

A different kind of peer pressure identified between mentors and students

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A study [published](#) in the *International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies* has looked at the dynamics of student peers helping each other with their educational needs.

Peer mentoring and collaborative learning are highlighted but the

research shows a worrying phenomenon whereby a high-performing [student](#) becomes resentful of a fellow student to whom they give assistance when that student then outperforms them and achieves higher grades. Such resentment might well scupper efforts to encourage peer mentoring and collaborative learning and must be taken into consideration when developing educational programs to facilitate such approaches to study.

Shih Yung Chou, Niyati Kataria, Shainell Joseph, and Charles Ramser of the Dillard College of Business Administration at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, U.S., conducted a [qualitative study](#) of 113 [undergraduate students](#) enrolled on a business program. They explored the students' motivations behind peer assistance and the interplay between assistance and resentment, and the impact these had on subsequent student behavior.

Peer helping, a form of student–student interaction where knowledge is shared voluntarily to aid every student's understanding of the course materials, is widely recognized as having a broadly positive impact in education. However, the new study, using a grounded theory approach to analyze qualitative data, sheds light on the putative emotional fallout of peer assistance that, for some students, might have negative effects on some students and so hinder future collaboration.

The team identified various reasons as to why students might help their peers: a sense of moral obligation, mastery of course material, or simple requests from their fellow students for help. There is a critical pivot point around which the student helper may feel aggrieved and resentful of the successes of the student they help, however. Such resentment is triggered by factors such as a perceived lack of effort from their peer or an imbalance in the give-and-take dynamic. This can significantly influence the helper's future behavior in this context, making it less likely that they will agree to helping any of their peers in the future.

The researchers suggest that educators and educational policymakers need to address the emotional and interpersonal aspects of peer assistance so that collaboration among students can be sustained. There is a need to maximize the mutual benefits of [collaborative learning](#), while minimizing potential problems that can arise.

More information: Shih Yung Chou et al, I shouldn't have helped you! When and why the student helper resents helping the peer: a qualitative inquiry, *International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies* (2023). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTCS.2023.134847](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTCS.2023.134847)

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