

COMPOSITE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTORSHIP AND EARLY CAREER PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

Thompson, Ime Udo

patthomabc@gmail.com

*Department of Educational Management
University of Calabar*

Uket, Rose Ofem

rosebassey009@gmail.com

*Department of Educational Management
University of Cross River State*

Akoh, Mba Edet

mbaedet@yahoo.com

*Department of Educational Management
University of Cross River State*

Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between mentorship and early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question and hypothesis were raised and tested in the study. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1,677 early academic staff from the two public universities in Cross River State. Stratified sampling was used to select 570 academic staff from the two universities as sample for this study. One instrument tagged “Mentorship and Early Career Performance of Academic Staff Questionnaire (MECPASQ)” was used for data collection. The items used for the study were faced-validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the items was established using Cronbach reliability method the reliability estimates ranged between .74 to .92. Multiple Hierarchical Linear Regression analysis and Multiple Linear Regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students’ record, and mentorship on classroom management individually and jointly predicted early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State significantly. The management

of public universities in Cross River State should make team teaching a culture in the universities, as this will help inexperienced academic staff acquire all the competencies they need to perform their roles effectively in the institutions.

Keywords= *Mentorship, Research and Publication, Student Evaluation, Team Teaching, Management of Students' Record, Classroom Management*

Introduction

Universities all over the world, are established to churn out graduates with practical, functional, and dynamic skills needed to drive the developmental process of society. The quest for expansion in knowledge production, the desire to increase the level of knowledge utility and the need to have a global-based competitive labour force, have heightened the strive for a functional university education system by developing countries all over the world. In Nigeria, universities are responsible for the production of high-quality manpower for the growth and development of all sectors of the Nigerian economy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). This goal may only be actualized when universities in the country are structured in a way that can arouse the morale of academic staff towards the performance of their statutory duties with a high level of commitment, passion, enthusiasm, and effectiveness. It means that developing programmes that can boost the morale of academic staff towards the effective performance of their roles in universities can be a feasible measure to maximize the goals of university education in the country.

It is a global notion that no university system can attain its pre-determined goals when the teaching workforce cannot perform their teaching, research and community service duties effectively (Orokpo & Sunday, 2023). This is because the core functions of universities which are teaching and learning, research, and community engagement are the primary jobs of faculty members (Mushemeza, 2016). Academic staff have the responsibility to ensure that students acquire the right knowledge, skills, competencies, abilities, morals, aptitudes and values for the growth and advancement of society through effective teaching. It is the duty of faculty to carry out problem-solving research aimed at solving the ever-changing problems of Nigerian society (Sunday, 2025). Academics have the obligation to deliver effective community services to boost effective learning among students, as well as fast-track community development. Academic staff are expected to be scholars who produce knowledge mainly through research, constantly creating the knowledge to enhance students' learning, and also making significant contributions to community development (Mushemeza, 2016).

Early career academic staff such as Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers II, and lecturers I, are supposed to deliver these roles effectively as academic staff are expected to be highly productive at this stage

of their career progression (González-Sauri & Rossello, 2023). Regrettably, some academic staff in this category seem to fall short of these expectations in many institutions in Nigeria. Yusuf, Ajidadga, Agbonna, and Olumorin (2010) lament that graduates of Nigerian universities are inadequately prepared in both content and pedagogy due to poor service delivery among academic staff (Sunday, 2025). Otolumefor (2011) also argues that many young academic staff in higher institutions in Nigeria cannot justify their degrees in the classrooms or guide students in their learning and research processes. This situation was also reported by Francis (2015) that university lecturers in Nigeria are altogether deep in greedy pursuit of vanity of material possession, do subvert the system which they were called to guarantee while using it in pursuit of immoral, illicit and contradictory personal goals which are in clear conflict with the ideals and fundamental values of the institutions, as they ply their trade through various avenues of which one is the examination platform. Abiodun-Oyebanji (2019) reported that the job performance of academic staff of many Nigerian higher institutions seems to have become a matter of great concern to stakeholders in recent times.

In Cross River State, this situation seems not to be different. The researcher observes that some young academic staff in universities in Cross River State seem not to be committed to research as most of them deliver instructions with old lecture notes (Orokpo et al, 2024). It appears that some do not create time to interact face-to-face with their project students for proper guidance, thus students tend to waste so much time completing their projects. In some of the institutions, the researcher notes that a good number of students, especially those in years one and two, appear not to have adequate knowledge of the implications of grades on their Grade Point Average (GPA), which means that they may not have been properly guided by their Course Advisers who are supposed to provide students with this information for effective learning. The researcher observes that some lecturers especially the low-ranked ones seem not to attend classes regularly and delight in promoting examination malpractice of all types which makes students lose confidence in their ability to write examinations independently and pass with good grades. The researcher observes that many of these early career faculty members in the universities constantly fail promotion because of poor research output and thus remain in one rank for many years.

Undoubtedly, with this state of affairs, one can vividly trace why graduates in Cross River State seem not to meet the expectations of society (Sunday & Neji, 2023). It is reported that graduates from higher institutions in Cross River State have skill deficiency; they lack basic skills such as entrepreneurship skills, communication skills, personal management skills, teamwork skills, computer literacy skills, and leadership skills among others (Uchendu, 2015). Again, Arop, Agunwa and Owan (2019) submit that there is generally a serious trend of poor academic performance of undergraduates in Cross River State. Uchendu (2015) laments that graduates in Cross River State lack what it takes to provide employment for themselves and others, are more job seekers and depend on others for survival. Similarly, Uko and Nnaji (2016) reported that most

undergraduates of higher institutions in the State lack the requisite skills and competencies needed to solve societal problems. This undesirable trend does not speak well of the future of Cross River State and thus needs urgent attention, as no society can progress without an effective university system. Thus, there is a need to find out what measures can be put in place to enhance the job performance of early-career academic staff in Cross River State since the success of universities tends to depend on the performance of this category of staff.

