

# The Alignment of Mentorship Programs with Allyship Behaviors

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## Abstract

Despite the increasing focus on mentorship programs designed to support women's success in the workplace, there is a lack of understanding of how well these programs align with the allyship behaviors women find most impactful. Critical allyship for women are underrepresented, raising concerns about the effectiveness of current mentorship initiatives in promoting gender equity and highlighting the need for further research to ensure that mentorship programs can better integrate female-centered allyship behaviors. Female-centered allyship behaviors should be aligned to mentorship programs if the programs are designed to help women become successful. 8 mentorship program manuals in various fields were analyzed for allyship behaviors using a scale of -1 to 1 based upon prominence and relativity. T-tests were performed to test whether women-considered or men-considered allyship behaviors were more strongly aligned and determined which allyship behaviors were most prominent. There was no statistically significant difference in frequency of men-considered and female-considered allyship behaviors. The most prominent allyship behavior was providing an opportunity to speak and the least prominent allyship behaviors were providing a male presence, savior attitude, discrimination confrontation, and asking for equal treatment.

*Keywords: Allyship for women, Mentorship programs, Workplace discrimination, Work environment for women, Allied behaviors*

## 1. Introduction

Women experience many different issues in the workplace, most commonly including, flexible work arrangements, equal pay, race or gender bias, access to job opportunities, lack of role models, sponsorship, sexual harassment, non-inclusive environment, and stereotypes (Rotman Management, 2017). The allyship and support of men to help women feel more comfortable at work and achieve equality are important. The first problem that causes a bigger disparity is that men are offered critical assignments that lead to job advancements more often. This leads to them receiving more respect and recognition, a higher salary, and more access to opportunities. However, even in situations in which men and women hold the same positions, men are paid significantly higher. On average, if women want to catch up to the earnings of their male coworkers, they need to work more than 70 additional days each year (Rotman Management, 2017). The effect of all these issues that women face is that more women are leaving their jobs or cutting down on hours. According to Harvard Business Review research in 2014, 90% of women who left their jobs did so because they experienced work issues (mostly frustration and long hours) not to care for their families, against common belief. Women experiencing issues were also more likely to leave their jobs completely, rather than work part-time because they felt there was an inability to work part-time without being marginalized. This marginalization is exemplified in the motherhood penalty which proves that mothers were significantly less likely to be recommended for hire than childless women. According to Harvard Business Review research in 2014, women with children were offered an average starting salary of \$11,000 less than childless women because of the assumption that they are less competent, less committed, and will ask for more time off. The marginalization is especially prominent in sales jobs

that have the largest wage gaps because saleswomen are given inferior accounts that generate smaller commissions, and they are often denied support staff. Women are viewed condescendingly and less likely to be considered or recommended to be firm partners (Harvard Business Review, 2014). This study did not address much about how women were treated within their jobs and how difficult it is to get the job they want, but a 2020 Lean In and Survey Monkey did.

A 2020 survey by Lean In and Survey Monkey polled employed men and women to determine how views of allyship and its prominence varied through different groups of people. According to the survey, 58% of women felt that they had strong allies at work, even though 78% of men considered themselves allies. 36% of black women and 23% of Latinas say that if they spoke out against racial discrimination at work, they were retaliated against (Lean In and Survey Monkey, 2020). This made them less likely to speak out again, simply allowing racial discrimination to occur. Women in the workplace are promoted at far lower rates than men, and between the entry-level and the C-suite, the representation of women of color drops off by more than 75% (LeanIn, 2021). Women of color account for only 4% of C-suite leaders, which is a number that has not moved in 3 years. Asian women account for 1 in 15 women in entry-level roles but only 1 in 5- women in C-suite roles. The minority number of women in prominent work positions leads to more discrimination and exclusion of women (LeanIn, 2021). This is harmful because women have a positive impact on the work environment as they are more willing and more likely to form allyships with their colleagues. They do more to support their teams and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. The amount and frequency of microaggressions that women of color face in the workplace have remained similar for the last 3 years (LeanIn, 2021). Women of color are more likely than white women to be on the receiving end of disrespectful behavior. 73% of white employees see themselves as allies to women of color, which is a number that has increased from previous years. However, even though more of them are perceived as allies, white employees are still equally unlikely as in previous years to speak out against discrimination, mentor or sponsor women of color, or take other actions to advocate for them (LeanIn, 2021). From this data and information, it can be concluded that allyship is a large issue for women in the workplace, especially for women of color. While these studies failed to address the definition of an ally and how it differed for men and women, Bordoloi and Warren expressed how men and women view allyship differently.

