that academic competence coupled with empathy can create more meaningful relationships between lecturers and students.

In contrast, NS assessed that although the lecturers at his campus were competent academically, the relationship between students and lecturers still tended to be formal. He described communication only occurring during lectures or KRS consultations, with no more personal follow-up. NS felt that interactions with lecturers were highly dependent on student initiative, while she herself felt

awkward initiating conversations. She said, *"I'm a shy person, so it's a bit awkward to have to initiate communication with lecturers"*. This view indicates a gap in the more active involvement of lecturers in the non-academic mentoring process.

Meanwhile, NCF shares NS's view. She believes that the relationship between lecturers and students is *"not close, just between lecturer and student"*. Nevertheless, she still appreciates lecturers who sometimes provide informal motivation and input. NCF believes that some lecturers are quite open to providing direction and constructive feedback, especially when discussing assignments or presentations. However, he also revealed that these interactions are not routine and are often situational.

From the three respondents, it was clear that all students recognized the lecturers' academic competence, but the relational and personal mentoring dimensions were not yet optimal. Lecturers were deemed capable of delivering material and providing good evaluations, but not many demonstrated active involvement in building long-term, mentoring relationships.

Furthermore, interview results indicate that students' perceptions of the competence, quality of interactions, and level of involvement of lecturers are strongly influenced by personal experiences, individual character, and the academic culture within the campus environment. Proactive and open students, such as RN and NCF, found it easier to build positive relationships with lecturers than shy and passive students, such as NS. This reinforces the theory of Fidesrinur et al. (2022) which states that perceptions are formed from the interaction between personal factors, objective factors (lecturer behavior), and situational factors (campus culture). Thus, it can be concluded that the success of the mentoring process depends not only on the lecturer, but also on the students' readiness to actively participate in building two-way communication.

Students with open and proactive personalities tend to build stronger mentoring relationships. Conversely, passive or shy students tend to wait for the lecturer to take the initiative, resulting in a more formal relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of a mentoring relationship depends heavily on two-way communication: student initiative and lecturer responsiveness. This demonstrates the importance of reciprocity in mentoring relationships for effective mentoring. Students often face various challenges in college, from adjusting to the academic environment to managing time and stress. Lecturers who are good at communicating can help students overcome these challenges by providing necessary support, feedback, and reinforcement. Lecturer communication patterns are a crucial aspect of the learning process in higher education. Effective communication encompasses not only the delivery of information but also interactions that build positive relationships between lecturers and students (Hartono & Holil, 2025).

### **The Real Contribution of Lecturer Mentoring to Academic Development**

Based on the interview results, it can be seen that the role of lecturers as mentors significantly contributes to students' academic development, particularly in terms of increasing learning motivation, self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and managing academic assignments. Although the level of

lecturer involvement in mentoring varied, all respondents acknowledged that lecturer guidance, both direct and indirect, impacted their academic development.

Respondent RN stated that her lecturer played a significant role in fostering her enthusiasm for learning. She noted that the lecturer's attention and encouragement made her more focused and enthusiastic about completing assignments. She said, *"When the lecturer tells me I can do it, I feel more confident and motivated to learn again"*. RN said the guidance provided by the lecturer, both in the form of advice and evaluation of assignments, made her more confident in presenting the material and more motivated to achieve better results. This suggests that mentoring accompanied by moral support can increase students' academic self-efficacy.

Meanwhile, NCF explained that the input and guidance from lecturers were very helpful in understanding the course material and improving the quality of assignments. She admitted that after discussions with lecturers, she gained a better understanding of logical and systematic thinking in constructing scientific arguments. NCF also felt that the feedback from lecturers helped him improve his analytical and academic communication skills. In other words, lecturer mentoring contributed to developing students' critical thinking skills and their ability to manage their learning independently.

