

IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

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***Abstract:** Mentorship has been long recognized in Europe, America and other developed countries as a very useful technique for improving on and in enriching the experiences, skills, knowledge and expertise of employees in organizations, including academic institutions. However, it is only recently that its usefulness is being realized in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. Mentorship and students' academic excellence has been subjects of discourse among social scientists from a wide range of disciplines in the last two decades. But unfortunately, very insufficient number of studies in this area has been conducted in Nigeria. This study was undertaken to fill this obvious research gap. A descriptive method was adopted and data was collected via a survey of 300 respondents using accidental sampling technique. Data collected were tested and analyzed using descriptive, frequency distribution, correlation and linear regression analysis. The result of the study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between mentorship and academic excellence. The result also revealed that mentorship does have a significant impact on academic excellence in University of Benin. Thus, the study recommends among others that Nigerian universities should give due attention to mentorship since mentoring has been recognized as a strategic technique for building and sustaining scholars in research universities that provide advanced education for the academic profession, policy makers and public and private sector professionals involved in the complex globalized economies of the 21st century.*

Keywords: Mentorship; Academic Excellence; Mentee .

1. INTRODUCTION

Mentorship is a learning relationship concept. It is a relationship in which the more experienced, knowledgeable and trusted person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person and the process involved is referred to as mentoring. Mentoring is a learning relationship which is broader than that involved in coaching. The latter is definitely skills or competency focused, whereas the former is concerned with passing on knowledge, insight and attitudes as well as skills to less experienced person (Cole, 2002). Mentoring has also been considered a personal enhancement strategy through which one person facilitates the development of another by sharing known resources, ideas, learning, expertise, values, skills, perspectives, attitudes, and proficiencies and professional competence. It is also a “strategic technique for building and sustaining scholars in research universities that provide advanced education for the academic profession, policy makers and public and private sector professionals involved in the complex globalized economies of the 21st century” (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019:21).

While mentorship may not be a panacea to academic excellence, Altbach and Salmi, 2011 cited in Peretomode and Ikoya (2019) believe that it is one sure road to achieving academic excellence, obtaining high scores and improving on the intellectual capacity of an individual or mentee. For instance, in making a world class research university, Altbach and Salmi (2011) expressed the view that the modern university is the ideal space for the ecosystem of scholars to search for new ideas in a spirit of free inquiry and mentorship plays a significant role in this.

Therefore, mentoring as a special social support helps students and amateur researchers and less experienced and less knowledgeable staff to develop into more confident, self-directed independent learners and researchers (Jekielek & Moore, 2002). While mentorship or mentoring has been long recognized in Europe, America and other developed countries as a very useful technique for improving on and in enriching the experiences, skills, knowledge and expertise of employees in organizations, including academic institution, only recently that its usefulness is being realized in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria and a very insufficient number of studies in this area has been conducted in Nigeria. This study therefore examines the impact of mentorship on students’ academic excellence in University of Benin, Benin City.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Mentorship or Mentoring

Mentorship is most often described as a guiding relationship in which a more experienced person, the mentor, assumes a supportive role by overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning with a less experienced person, the mentee (Gazza & Shellenberger, 2005). Wikipedia, 2017 cited in Peretomode and Ikoya (2019:18) defines mentorship as “a learning and development partnership between someone with vast or in-depth experience and knowledge (the mentor) and someone who wants to learn, build skills and knowledge while attaining his goals.

