

Mentorship and Professional Development of Young Academic Staff in Some Selected Universities in North-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the relationship between mentorship and professional development of young academics staff in selected universities in Northwest, Nigeria. Using a quantitative approach, the study employed descriptive correlational design. The sample size of 185 respondents was used, which was selected using purposive sampling technique. The objectives were: to determine the level of mentorship; to determine the level of professional development of young academics; to examine the relationship between mentorship and professional development of young academics staff; and to examine the influence of mentorship on professional development of young academics in the selected universities. Data was collected using a questionnaire which validity and reliability were confirmed through computation of content validity index (CVI) and Cronbach Alpha test which were found to be 0.79 and 0.85 respectively. The quantitative data was analysed using mean, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that the level of mentorship in the selected universities is good; the level of professional development is also good; the association between mentorship and professional development is positively significant; and mentorship is a significant predictor of professional development of young academic staff. The study concludes that professional development of young academics can be enhanced through mentor-mentee relationship. The study recommends among others, university managements should invest into mentoring programmes as a strategic priority for the development of quality human resource and capacity building needed for the achievement of their vision and mission.

Keywords: Mentorship, Professional Development, Young Academics, Universities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the swiftly changing landscape of higher education, ensuring the professional development of young academic staff is essential for maintaining the quality and relevance of education and research (Ozurumba & Amasuomo, 2016). Mentorship plays a crucial role in shaping the academic journey of early-career faculty members, offering guidance, support, and opportunities for skill enhancement (Paetow *et al.*, 2018).

In countries like Nigeria, which, akin to many other developing nations, is witnessing substantial growth in its higher education sector, the escalating demand for quality education underscores the necessity for competent and skilled academic staff (Ozurumba & Amasuomo, 2016). Nevertheless, young faculty members often encounter challenges in navigating the

intricacies of academia, encompassing teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities (Okoduwa *et al.*, 2018). The absence of well-structured mentorship programs may impede their ability to flourish in the academic environment (Schrubbe, 2004). Hence, comprehending the current status of mentorship programs is critical for identifying deficiencies and proposing effective strategies for enhancement.

While mentorship is recognized as an essential component of professional development globally (Svetlik & Lalić, 2014), its implementation in Nigerian universities, particularly in the Northwest region, may vary. Some universities may have established mentorship programs, while others may lack formal structures for supporting young academic staff. Thus, this study focuses on exploring the landscape of mentorship and its impact on the professional

development of young academic staff in selected universities in Northwest, Nigeria

Various studies underscore the positive impact of mentorship on the career development of early-career academics where mentored individuals often exhibit increased job satisfaction, improved research productivity, and a higher likelihood of career advancement (Bakker, 2017; Odetunde *et al.*, 2020; Myers *et al.*, 2021). By investigating the correlation between mentorship and professional development in the context of Northwest Nigerian universities, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing literature.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the academic landscape in Northwest, Nigeria has witnessed the establishment of additional universities and a surge in the recruitment of young academic staff, reflecting the region's commitment to fostering educational growth. However, despite this influx of young talent, there exists a significant gap in mentorship and professional development opportunities for these individuals (Obi, 2017). The absence of structured mentorship programmes and inadequate support systems may hinder the optimal growth and contribution of young academic staff in their respective fields (Ajayi, 2019; Idris, 2020).

The mentorship and professional development of young academic staff play a pivotal role in shaping their career trajectories, enhancing their teaching and research capabilities, and fostering a conducive academic environment (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2018; Adeleke *et al.*, 2021; Obi, 2017). Numerous studies emphasize the positive impact of mentorship on career satisfaction, productivity, and retention of academic staff (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2018; Obi, 2017). However, the lack of tailored mentorship programs specifically designed for young academics in Northwest, Nigeria raises concerns about their ability to navigate the complexities of academia and fulfill their potential.

Furthermore, the changing landscape of higher education, evolving teaching methodologies, and the increasing demand for research output necessitate continuous professional development for academic staff (Adeleke *et al.*, 2021; Oladipo, 2018). The absence of accessible and relevant professional development opportunities for young academic staff in Northwest, Nigeria may impede their ability to adapt to emerging trends and contribute meaningfully to their academic disciplines. This research aims to investigate the current state of, and the relationship between mentorship and professional development for young academic staff in selected universities in Northwest, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of mentorship on professional development among young academics in north-western universities in Nigeria.