When women work in academic disciplines that are male-dominated, they frequently are subjected to gendered microaggressions and sexism (Bordoloi & Warren, 2021). Male allies need to support women to combat the imposter phenomenon that women experience due to gender bias and societal expectations. The two main groups of allyship behaviors are visible advocacy and interpersonal support. Female-supported visible advocacy allyship behaviors included impression promotion, providing backup for an idea or a stance, cheerleading, social support, and acknowledging or giving credit to ideas or work. Female-supported interpersonal support allyship behaviors included active listening, helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices, providing job/task-related information, providing a male presence, and serving as reflection partners. Male-supported visible advocacy allyship behaviors included confrontation towards discriminators, asking for equal treatment of a female coworker, a savior complex attitude toward discriminators, and creating/supporting policies. male-supported interpersonal support allyship behaviors included active listening, taking on their responsibilities, helping with tasks, providing a male presence, providing an opportunity to speak, and offering reassurance. This study did not express how this allyship behavior had changed over time and what affected these differences (Bordoloi & Warren, 2021). One of the big aspects of allyship identified by women was the effectiveness of each behavior (Cheng et al., 2019). Women frequently described allyship as effective when it included outcomes that advanced a woman's career, stopped a precipitating behavior, or made the target feel supported. Ineffective allyship was defined as behaviors that had no impact on precipitating behavior, or when the ally or target experienced backlash due to the action. It was more effective when a boss or person in a higher position of power acted as an ally with a positive outcome of 81% rather than when a coworker acted as an ally with a positive outcome of 56% (Cheng et al., 2019). Continual actions rather than single incidents tended to be more effective. This study failed to recognize how these allyship behaviors varied within different workplace settings.

Women in the workplace face numerous challenges, including unequal pay, limited job opportunities, and discrimination, with women of color and mothers experiencing even greater marginalization. Male allyship is crucial but often falls short, as men are less likely to take meaningful action despite viewing themselves as allies. Research

on allyship for women in the workplace is crucial because it sheds light on persistent issues such as unequal pay, gender and racial bias, and the lack of career advancement opportunities. Although men often view themselves as allies, the disparity between their self-perception and the actual support women experience highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how allyship can be made more effective. By studying the impact of allyship behaviors - both visible advocacy and interpersonal support - research can identify strategies that not only create a more inclusive and equitable work environment but also foster long-term career success for women, especially women of color. This research is particularly important in male-dominated fields where microaggressions and bias exacerbate the challenges women face, and where sustained allyship could significantly reduce the barriers to advancement and inclusion. The purpose of a mentorship program is to help the mentees achieve success in their field of study. By increasing allyship behaviors, it is expected that there will be more success for women in the workplace. To what extent are formal mentorship programs aligned with behaviors that women consider allyship in the workplace? Formal mentorship programs align with what women consider allied behaviors in the workplace.

## 2. Methods & Materials

In order to investigate the alignment of formal mentorship programs with allyship behaviors, the leaders of several mentorship programs were contacted to collect manuals and mission statements. The programs that were used in this study included the Syosset School District Teacher Mentorship Program, the New York American College of Emergency Physicians OWL Mentorship Program, the GSAS Mentorship Program, the Northwestern Network Mentorship Program, the NACE Mentor Program, the Society for Scholarly Publishing Mentorship Program, the Center for Health Leadership & Practice Mentorship Program, and the Saving Lives Inspiring Youth (SLIY) Mentorship Program. The mentorship manuals were selected from a variety of fields to ensure a diverse group of programs, in order to ensure that the results were not solely found for a single field of study. The manuals were retrieved through program websites or by program directors sharing the manuals with the researcher.