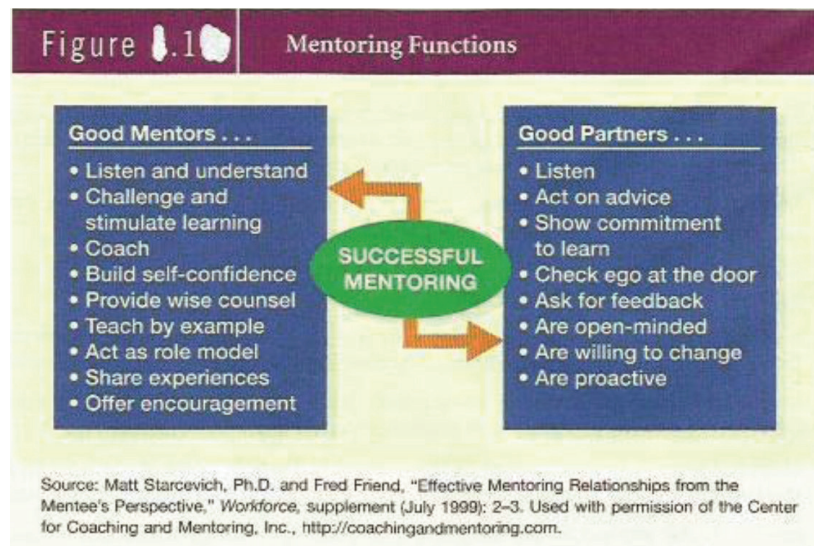
The person who wants to learn could be a male (mentee) or a female (protégé)”. The goal of a mentorship relationship is to provide an environment of support and to advise and coach an individual within the context of the culture and expectations of the organization or institution (Angelique, Kyle & Taylor, 2002). It also help the less experienced persons to learn new skills that will position them to be successful in their academic career (Waddell, Martin, Schwind & Lapum, 2016).

The expression ‘mentor’ originates from Greek mythology, where Ulysses (Odysseus), before leaving for the Trojan wars, entrusts his son, Telemachus, to the care and direction of his old and trusted friend, mentor. Thus, a mentor has come to mean someone mature and experienced who advises (and gives practical assistance where required) to a younger and less experienced person (Cole, 2002). Since then, the term has evolved and the practice has become acceptable and popular. Mentoring as a special form of social support is mainly found in three different areas: (i) workplace mentoring, (ii) youth mentoring, and (iii) mentoring in higher education (Allen & Eby, 2007). Although, there is no consistent definition of mentoring (Crisp & Cruz, 2009), in higher education, mentoring programs mostly show positive effects for mentee (e.g., better academic performance, as well as for mentor (e.g., more satisfaction) and the institution itself (e.g., reduced drop-out rates) (crisp & Cruz, 2009).

Mentoring according to Armstrong (2009), is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advise and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop. Mentors prepare individuals to perform better in the future and groom them for higher and greater career advancement. Mentoring in the words of Katamei and Omwono (2015) is where one or more teachers, tutors, coaches or mentors work on a regular, one-to-one or small group basis with students. It is essential to note that the student/mentor relationship may be a powerful influence in a student’s life, particularly for those students who are vulnerable for a range of reasons outside the mentoring relationship. Mentoring of students by teachers (lecturers) and adults is crucial for their academic excellence. In addition, Peretomode and Ikoya (2019) affirm that mentoring is more than just giving advice on how to work more effectively or handle a specific problem. It involves the mentor taking personal interest in seeing that a mentee developed the right talent, skills, values, attitudes, expertise and knowledge needed to succeed, to have a successful career and contribute as much as possible to the organization, society and the nation.

Mentoring relationships are categorized into two, namely, formal and informal mentorship. A formal mentorship is one in which the mentor/mentee relationship is organizationally structure. The management of the organization is “responsible for deliberately selecting and pairing the mentee and the mentor with

the goal of assisting the mentee grow and develop specific competencies. In an informal mentorship, on the other hand, it is the mentee or protégé who requires training that selects the mentor-the person with more expertise, experience, knowledge and advice he/she wants to share with or under study” (Murray, 2001:13). Mentoring programs have two important features, i.e., communication and support (Ismail & Ridzuan, 2012). In the context of university mentoring program, communication is generally defined as mentors openly delivering information about the procedures, content, tasks and objectives of the mentoring programs, conducting discussions about tasks that should be learned, giving detailed explanations about the benefits of attending mentoring programs and providing performance feedback. While support on the other hand, is defined as providing emotional support (i.e., acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and guide them to properly apply in daily life) and instrumental support (i.e., assist mentees to adapt to campus environment) at varying times (Fox *et al.*, 2010). Mentoring relationships are therefore characterized by providing two dimensions of mentoring functions for mentees, i.e., career-related functions (e.g., coaching) and psychosocial functions (e.g., role modeling) (Leidenfrost *et al.*, 2014). The figure 1.1 shows a list of the most effective features of mentors as well as partners.