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

- i. To determine the level of mentorship in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- ii. To determine the level of professional development of young academics in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- iii. To establish the relationship between mentorship and staff professional development.
- iv. To examine the influence of mentorship on staff professional development

Research Questions

- i. What is the level of mentorship for young academic staff of universities in North-west, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the level of professional development of young academics in universities of North-west, Nigeria?
- iii. Is there a significant relationship between mentorship and staff professional development of academic staff in North-west, Nigeria?
- iv. Does mentorship have effect on staff professional development of academic staff of universities in North-west, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant relationship between mentorship and staff professional development of academic staff in North-west, Nigeria
- ii. Mentorship has no positive effect on staff professional development of academic staff of universities in North-west, Nigeria

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

There are various theories that explain the concept and application of mentoring relationship that could produce optimal performance among young academics in educational institutions. However, this study is anchored on the social exchange theory.

Social Exchange Theory

George Casper Homans introduced Social Exchange Theory in 1958, as mentioned by Olannye (2014). This theory suggests that most relationships are built on a foundation of reciprocity, where individuals engage in a "give and take" dynamic, with the proportions varying based on the relationship's intensity (Opara & Odu, 2019). The core assumptions of this theory include: i. Each person in a relationship has expectations from their partner(s), and the satisfaction of these expectations determines the strength and longevity of the relationship (Olannye, 2014). ii. Successful relationships are characterized by mutual benefits, emphasizing that they should not be one-sided.

Individuals invest time and energy in a relationship when they receive something of corresponding or greater value in return (Olannye, 2014).

In academia, there is a social expectation for young or less experienced academics to receive guidance and encouragement from their more seasoned counterparts (Neil, 2018). According to the social exchange theory's assumptions, the level to which experienced academics share their knowledge, exchange ideas, provide advice, and offer career support to their less experienced colleagues directly influences the satisfaction and commitment of the mentees (Opara & Odu, 2019; Akpan *et al.*, 2017). Conversely, a lack of meaningful mentoring relationships can result in feelings of alienation and deprivation among workers, leading to a decline in commitment levels (Opara & Odu, 2019; Akpan, *et al.*, 2017; Mba & Godday, 2015). Therefore, the social exchange theory posits that professional development is a reciprocal response to the fulfillment of mentoring efforts within higher education institutions.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Mentorship

The learning process begins from the day we were born, the first steps we took and it continues throughout our lives in order for us to be successful (Naris & Ukpere, 2010). Mentoring has been regarded as one of the learning methods used to enhance individuals learning and development in all spheres of life (Brady, 2018). It has also been described as a process through which the more experienced senior employee helps to develop a less experienced employee (Noe *et al.*, 2006; Mackey & Livsey, 2006).

Mentoring is defined as “the professional relationships in which an experienced individual who is called mentor helps another person called mentee in developing particular knowledge and skills which can improve personal and professional growth of less-experienced people” (Pertin, 2011). According to Mladenovic M (2012), mentoring is a process whereby an inexperienced individual is brought together with a more experienced person in an attempt to facilitate the less experienced individual to gain knowledge, self-confidence, skills from the other party as they go through the process. Pleschová and McAlpine (2015) posit that mentoring entails the process in which mentor passes on knowledge of subjects, facilitates personal development, encourages wise choices, and helps the protégé to make transitions”.

In higher educational institutions, mentoring is defined as “a process whereby an experienced senior faculty member helps to develop a less experienced junior faculty member” (Dawn and Palmer, 2009). Therefore, Mentoring involves the sharing of knowledge and experience between mentors and mentees in an existing relationship that may lead to personal and professional development of the people involved.

Mentoring relationship can be dyadic (one-on-one); Socratic model (one mentor with a group of mentees) or it could take place within a peer group (Ojewunmi, 2013). Scholars identified six dimensions of mentorship in tertiary institutions of learning including universities to include simulation of reflection (Heeneman and Grave, 2019), teaching-based skills, research-based skills, evaluation-based skills, communication-based skills (Chidi *et al.*, 2023) and mentor presence (Heeneman and Grave (2019).