Respondent NS, despite not having any personal mentoring experience, acknowledged that competent lecturers can boost his motivation to study harder. She believes that lecturers who can explain material clearly and provide concrete examples make it easier for students to understand the lecture content. NS stated that even though there hasn't been any intense mentoring interaction, the lecturer's ability to provide academic guidance indirectly influences student enthusiasm for learning and achievement.

In the context of the tangible contribution of lecturer mentoring to self-development, this study found that students who established good mentoring relationships with lecturers experienced improvements in several key aspects, such as self-confidence, communication skills, learning motivation, and career orientation. These findings reinforce the view of Mubarak et al (2025) that effective mentoring relationships must be built on trust, empathy, and openness. When lecturers are able to create a safe and supportive atmosphere, students will more easily express themselves, admit weaknesses, and receive positive feedback. Several previous studies that explain moral development or mentoring include: Mentoring can be defined as an interactive discussion method between a mentor or guide and several participants (small groups) discussing a problem or topic, where the mentor or guide has an equal position with the participants or, if necessary, acts as a resource person who directs the discussion (Saputra, 2022).

### **The Role of Lecturer Mentoring in Personal Development**

Interview results indicate that lecturers play a crucial role in helping students develop personal aspects such as self-confidence, emotional control,



and self-motivation. Respondent RN reported that the attention and moral support from lecturers made her more confident and motivated in facing the pressures of college. NCF felt that advice and feedback from lecturers helped her learn to accept criticism and become a more open person. Meanwhile, NS has not experienced many direct mentoring benefits, but recognizes that lecturers can be role models and sources of inspiration for self-development.

In general, lecturer mentoring helps students develop character, increase self-confidence, and encourage positive thinking and self-responsibility. An open and supportive relationship between lecturers and students has been shown to be influential in fostering emotional balance and personal maturity in students. Lecturers often lack formal guidance in carrying out their mentoring role, so mentoring activities rely heavily on personal initiative. This is in line with the findings of Kholifatun dan Harpina (2024) who stated that lecturers often only carry out academic roles without paying attention to the development of students' character and personal values.

The role of lecturers as mentors significantly influences students' personal development. Successful mentoring depends on meaningful interactions between lecturers and students, characterized by openness, positive communication, and consistent emotional support. When lecturers effectively fulfill their role as mentors, students will find it easier to understand themselves, determine their career direction, and develop a sense of responsibility for their future.

Furthermore, in the context of student self-development, this study demonstrates that lecturer mentoring plays a crucial role in strengthening the three main dimensions as described by Arifudin et al (2020) cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Through mentoring, students not only gain increased academic knowledge (cognitive aspect), but also experience growth in self-confidence and the ability to manage emotions (emotional aspect), as well as strengthening their ability to interact and collaborate (social aspect). This finding is also in line with Sekar dan Kamarubiani (2020) who emphasize that self-development is a conscious and ongoing process to optimize one's personal and professional potential through reflection and guidance.

Thus, it can be concluded that the role of lecturers as mentors contributes significantly to developing students with character, confidence, and readiness to face future challenges. A strong mentoring relationship can improve the quality of learning and enrich students' educational experiences holistically, not only academically but also in terms of emotional and social maturity.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research shows that students have a positive perception of the role of lecturers as mentors in self-development. Students understand that lecturers' function not only as teachers but also as mentors who provide direction, motivation, and emotional support.

Research shows that active and open lecturers can significantly impact students' self-confidence, communication skills, and motivation to learn.

Furthermore, mentoring relationships positively influence students' personal development, including emotional management, independence, and responsibility. However, the mentoring role has not been optimally implemented because it remains informal and relies on the personal initiative of both lecturers and students. Proactive students tend to benefit more than passive ones. This situation highlights the need for a more structured mentoring system from institutions to ensure that all students receive optimal support.

Thus, it can be concluded that the role of lecturers as mentors is crucial for character formation and student self-development. Universities need to strengthen mentoring systems to ensure more focused, sustainable, and supportive relationships between lecturers and students, supporting both academic and personal growth.

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