2.2 Qualities of a Good Mentor

A mentor is an experienced or knowledgeable person who coach, advise and encourage less experienced person or persons. For a mentor to achieve his/her goals he/she must possess certain key qualities. Thirteen major qualities are identified in the literature (Demers, 2014; Lovett, 2018; Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019) as shown below:

- (i) Ability and willingness to clearly communicate his/her values, skills, knowledge and expertise.
- (ii) Be prepared always for each mentoring session.
- (iii) Be prepared to show faith in his mentee's abilities and willingness to learn.
- (iv) Should be available, approachable, flexible, and be an active listener.
- (v) Should be trusted, honest, candid and straightforward whenever the mentee asks questions.
- (vi) Should provide guidance and constructive feedback to the mentee or protégé.
- (vii) Always be ready to follow up to find the answers to questions asked by his mentee that he does not know.
- (viii) Should be able to allow the partnership to focus on the needs of the mentee.
- (ix) Should be able to celebrate the mentee whenever he achieves a task.
- (x) Be objective and fair in the mentor mentee relationship.
- (xi) Should be able to show genuine compassion.

- (xii) Should be willing to step out of his/her comfort zone and be dedicated to others' successes.
- (xiii) There should be high degree of openness, there should be no hidden agenda or ulterior motives involved in the relationship.

2.3 Mentorship Techniques: Strengths and Challenges

i. Traditional Mentorship: The traditional mentorship models are more common in the academic environment (Angeloque *et al.*, 2002). Traditional mentoring describes a one-to-one, unidirectional, asymmetrical relationship in which a junior or less experienced person is paired with a more experienced person who provides guidance and support (Blackwell, 19898). There are limitations to the traditional didactic model and the literature suggests a need for innovative, more effective models that address the needs of less experienced person within the contexts of contemporary academic institutions (Darwin & Palmer, 2009). While the traditional mentorship model provides less experienced person with support and coaching with a more experienced person, this relationship can propagate a dynamic of power. The mentor is generally the one in control of the mentor/mentee relationship, and as such, the power dynamic can have the potential to be exploitative (Angelique *et al.*, 2002). This type of mentorship also limits less experience person to single point of view (Waddell *et al.*, 2016). Darwin and Palmer (2009) add that to be successful in today's academic environment, one must have access to various mentors, perspectives and insights.

ii. Peer Mentorship: To address the potential drawbacks of a traditional dyadic mentorship relationship, alternative forms of mentoring have emerged. Peer mentoring is a form of mentorship in which members with equal ranks and similar level responsibility developed supportive networks to improve the effectiveness of

one or the other (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). Peer mentorship can occur within dyads where one peer has slightly more experience than the other member of the dyad (Beane-Katner, 2014). By pairing individuals with those of the same experience, rank and hierarchical level within the institution, new members have an opportunity to meet others in the same situation as themselves, thereby fostering a sense of inclusiveness and well-being. Peer mentorship has the potential to create a more equitable environment, and drawing on commonalities, participants have the opportunity to be more empathetic (Angelique *et al.*, 2002). However, Angelique and colleagues caution that a peer mentorship model has the potential for competitiveness amongst peers.

iii. Mutual Mentorship: A variant of a dyadic peer mentorship approach is mutual mentoring. Mutual mentoring is a form of mentorship that provides members with the opportunity to mentor one another directly (Beane-katner, 2014). It is a relationship where neither party is designated 'mentor'. Each is a confident and a resource to the other. Each serves as a sounding board for ideas and a reality check for plans (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). Beane-katner (2014) suggests that both peer and mutual mentorship can occur in groups where members with similar characteristics and experiences establish networks that serve to build a sense of community and shared understanding of the faculty role.