Concept of Professional Development

Professional development is a structured professional learning that results in changes in practices and improvements in learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017). Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for educators to continue to improve their knowledge and skills so they can achieve greater success (Ozurumba & Amasuomo, 2016). It is argued that any institution concerned about their students' futures will want to support a cycle of continuous professional growth for educators, as the more educators learn, the better the students learning (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017).

Academics are frequently discomfited by negative students' feedback and this impacts on their satisfaction with teaching and their level of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Okoduwa *et al.*, 2018) and can act as a de-motivator to engage with learning and teaching academic development programmes (Ozurumba & Amasuomo, 2016). Hence, professional development that is psychologically safe, through which academics can discuss, reflects upon their teaching, share ideas and resources, and feel empowered to try different strategies in relation to their academic obligations has been found to be highly effective in changing practices and dramatically increasing their productivity (Odetunde *et al.*, 2020; Chidi *et al.*, 2023), and students' satisfaction (Bakker, 2017).

As academics lead busy lives and are frequently juggling the demands of teaching, research, administration, personal life commitments, and service to their wider community, they need to have professional development processes that are convenient and relevant to their discipline and work realities (Odetunde *et al.*, 2020). Mentoring has gained increased popularity as a strategy for developing an individual's professional knowledge and skills (Carmel & Paul, 2015). In the same line, Bakker (2017) indicate that teachers' learning and development, for example, could be enhanced with a collaborative culture of ideas sharing and experimentation.

The present study considered six (6) constructs of professional development in relation to academic staff of the universities: professional identity development (Heeneman and Grave (2019); career advancement and expanded thinking; increased scholarly confidence;

collaborative working; skills development and goal setting; and action planning (Carmel & Paul (2015).

Conceptual Framework

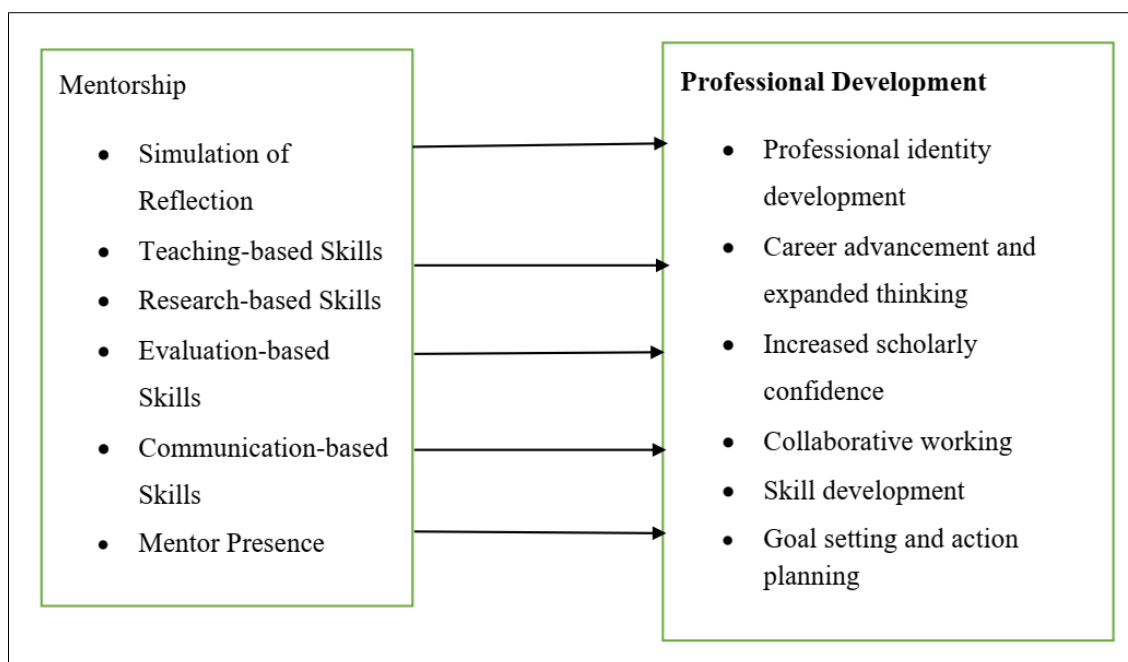


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researchers computed (2023)

Figure 1 elucidates the variables under study. The variables include mentorship and professional development of young academics. The independent variable is mentorship and it measures six domains: simulation of reflection, teaching-based skills, research-based skills; evaluation-based skills, communication-based skills and mentor presence. Professional development acts as the dependent variable and it is based on six dimensions as well. These are: professional identity development, career advancement and expanded thinking, increased scholarly confidence, collaborative working, skills development, and goal setting and action planning. The six domains of professional development will be predicted to be associated with mentoring programme. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study. This framework also predicts that all attributes of mentorship promote professional development.