Comparisons were made between the recommended allyship behaviors found in a paper by Meg A. Warren and Samit D. Bordoloi about men's allyship behaviors on Academia.edu (Bordoloi, S. D., & Warren, M. A., 2021) with the manuals of the mentorship programs. Allyship behaviors were categorized into two groups: visible advocacy and interpersonal support, for both men and women separately. The behaviors listed for female-considered allyship in the visible advocacy category included impression promotion, providing backup for an idea or stance, cheerleading, social support, and acknowledging or giving credit to ideas or work. The behaviors listed for women-considered allyship in the interpersonal support category included active listening, helping to navigate double-binds and impossible choices, providing job/task-related information, providing a male presence, and serving as a reflection partner. The behaviors listed for male-considered allyship in the visible advocacy category included confrontation towards the perpetrator, asking for equal treatment for female coworkers, savior complex attitude towards perpetrators, and creating/supporting policies. The behaviors listed for male-considered allyship in the interpersonal support category included active listening, taking on the responsibilities of female coworkers to help them, helping to complete tasks, providing a male presence, providing an opportunity to speak, and offering reassurance.

An evaluation of the alignment of these allyship behaviors with the mentorship program manuals was completed and the alignment was rated on a scale of -1 to 1, with -1 representing no alignment, 0 representing moderate alignment, and 1 representing strong alignment.

To determine the alignment between mentorship program manuals and allyship behaviors, two statistical methods were employed: the paired-sample t-test and the Wilcoxon sum test. The t-test is used to compare the means of two related groups—in this case, female-considered allyship behaviors and male-considered allyship behaviors—by assessing whether the observed differences are statistically significant. The test returns a p-value, which indicates the likelihood that the observed difference between the groups occurred by chance. A p-value less than 0.05 is typically considered statistically significant, meaning the difference is unlikely due to random variation.

In cases where the data did not meet the assumptions of normal distribution required for a t-test, the Wilcoxon sum test was used as a non-parametric alternative. This test ranks the data and compares the average ranks rather than the raw data itself, making it more appropriate for non-normally distributed or ordinal data. The z-value in the

Wilcoxon sum test represents the standard deviation from the mean rank of the data; it provides insight into how far the observed rank is from what is expected under the null hypothesis (i.e., no difference between the two sets of behaviors). A higher absolute z-value indicates a greater deviation from the null hypothesis, with significance typically achieved if the z-value corresponds to a p-value less than 0.05.

By using these statistical tools, this study aimed to determine whether there was a meaningful difference in the alignment of mentorship program manuals with female- and male-considered allyship behaviors. Statistical significance in this context would indicate that one set of allyship behaviors was more strongly promoted within mentorship programs, providing a deeper understanding of how these programs can better support women in the workplace.

### 3. Results

Allyship Behavior 19, offering an opportunity to speak, was the most commonly found within the manuals, closely followed by Allyship Behavior 10, serving as a reflection partner, and Allyship Behavior 15, active listening. The least commonly found behaviors within the manuals were Allyship Behavior 11, confrontation towards discriminators, Allyship Behavior 12, asking for equal treatment for female coworker, Allyship Behavior 13, savior complex attitude towards discriminators, and Allyship Behavior 18, providing a male presence. Each manual had more female-supported behaviors than male-supported behaviors, except for the Syosset High School Teacher Mentorship Program Manual, which had the same quantity of female-supported behaviors as male-supported behaviors. Overall, female-supported behaviors were more prominent. The biggest disparity was found in the manual of the Scholarly Publishing Mentorship Program, whereas the smallest disparity was found in the manual of the Syosset High School Teacher Mentorship Program. However, there is not enough disparity within any of the manuals to determine that a conclusion can be made with statistical significance.

### 4. Discussion

Even though female-supported behaviors tended to be found more often than male-supported behaviors in the mentorship program manuals, there was not a big enough statistical significant difference to claim that female-supported behaviors are more prominent. This could be because the data ranks were too close for men-considered behaviors and women-considered behaviors per each manual. The two allyship behaviors that overlap with women-considered and men-considered behaviors are active listening and providing a male presence. The allyship behavior of providing an opportunity to speak was found to be encouraged the most within the manuals, even though that is a male-considered behavior. The other behaviors of high prevalence within the manuals were serving as reflection partners and active listening. Serving as a reflection partner is a female-considered behavior and active listening is considered an allyship behavior by both men and women. There were four allyship behaviors that were not commonly found within the manuals; confrontation towards discriminators, asking for equal treatment for a female coworker, holding a savior complex attitude towards discriminators, and providing a