iv. Circle Mentorship: Circle mentorship model draws its strengths from the peer and mutual mentorship models. It is an innovative model that fosters mentorship relationships and typically involves more experienced person or faculty facilitator(s) serving in the role of mentor with a group of few less experienced persons or new faculty peers. A mentorship circle approach, based on the premise that individuals learn in relationships, offers flexibility, diversity, and knowledge creation by exposing the mentees to various perspectives, including those of the mentees themselves (Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Waddell *et al.*, 2016). Mentorship circle model allowed mentees to establish and maintain supportive and collegial relationship with others, which fosters a sense of community and collaboration. The mentorship circle promotes a learning environment in which mentees shared their experiences, listened carefully without judgment, asked clarifying questions, and offered thoughtful feedback to each other (Waddell *et al.*, 2016).

2.4 Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is "A ubiquitous and an elusive quality as the world beauty. It is used in many different ways that it can almost be meaningless but one thing is clear, like beauty, if you see one you recognize it" (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019:20). Excellence can be seen as a hooray word' (Whyte, 2005), an 'idealized cultural construct' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) or a 'Macro-cultural myth' (Hallett, 2010). It has been widely used to refer to various aspects of universities' activities. Such myths are particularly important in institutions where success depends on legitimacy acquired from conformity to macro-cultural myths (Hallett, 2010).

McGrath *et al.* (2015) defined students' academic excellence as progress or distance travelled in their knowledge, skills and personal development. According to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), humans naturally strive for progress and therefore progress in studying is conceptually more accurate representation of learning than achievement perse. In addition, (sufresno.edu (2017) defines academic excellence as the demonstrated ability to perform, achieve and/or excel in scholastic activities. Academic excellence has been identified with achieving high grades and superior performance. But academic excellence is more than just making good grades. It is the maximum development of your intellectual capacities and skills in service to humanity.

2.5 Mentorship and Academic Excellence

Excellence is defined as the quality of excelling greatness, value and worth. According to BBC English Dictionary (1993:379), excellence is “the quality of being extremely good at something.” Excellence, including academic excellence is never an accident. As Rodriquez, 2015 cited in Peretomode and Ikoya (2019:22) noted, “It is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution”. Mentorship or mentoring is vital in achieving academic excellence because it helps students to proactively navigate learning in higher education by role-modeling effective study habits, offering supportive and collaborative environments for good teaching, learning, research, innovation and extension services. Mentoring is surely an effective way of passing on experience and developing the neophyte and even the old who may wish to develop skills and expertise in certain specific areas (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). Jekielek and Moore (2002) conducted a study on mentoring as a promising strategy for youth development and they affirmed that because academic achievement is a key predictor of socio-economic status, many mentoring programs have led to improving the academic and cognitive skills and experiences of young people and other learners. The work of Crisp and Cruz (2009) shown that mentoring enhances academic excellence and there is a positive relationship between proper mentoring and high academic achievement at all levels of education including tertiary education level. Overall, youth participating in mentoring relationship experience positive academic returns through better attendance, better chance of going on to higher education, better attitudes toward school and it improves grades (Jekielel & Moores, 2002). They concluded that young people who perceived high quality relationship with their mentors experienced the best results.