Empirical Review

Several studies have empirically documented a connection between mentorship and professional development of employees in various work settings. For example, Odetunde *et al.*, (2020) conducted a study aimed at establishing a link between mentorship and career development of faculty in Nigerian universities. They employed a correlational design and collected data using questionnaire. Their findings revealed that mentorship and career development are positively and significantly correlated. Similarly, Ozurumba and Amasuomo (2016) studied the link between professional development of academic staff and their output in state

universities in South-South, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that professional development leads to better output among academic staff. This implies that the more professionally developed an employee is, the better his/her productivity. This therefore calls for mentoring programmes to ensure professional growth of young academics. Also, a qualitative study by (Carmel & Paul, 2015) revealed that mentoring has impacts on mentee's exposure to new fields of enquiry and motivation to advance in career. They also revealed that mentorship increases the scholarly confidence of the mentee, development of collaborative work skills, mentorship is also linked with goal setting and action planning, as well as skill development.

Similarly, Pleschová & McAlpine (2015) carried out a systematic review of existing research on mentoring in the context of educational development in higher education. They discovered that mentoring significantly and positively affects the professional development of employees in tertiary institutions. This implies that with mentoring programme in place, inexperienced faculty members can professionally grow, which in turn, leads to the success of the institution. Additionally, Bryant-Shanklin and Brumage (2011) developed and implemented a Collaborative Responsive Educator Mentoring Model (CREMM) in higher institutions of learning. They discovered that the model can be used in post-secondary institutions to address systems changes in higher education organizations to establish a culture for research in the academy thereby enhancing the professional growth of the young faculty

members. This implies that mentorship aids the professional development of young academics.

McAndrew *et al.*, (2018) conducted a survey of faculty development in U.S. and Canadian dental schools, exploring the types of activities and institutional entities responsible for professional development. Although specific to dental schools, this study provides valuable insights into faculty development and mentorship, which are applicable to tertiary institutions. Also, Costa & Smith (2023)'s article explores career satisfaction and advancement related to mentorship experiences of underrepresented nursing faculty. While focused on nursing, the themes of career advancement and satisfaction related to mentorship are relevant to the professional development of employees in tertiary institutions.

Reid *et al.*, (2011) examined the relationship among mentorship, productivity, and promotion among academic hospitalists in U.S. They discovered that many academic hospitalists lacked mentorship and this was associated with a failure to produce scholarly activity. This means that if academic hospitalists were engaged in mentor-mentee relationship, they could have presented a poster at a national meeting, authored an academic publication, or presented grand rounds at their institution. This therefore suggests that mentorship may improve academic productivity among hospitalists.

Also, Cheroni *et al.*, (2016) conducted a study to determine the influence of mentorship practices on employees' performance in small manufacturing firms in Garissa County of Kenya. A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study and data was collected through the administration of the questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data, and the result indicated that a significant relationship exists between mentorship and employee performance. Kosgei (2018) carried out a study to established direct and indirect effect of talent development mentorship practice on employee performance. Data was gathered through the use of questionnaire, and analysed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that talent development mentorship practice significantly influences employee performance both directly and through the mediating role of organisational culture. Despite focusing on manufacturing firms, employee performance related to mentorship are particularly relevant to the professional growth of young academics in higher education setting.

It can be deduced that mentoring and coaching foster a professional relationship that helps individuals to acquire skills needed to remain relevant and competitive in higher education academic environment (Dean, 2009). While the available literature on the link between

mentorship and professional development of employees focused on educational institutions and other organisations in different places, there is need replicate similar studies in the understudied context of Northwestern Nigeria.