Table 1. Frequency Ranks of Allyship Behaviors. Each of the 20 allyship behaviors were labeled 1-20. They were given a mean rank based on their prevalence within the mentorship manuals. The allyship behaviors with the highest mean rank had the highest prevalence, whereas the allyship behaviors with the lowest mean rank had the lowest prevalence. (created by student researcher)

Ranks				
	Allyship Behavior	N	Mean Rank	
Score	1	8	62.56	
	2	8	55.81	
	3	8	69.31	
	4	8	100.06	
	5	8	51.50	
	7	8	89.56	
	8	8	106.81	
	10	8	111.13	
	11	8	38.00	
	12	8	38.00	
	13	8	38.00	
	14	8	51.50	
	15	8	111.13	
	16	8	55.81	
	17	8	78.50	
	18	8	38.00	
	19	8	113.56	
	20	8	95.75	
		Total	144	

male presence. The first three behaviors were male-considered allyship behaviors and providing a male presence was considered an allyship behavior by both females and males.

A potential source of error was misreading the information offered in the manuals or failing to read the entire manual which could cause the rating scale of the behaviors to change if the behaviors were listed in the section that was missed. This could be reduced through additional trials. A third source of error could have been that the allyship behaviors obtained from the

Table 2. Frequency of male-supported allyship behaviors in comparison to female-supported allyship behaviors. As the Mann-Whitney U value reached towards 0, there were more female-supported behaviors found in the mentorship manuals. As the Mann-Whitney U value reached towards 100, there were more male-supported behaviors found in the mentorship manuals. (created by student researcher)

	Test Statistics							
	SyoTeach	NYAC OWL	GSAS NYU	NACE	Northwestern	SLIY	ScholarlyPub	CHLP
Mann-Whitney U	50.000	33.500	39.000	38.000	48.000	46.500	29.000	35.500
Wilcoxon W	105.000	88.500	94.000	93.000	103.000	101.500	84.000	90.500
Z	.000	-1.384	-1.191	-.975	-.173	-.295	-1.728	-1.193
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.166	.234	.330	.863	.768	.084	.233
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	1.000	.218	.436	.393	.912	.796	.123	.280

research paper by Meg A. Warren and Samit D. Bordoloi were not accurate in their representation of how helpful they are for women in the workplace. This limitation is an inherent challenge of studying allyship because the results are from a single study, and not various sources. A fourth source of error is that the allyship behaviors obtained from the research paper by Meg A. Warren and Samit D. Bordoloi were not applicable to this study because of the mentorship aspect. This study furthered the research conducted by Meg A. Warren and Samit D. Bordoloi because while their study focused on identifying the behaviors that were considered to be helpful by men and women for women, this study used those identified behaviors as factors in identifying allyships in mentorship manuals.

There are many ways that this data can be applied to future research. Future research should look into how mentorship programs can further integrate allyship behaviors into their programs in the most efficient ways. It should also look into how lack of support in the workplace can influence the efficiency and efficacy of performance, for both men and women. Future research can look into how different types of mentorship programs approach allyship differently, based upon the field, location, and level. It can also look into the acceptance of women-considered allyship behaviors versus men-considered allyship behaviors in the workplace. This study could result in very different conclusions if it was performed on specific gender or racial groups, or if it was performed at a more specific level such as categorizing based upon the type of mentorship program. This study also did not include mentorship programs that lacked a manual but if future research was to do so, it is hypothesized that allyship behaviors would be found to be less prevalent.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the alignment of formal mentorship programs with allyship behaviors that women consider essential for success in the workplace. While female-supported allyship behaviors were generally more prominent in mentorship manuals compared to male-supported behaviors, the lack of a statistically significant difference suggests that current mentorship programs may not fully integrate the specific allyship practices women find most effective. The most commonly encouraged behaviors, such as providing an opportunity to speak and active listening, align with both male and female definitions of allyship, indicating some degree of shared understanding. However, critical behaviors like confronting discrimination and advocating for equal treatment were notably underrepresented, pointing to areas where mentorship programs could improve to foster a more inclusive work environment. Future research should expand this analysis to include a broader range of mentorship programs and explore how integrating more targeted allyship behaviors could enhance the professional development of women, particularly women of color. By addressing these gaps, mentorship programs can better support the advancement and inclusion of women in the workplace, contributing to long-term career success and equity.

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