Further, results of a number of empirical/quantitative studies have shown that mentorship significantly and positively affected and improved the academic performance, experience and productivity of students and thus enhanced academic excellence (Shcker & Palmer, 1993; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Nagba *et al.*, 1998; Thompson & Kelly, 2001; Bland, Yayloor & Shollen, 2009; Bordes- Edgar, Aredondo, Kurpius & Rund, 2011; Cho, Ramanan & Feldman, 2011; Fleming, Burnham & Huskins, 2012; Karanja & Gukingu, 2014; Pfund, 2016). More specifically, Campbell and Campbell's quantitative study showed that mentored

students obtained better academic achievement than those who did not participate in the mentoring program. Also, Bordes-Edgar *et al.*, found that mentoring improve, directly or indirectly GPA and persistence of college students. Similarly, Thompson and Kelly found that mentored boys made significantly higher academic gains than non-mentored boys.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While there are several theories and models which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the action-reflection model and the theory of andragogy present us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central issues of the study. The action-reflection model is a humanistic and dialectic model developed by Handal and Lauvas (1983). Drawing from the action-reflection model, the focus of mentorship is on helping the mentee or protégé become better at understanding the theory behind the practice of mentoring and the goal is to create awareness about core values, experience and knowledge that direct our action. It is not surprising therefore that the term 'practice theory' is an important term in the action reflection mode. The model emphasizes planned, formalized mentor-mentee conferences rather than formal mentoring (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). The model is builds on four mentoring outcome pillars: orientation to the faculty role, socialization to the academic community, development of teaching, research and service skills, and facilitation of growth of future leaders (Nick *et al.*, 2012). The theory of andragogy on the other hand considers mentorship as the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Merriam, 2001:5). The theory argues that "the task of the mentor is to facilitate learning, create an educational program and setting in which adult students can develop their talent and self- directed learning" (Brookfield, 1986:92). These authors believe that as the mentee or protégé is helped to learn, he/she will grow to continue self-directed learning-learning without the mentor-to imbibe the values, the right attitude, skills, acquire the relevant knowledge, experiences and become more effective in society (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). All these positive qualities can bring about achieving set goals of academic excellence. In the final analysis, the relevance of the action- reflection model and the theory of andragogy is based on their ability to justify how mentorship helped to enhance academic excellence

In line with the literature review, the following objectives and hypotheses were formulated for the study;

- i. To examine the relationship between mentorship and students' academic excellence?
- ii. To evaluate the impact of mentorship on students' academic excellence?

Hypotheses of the Study

H¹: There is no significant relationship between mentorship and students' academic excellence.

H²: Mentorship does not have a significant impact on students' academic excellence.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey research design to determine the impact of mentorship on students' academic excellence in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City. Data was collected via a survey of 300 students using accidental sampling technique. The research instrument of the study was the structured questionnaire. This was a modified form of the research instrument used by Campbell and Campbell (1997); Bordes-Edgar *et al.* (2011) and Kendrick, Nedunuri and Arment (2013). This was necessary to better address the new respondents in a different environment. Participants were given up to one week to complete and return the questionnaires. All participants were guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality and freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 263 were retrieved and analyzed giving us a response rate of 87.7%. Out of the 263 respondents, 145 were female students and 118 were male students. The items of measurement were rated on 5-point likert type scale which ranks responses on a scale of (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Data collected were tested and analyzed using descriptive, frequency distribution, correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. A pilot study to determine the level of reliability was carried out on 50 students who were part of the study within a time interval of two weeks. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of Variable

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Mentorship	10	0.723
Academic excellence	3	0.769

The results yield a coefficient of 0.723 and 0.769, which satisfied the general recommended level of 0.70 for the research indicators (Cronbach, 1951). Also, the questionnaire was validated by experts in management sciences. Hence, researchers' satisfied both reliability and validity of the scale.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Sample Profile

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic characteristics. The majority of the respondents were female 145(55.1%). Male respondents were 118, consisting 44.9%. Age group of 27-32 years which comprised of 95 (36.1%) accounted for majority of the respondents. Most respondents representing 245 (93.2%) are single. 99 (37.6%) comprises of second year students accounted for major of the respondents and students achieving CGPA between 2.40-3.49 also being the majority amongst the respondents consists of 39.2%.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