III. METHODOLOGY

Using quantitative approach, this study employed a descriptive correlational survey design. The population for the study comprised academic staff from ten purposively selected universities in North-western Nigeria. The selection of these ten universities was based on the fact that they are newly established universities in the region, and that they needed the services of experienced academics from other (older) universities on visiting capacity and sabbatical who would mentor the young tenure staff to grow. The sample size of 297 academic staff was drawn from the population using Slovin's formula, and was selected from the population using purposive sampling technique based on researchers' judgment. The researchers outline the inclusion/exclusion criteria that a respondent must fall within in order to be selected to participate in the study. These inclusion/exclusion criteria include:

- An academic staff must be a tenure staff of a given institution
- An academic staff must have started as a Graduate Assistant or Assistant lecturer
- An academic staff must be below the rank of Senior lecturer.

A questionnaire, titled "Mentorship and Professional development Questionnaire" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to 297 respondents out of which 185 completed responses were retrieved. To test the validity of the instrument, it was given to experts in the area of Educational Measurement and Evaluation from academia. The results of these experts' observation were subjected to content validity index computation which revealed 0.79. Reliability test was done using test re-test method. In this, the instrument was administered to few respondents outside the study area. The results of the two tests yielded Cronbach Alpha value of 0.85 coefficients after been subjected to statistical computation. Statistical mean, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient regression were used to analyse the data. Data was analysed based on the research questions.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the level of mentorship in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of Mentorship

Dimensions of mentorship	Mean	Interpretation
Teaching-based Skills	3.34	Moderate
Research-based Skills	3.72	Good
Communication-based Skills	3.63	Good
Evaluation-based Skills	4.14	Good
Simulation of Reflection	3.25	Moderate
Mentor Presence	3.86	Good
Overall Mean	3.66	Good

Table 1 shows that the independent variables in the study were six dimensions that define mentorship namely; teacher-based skills, research-based skills, communication-based skills, evaluation, simulation of reflection and mentor presence. The table presents the mean scores of the agreement level of mentorship basing on the six domains by respondents. As shown in the table, the mean scores for the six aspects of mentorship extended from 3.25 to 4.14. The highest perception level of agreement was evaluation-based skills (mean = 4.14), followed by mentor presence (mean score = 3.86). This is followed by research-based skills (mean score = 3.72), followed by communication-based skills (mean = 3.63),

teaching-based skills follows with the mean score of 3.34, and then, simulation of reflection (mean score = 3.25). The overall mean obtained by the independent variable (mentorship) is 3.66, which on the scale used corresponded to “agree” and hence a good overall rating of the respondents on mentorship. This implies that there is a high level of mentorship in the selected universities in North-western Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the level of professional development of young academics in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of Professional Development

Dimensions of professional development	Mean	Interpretation
Professional identity development	3.45	High
Career advancement and expanded thinking	3.31	Moderate
Increased scholarly confidence	4.34	Excellent
Collaborative working	4.13	High
Skills development	2.64	Moderate
Goal setting and action planning	2.56	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.41	Good

The dependent variable was also divided into six constructs namely; professional identity development, career advancement and expanded thinking, increased scholarly confidence, collaborative working, skills development, and goal setting and action planning. The items developed to measure these constructs were scaled using the five-point Likert scale ranging from a minimum of 1 for the worst case scenario (strongly disagree) to a maximum of 5, which is the best case scenario (Strongly agree).

Table 2 illustrates that for professional identity development, the mean obtained is 3.45, which on the scale used corresponded to “agree” and hence a good overall self-rating of the respondents on professional identity development; career advancement and expanded thinking has the mean of 3.31, which on the scale used corresponded to moderate self-rating of the respondents on career advancement and expanded thinking; for increased scholarly confidence, the mean score of 4.34 was obtained, which on the scale used corresponded to “strongly agree” and hence a very good self-rating of the respondents on increased scholarly confidence; yet for collaborative working, the table indicates mean score of 4.13, which on the scale used corresponded to “agree”

and hence a good self-rating of the respondents on collaborative working; the mean score obtained by skills development was 2.64, corresponding to moderate self-rating of the respondents on skills development; and lastly, goal setting and action planning obtained the mean score of 2.56, indicating a moderate self-rating of the respondents on goal setting and action planning, as the mean corresponds to “agree” on the used scale. The overall mean obtained by professional development of young academics was 3.41, which on the scale used corresponded to “agree” and hence a good overall self-rating of the respondents on employee performance. This implies that there is a high level of professional development among young academics in the selected universities in North-western Nigeria.

Research Question Three:

Is there a significant relationship between Mentorship and Professional Development of Young Academics in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria?

Here, the study sought to examine if the relationship exists significantly between mentorship and professional development, and between each individual

component of mentorship and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in

North-west, Nigeria. The study further sought to examine the relationship.

Table 3: Correlation between Mentorship and Professional Development of Young Academics

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value (0.01)	Decision	Interpretation
Professional Development of Young Academics and				
Mentorship	0.608	P<0.01	Rejected	Significant

Table 3 revealed the result of the correlation between mentorship and professional development of young academics in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria. As shown in the table, Pearson's (r) data analysis revealed a significant positive relationship ($r =$

0.608, $P < 0.01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and concludes that there is a positive significant relationship between mentorship and professional development of young academics in the selected universities.

Table 4: Correlation between the six components of mentorship and professional development of Young Academics

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value (0.01)	Decision	Interpretation
Professional Development of Young Academics And				
Teaching-based Skills	.048	$P > 0.01$	Not rejected	Not significant
Research-based skills	0.535	$P < 0.01$	Rejected	Significant
Communication-based Skills	0.601	$P < 0.01$	Rejected	Significant
Evaluation-based skills	0.550	$P < 0.01$	Rejected	Significant
Simulation of Reflection	0.062	$P > 0.01$	Not rejected	Not significant
Mentor Presence	0.608	$P < 0.01$	Rejected	Significant

In order to test the relationship between each of the six constructs of independent variable (mentorship) and the dependent variable (professional development), Pearson's linear correlation coefficient was used at a 0.01 significant level and 2-tailed. Table 4 presents the results of the correlation. As shown in the table, there exists a significant positive relationship between research-based skills and professional development at r -value 0.535 ($P < 0.01$). Also, Communication-based Skills and professional development revealed a significant positive relationship at r - value 0.601 ($P < 0.01$). Similarly, Pearson's r -value of 0.550 indicates a significant positive relationship between evaluation-based skills and professional development ($P < 0.01$). Moreover, relationship between mentor presence and professional development revealed a significant correlation of 0.601 ($P < 0.01$). However, the correlation revealed insignificant relationship between teaching-based skills and professional development, and between simulation of reflection and professional development with Pearson's r values 0.048 ($P > 0.01$) and 0.062 ($P > 0.01$) respectively.

Therefore, from the results of the correlation between the six components of mentorship and professional development presented in table 4.5, it can be inferred that:

- There is no significant relationship between teaching-based mentoring and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- There is a significant relationship between research-based mentoring and professional

- development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- There is a significant relationship between communication-based mentoring and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- There is a significant relationship between evaluation-based mentoring and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- There is no significant relationship between simulation of reflection and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria
- There is a significant relationship between mentor presence and professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria

Research Question Five:

Is there a significant influence of mentorship and professional development of young academics in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria?

In order to find out the influence of mentorship on professional development of young academics, multiple regression was carried out to discover the considerable predictor for professional development. In this analysis, the six dimensions of mentorship were treated as predictor variables, whereas professional development was treated as the dependent variable. Table 5 below presents the summary of the results:

Table 5: Regression analysis of the influence of mentorship on professional development of young academics

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficients		sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	44.341	6.157		7.202	0.000
Teaching-based mentoring	0.053	0.193	0.014	0.273	0.785
Research-based mentoring	0.818	0.189	0.262	4.322	0.000
Communication-based mentoring	0.727	0.250	0.209	2.908	0.004
Evaluation-based mentoring	0.345	0.240	0.103	1.439	0.152
Simulation of reflection	0.072	0.143	0.027	0.505	0.614
Mentor presence	0.789	0.146	0.334	5.413	0.000
R = 0.726, R2 = 0.528, F = 39.648					

- Dependent Variable:** Professional development
- Predictor Variables:** (Constant), Teaching-based Mentoring, Research-based Mentoring,