S/ N	Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Gender of Respondents	Male	118	44.9
		Female	145	55.1
		Total	263	100.0
2	Age of Respondents	15-20years	38	14.4
		21-26years	71	27.0
		27-32years	95	36.1
		Above 32 years	59	22.5
		Total	263	100.0
3	Marital Status of Respondents	Single	245	93.2
		Married	13	4.9
		Divorced	2	0.8
		Widowed	3	1.1
		Total	263	100.0
4	Current year of Study of Respondents	First year	41	15.6
		Second year	99	37.6
		Third year	56	21.3
		Fourth year	67	25.5
		Total	263	100.0
5	Academic Achievement of	CGPA of 1.00-1.49	17	6.5

Respondents	CGPA of 1.50-2.39	54	20.5
	CGPA of 2.40-3.49	103	39.2
	CGPA of 3.50-4.49	76	28.9
	CGPA of 4.50-5.00	13	4.9
	Total	263	100.0

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2019

4.2 Analysis of Constructs

Table 3 shows the correlation between mentorship and students' academic excellence in the Faculty of Education, university of Benin, Benin City. There exists a significant positive high correlation between mentorship and students' academic excellence ($r=.912$, $n=263$, $p<0.01$). This implies that mentorship has a strong and positive relationship with students' academic excellence. This is widely supported by the previous findings of Campbell and Campbell (1997); Thompson and Kelly (2001); Pfund (2016).

Variables		Mentorship	Students' Academic excellence
Mentorship	Pearson correlation Sig. (e-tailed) N	1	.912** .000 263
Students' academic excellence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.912** .000 263	1 263

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

4.3 Effectiveness of Mentorship on Academic Excellence

Table 4&5 shows the results of students' perception of faculty mentorship or mentoring. A likert scale of 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree was used to

evaluate students' perception of faculty mentorship. The mean scores were above 4.0 for all the items which indicated positive experiences towards faculty mentorship. Overall, mentor support scores ranged from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 5. The average mentor support score for students was 4.28 (SD=0.76). The average mentor support score for students satisfaction was 4.71 (SD =0.62). It indicated that the students were satisfied with faculty mentorship.

Table 4 Survey Results of Students' Perception of Faculty Mentorship/Mentoring

Survey Item (Scale 1-strongly Disagree to 5-strongly agreed)					
	\bar{X} favourable*	SD	Min	Max	Percentage
My faculty mentor showed genuine concern for me and treated me with respect	4.52	0.83	2	5	72.7
My faculty mentor helped minimize my anxieties about course work	4.43	0.83	2	5	72.7
My faculty mentor provided guidance about my educational problem	4.40	0.67	2	5	70.8
My faculty mentor advised me about my degree progress	4.38	0.63	2	5	93.1
My faculty mentor provided adequate support to facilitate my learning	4.33	0.63	2	5	88.4
My faculty mentor provided constructive feedback throughout the semester	4.30	0.72	2	5	84.3
My faculty mentor provided information about internship opportunities	4.21	0.81	2	5	66.9
My faculty mentor provided information about research opportunities	4.13	0.95	2	5	81.8
My faculty mentor provided information about professional development workshops	4.06	0.82	2	5	87.6
My faculty mentor was available when I needed him/her	4.03	0.66	2	5	68.7
Average score for all 263 respondents	4.28	0.76	2	5	78.6

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

Table 5 Survey Results of Students' Satisfaction with Faculty Mentorship or Mentoring

Survey Item	\bar{x}	SD	Min	Max	Percentage
(scale 1-very Dissatisfied to 5-very Satisfied)	favourable *				
How satisfied interactions?	4.69	0.68	2	5	88.5
How would you rate your overall experience with your mentor?	4.73	0.56	2	5	81.7
Average score for all the 263 respondents	4.71	0.62	2	5	85.1

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

4.4 Comparism of Self-Perceived Mentor-Mentee/Protégé Relationship of Male and

Female Students

Using the respondents subjective self-assessment of their perceived mentor-mentee/protégé relationship, the results reported in table 6 shows that both the male and female students perception do not differ in their expression on mentor-mentee/protégé relationship. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female students perception on mentor-mentee/protégé relationship at the 0.05 level as in indicated in table 6