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression. As shown in the table, $F = 39.648$ implies that all the six dimensions are good in explaining variation in professional development. Similarly, the R-square (R^2) value 0.528 shows that all the six predictor variables explain 52.80% of the total variation. This implies that 47.2% of the joint variation was accounted for by other factors which this study does not consider. The table also indicates that three of the six dimensions of mentorship: research-based mentoring, communication-based mentoring and mentor presence were significant and positive predictors of professional development with $\beta_1 = 0.262$, $P = 0.000$, $\beta_1 = 0.209$, $P = 0.004$, and $\beta_1 = 0.334$, $P = 0.000$, respectively, while teaching-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and simulation of reflection with $\beta_1 = 0.014$, $P = 0.785$; $\beta_1 = 0.103$, $P = 0.152$ and $\beta_1 = 0.027$, $P = 0.614$ respectively were found not to significantly predict professional development. Therefore, these results imply that mentorship has a significant influence on professional development. Specifically, the coefficient is positive and the significance level is less than 0.01 in each case of research-based, communication-based and mentor presence, implying that research-based, communication-based and mentor presence each has a significant positive relation with professional development of young academics. The coefficients also imply that these three aspects of mentorship each influences professional development of young academics in the studied universities by 26.2%, 20.9% and 33.4% respectively. Therefore, research-based mentoring, communication-based mentoring and mentor presence each has a significant effect on professional development. However, the coefficient of each of teaching-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and simulation of reflection is positive but the significant value of each is greater than 0.01. This implies that teaching-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and simulation of reflection do not individually predict professional development. Therefore, teaching-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and simulation of reflection each has no influence on professional development of

young academics in the studied universities. However, the six dimensions of mentorship jointly influence professional development of young academics in the studied universities.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study on the level of mentorship indicate that teaching-based mentoring and simulation of reflection obtained the moderate levels of agreement. These indicate insufficient competences required for teaching provided to the mentees and inadequate simulation of mentees' reflection. For teaching-based mentoring, it might be because some of the mentees were not properly coached on how to prepare for lectures, how to build confidence while presenting lecture, and how to encourage class participation during lecture delivery. For, simulation of reflection, the moderate level of agreement obtained might be as a result of mentoring provided to some mentees were not enough to enable them properly deepen their reflection, critically analyse their self-image, go beyond the borders of their current academic performance, reflect on their development over the years, reflect on their personality traits such as dominant behaviour, introversion etc. and reflect on all key and enabling competencies. Even though it is not every mentee that did not get enough mentoring on teaching-based competences and simulation of reflection, there is need for improved mentoring on these areas of competences.

However, research-based mentoring, communication-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and mentor presence each obtained a high level of agreement. For research-based, it could be due to provision of the necessary skills needed to carry out quality research by the mentors to the mentees. For evaluation, it might be because mentors follow up to observe mentees' competences, providing feedback with respect to mentees' progress, suggesting ways for improvement and discussing problems with regards to mentees' progress with a view to address. For communication, it could be due to proper coaching provided to mentees on how to develop good communication skills, express ideas orally and in writing, listen well and importance of good communication in academia. For mentor presence, it

might be because of mentors' ability to encourage mentees' personality development, pay attention to mentees' emotional experiences, share their experiences with mentees, being readily available for contact and exhibit professional behaviour. The overall mean score of mentorship indicates a high level, implying that senior academics engaged in mentor-mentee relationship are discharging their duties of coaching the less experienced academics to a reasonable extent. There is however a need for improvement to attain an excellent level of mentorship.

The findings on the level of professional development of young academics revealed that increased scholarly confidence got the highest level of agreement. The reason for this could be that the mentees feel motivated through mentor-mentee relationship to seek other avenues for growth, to hone their confidence through reflective and reflexive thinking, and to make scholarly contributions. Collaborative working and professional identity development follow with the second highest agreement level. For collaborative working, it might be due to the ability of the mentees to jointly work with others where responsibilities are shared, to work in academic events for networking and capacity building, and to share ideas with others about new opportunities and insights about academic activities. For professional identity development, it might be due to mentees' ability to envision the development of their identity as academics, to avail themselves with/use their own qualities, values and strengths, to be sensitive to their cultural and religious background, and to understand the importance of advancing their academic portfolio. Similarly, career advancement and expanded thinking, skills development and goal setting and action planning obtained moderate level of agreement. For career advancement and expanded thinking, it might be as result of the mentees' insufficient exposure to new fields of inquiry, not extensively discussing their career plans with senior academics and feeling not highly motivated to advance in their professional career. For, skills development, it might be due to the mentees' ability to partially navigate other academic duties that interfere with the completing of assigned tasks, their inability to sufficiently learn argumentation and discussion skills, as well as their quest to improve on their teaching, research and general academic writing skills. For goal setting and action planning, the reason might result from the mentees' unsatisfactory effort to formulate specific and attainable career objectives, set up time bound for achieving them, work towards attaining them and pursue them in practice. The overall mean score obtained by professional development of young academics indicates a high level, signifying that the degree to which young academics have professionally developed is reasonable.

The finding on the relationship between mentorship and professional development of young academics indicates the existence of a significant

positive relationship. This denotes that increase in the mentoring activities will increase the development of young academics professionally. This finding agrees with that of previous studies who also revealed that mentorship positively relates with employee professional development (Odetunde *et al.*, 2020; Carmel & Paul, 2015; Ozurumba & Amasuomo, 2016; Bryant-Shanklin & Brumage, 2011; Reid *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the present and previous findings on the relationship between mentorship and employee professional development suggest that mentoring is critical to the professional success of individuals in higher education as it represents an important professional development tool for career advancement and intellectual development.

The finding on the relationship between each of the dimensions of mentorship and professional development of young academics shows that the correlation coefficient is positively related. In short, among the six constructs of mentorship; mentor presence, communication-based mentoring, evaluation-based mentoring and research-based mentoring had significant and positive relationship with professional development of young academics, while teaching-based mentoring and simulation of reflection found not to be significantly associated with professional development. Mentor presence had the highest level of association with professional development. This agrees with that of Heeneman and Grave (2019) who found that mentor presence in a mentor-mentee relationship helped in development of competencies, self-direction of learning and professionalism of the mentees in health profession education. The existence of the relationship between mentor presence and professional development of young academics found in this study might be because of the experiences mentors shared with mentees and the understanding of the mentees' personalities, religious and cultural background by the mentors had helped them in shaping the academic mind sets of the mentees which in turn led to the professional development of the mentees. Research-based mentoring had the lowest association with professional development. This might be because, the necessary research-based skills the mentees were trained on were good but not enough for a full professional development. For the teaching-based skills and simulation of reflection that were found not to be significantly associated with professional development, it is possible due to insufficient coaching on teaching competences and on how to reflect on issues and align them with the required competences for professional growth respectively.

The findings on the influence of mentorship on professional development of young academics revealed that that all the six predictor variables (the six dimensions of mentorship) jointly explain 52.80% of the total variation in professional development. This means that the dimensions of mentorship considered in the present study are significant predictors of professional development of young academic staff in the studied

location. Therefore, this result implies that mentorship has a significant influence on professional development. This finding corroborate the previous findings from the related studies that indicate a positive influence of mentoring on professional development of employees in different institutions (McAndrew *et al.*, 2018; Costa & Smith, 2023; Cherono *et al.*, 2016; Kosgei, 2018).

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has provided empirical evidence that mentorship is positively related to and significantly influences professional development of young academic staff in some selected universities in North-west, Nigeria. This shows that having a mentoring programme for junior academic staff members might change the staff equity profile (Naris & Ukpere, 2010). The paradox is that if less experienced academics are to be successful in academia and if universities are to be transformative in what they do, mentoring is a crucial undertaking. Experienced academics need to see mentoring as part of their professional responsibility and should make themselves available to mentor others even in the absence of a system or structure for mentoring formally in their institutions. This is because mentorship is vital in ensuring the development of young academic staff in all spheres of academic life. Therefore, mentoring programme or mentor-mentee relationship should be based on the enhancement of professional development of less-experienced staff in his academic career.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends from the findings that:

1. University managements should invest into mentoring programmes as a strategic priority for the development of quality human resource and capacity building needed for the achievement of their vision and mission.
2. Experienced academics serving as mentors should focus their coaching more on teaching-based skills to enable the mentees know how to prepare for lectures, develop confidence and encourage participation during lecture delivery
3. Mentor-mentee relationships should also be focused on stimulating reflection among mentees to enable them analyse their self-image critically, deepen their reflection, extend beyond their current academic performance level, reflect on their personality traits, on their development over the years and on other key areas of academic competences.
4. Mentees should be able to exert satisfactory effort to formulate specific and attainable career objectives, work towards attaining them and pursue them in practice in other to enhance their goal setting and action planning
5. Mentees need to be well exposed to new fields of inquiry, discuss their career plans with senior academics and be highly motivated for their career advancement and expanded thinking.

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