Table 6: Comparism of Self- Perceived Mentor-Mentee/Protégé

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Male students	118	4.03	0.87	0.513	0.548
Female students	145	4.06	0.87		
Total	263	4.045	0.87		

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

4.5 Linear Regression Analysis

In table 7 & 8, the simple linear regression shows (R^2) value of 0.683 which reveals that mentorship/mentoring independently account for 68.3% of the variation in students' academic excellence in the Faculty of Education, university of Benin, Benin City. The F. Statistics of 374. 218 revealed that the model is

statistically significant at 0.05 significant levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R ²	Adj-R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.856	0.683	0.649	0.345

a. Predictors: (Constant), mentorship

b. Dependent variable: Students' academic excellence

Table 8: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Square	Df	Mean	F	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	18.573	2	6.378	374.218	.000 ^b	Sig
	Residual	9.614	259	0.826			
	Total	28.187	261				

a. Dependent variable: Students' academic excellence

b. Predictors: (Constant), mentorship

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results amongst others showed that mentorship have strong and positive correlation with students' academic excellence. This is in agreement with the previous studies. Campbell and Campbell (1997); Thompson and Kelly (2001); Cho *et al.* (2011); Karanja and Gukingu (2014); Pfund (2016) found that mentorship/mentoring program has a positive relationship with students' academic excellence. The findings is in agreement with Crisp and Cruz's (2009) views that mentorship enhances academic excellence and there is a positive relationship between proper mentoring and high academic achievement at all levels of education including tertiary education level. The findings also support the views of Jekielek and moore (2002) that many mentoring programs have led to improving the academic and cognitive skills and experiences of young people and other learners. It is, therefore not surprising that Jekielek and Moore (2002;1) expressed the view that "interest in mentoring is at all times high".

Also, based on the results of the statistical analysis, mentorship has significantly explained 68.3% of variation in students' academic excellence. Therefore, the study have shown that mentorship significantly and positively affected and improved the academic performance, experience and productivity of students and thus enhanced academic excellence. This findings is in agreement with Thompson and Kelly (2001); Bland *et al.* (2009); Cho *et al.* (2011); Bordes-Edgar *et al.* 2011); Fleming *et al.* 2012); Karanja and Gukingu (2014); Pfund (2016) that mentorship has a strong influence on students' academic excellence.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mentorship is an essential concept and technique because it helps young people overcome the barriers and risk factors in achieving successful academic outcomes. It is no doubt a very promising technique for achieving students' academic excellence at all levels of education including tertiary education level. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that mentor/mentee relationship is based on personal dynamics and should not involve evaluation. Once evaluation is considered, the dynamic of the relationship changes from a free-flowing, transparent and confidential relationship to a guarded power-driven relationship where the focus is on outcomes and impact. Evaluation occurs in students/supervisor relationships and in faculty/supervisor relationships. These settings may be valuable to promote career development but do have elements of conflicts of interest. The study have revealed through its perceived findings that mentorship has a positive impact on students' academic excellence and the benefits of mentorship are such that it is worth investing time, effort and money at all levels of education. Arising from the foregoing, we beg to make the following recommendations:

i. Nigerian universities should give due attention to mentorship since mentoring has been recognized as a strategic technique for building and sustaining scholars in research universities that provide advanced education for the academic profession, policy makers and public and private sector professional involved in the complex globalized economic of the 21st century.

ii. Mentor/mentee relationship should focus on the needs of the students. This is because caring and supportive relationship increases self-confidence, academic achievement and positive attitudes towards assisting others.

iii. Faculty mentors in Nigerian universities should be available, approachable, flexible, honest, candid and straightforward, be an active listener and always provide constructive feedback to their mentees. This is because students tend to be more successful academically when placed in supportive environments.

iv. Nigerian universities should intensify efforts in providing supportive programs, especially mentoring programs focusing on supporting first-year students. This is because mentoring foster students' academic and lifelong personal success.

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