Early career academic staff are faculty members with less than 10 years of experience which included those at the rank of Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II, and Lecturer I (VanBenthen, NadimAdi, Corkery, Inoue & Jadavji, 2020). Early career performance of academic staff is the extent to which early career academic staff discharge their core mandates of teaching, research, and community service in higher institutions. Victor and Babatunde (2014) describe academic staff job performance as the degree to which faculty members in tertiary institutions deliver their statutory duties of lecture planning and delivery, research, and community service. This affirms the fact that early career academic staff job performance can be assessed from teaching, research, and community service. However, teaching goes beyond instructional delivery to students' assessment and project supervision. Olowolafe, Ikoyi, Ugbamaja and Ademola (2013) affirm that today the work of academic staff is not just to deliver lectures and give exams, but also the lecturers take on the role of organizing, managing, counseling, observing, supervising, motivating, and evaluating students' learning. Therefore, in this study, early career academic staff role performance is assessed based on teaching, research, students' assessment, project supervision, and community service.

The teaching dimension of academic staff role performance involves all instructional practices ranging from developing course contents for students, delivering instructions in the classroom, supervising students' projects, evaluating students' learning through effective assessment practices, organizing seminar presentations for students, to publishing students' results. Scholars have noted that lecturers' teaching role includes delivering lectures to students as scheduled by the timetable and evaluating the students by giving and marking coursework, setting tests and examinations, invigilating and marking them, and submitting their results/marks for final assessment, grading, accrediting, and supervising research students by creating adequate time for guiding them through their research proposals, projects and dissertations (Igbojekwe, Ugo-Okoro & Agbonye, 2015). This means that proper measurement of the teaching aspect of academic staff role performance will involve adequate assessment of their teaching process, the extent to which they assess students' learning outcomes, and the extent to which they are effective in project supervision.

Similarly, early career academics must be effective in carrying out practical and problem-solving research and publish them in reputable journals for their personal growth and the growth of society.

The effectiveness of academic staff in their research roles is expressed in their ability to publish in local and foreign journals, collaborate with local and international scholars in providing solutions to emerging societal problems, write book chapters, and write conference papers, among other research-based activities. Anyalor, Nwali and Agbionu (2018) affirm that the research job of academic staff in higher institutions involves conducting research and publishing findings in reputable academic journals, or using the findings to write textbooks, textbook chapters, and articles in media outlets and documentaries. Again, the extent to which lecturers perform their jobs can also be measured by their ability to deliver their community service roles in the institutions. This involves all non-instructional activities carried out by lecturers to enhance students' learning in the institutions, as well as ensure the development of institutional communities. These include academic services such as academic advising to students, academic guidance and counseling, administrative service, library service, health service, safety service, academic relationship with students, academic and social support service, hygiene and physical care services, as well as participating in community service by carrying out activities such as public scholarship, participatory research, community partnership, public information networks, and civil literacy scholarship (Akuegwu & Nwi-ue, 2016).

However, the extent of early career academic staff job performance in any university system tends to depend considerably on effective mentorship programme meant to guide them in the system. Researchers have argued that mentorship plays a crucial role in shaping the academic journey of early-career faculty members, offering guidance, support, and opportunities for skill enhancement (Elizabeth, Tumburku & Danjuma, 2024). It is also stated that young faculty members often encounter challenges in navigating the intricacies of academia, encompassing teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, thus the absence of well-structured mentorship programmes may impede their ability to flourish in the academic environment (Okoro, Akpotu & Asiyai, 2024). These expressions buttress the fact that early-career academic staff may not be able to improve their performance without adequate mentorship. It is affirmed that in the university system, mentorship is a novelty way of empowering and improving the qualities of young faculty members in all areas of their roles in the system, thus a necessary tool for enhancing the job performance of early career academic staff (Banja, Ndhlovu & Mulendema, 2018).

Mentorship is a relationship in which the more experienced or knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person through the process of mentoring (Mena et al., 2020; Merga and Mason, 2021). It is the coaching relationship between an experienced senior colleague (mentor) and a less knowledgeable colleague (mentee) aimed at guiding the mentee. Mentoring involves the mediation of professional learning by more experienced colleagues, known as mentors (Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018; Helgevold, Næsheim-Bjørkvik & Østrem, 2015; Mena, Faikhamta & Clarke, 2020), and who provide emotional and career support to their mentees. Research by Sunday and Neji (2025) indicates that mentorship on research and publication,

mentorship on students' evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on the management of students' records, and mentorship on classroom management are critical mentorship programmes that can improve the job performance of early career of the academic staff in universities (Naris & Ukpere, 2010).

Mentorship on research and publication deals with coaching. It is an organized avenue through which senior skilled colleagues are involved with assigned mentees to render professional guidance on how to carry out research and communicate the findings in the research community. Mentorship on students' evaluation connotes the professional support given to less experienced academics by the experienced ones on effective ways to assess students' learning and make informed decisions about their achievement. It can also be through tailored criticism in an observable manner on effective ways to assign marks and award grades. Similarly, mentorship in team teaching deals with the establishment of a collaborative work-related structure for value which is often initiated to strengthen early career colleagues (De Lange & Wittek, 2023). The aspects of team teaching include mentoring on mapping course objectives, course outlines, and assessment of students to cover their learning needs. It will be difficult for early-career academics to succeed in research and teaching when they are not properly mentored by an experienced colleague.

Also, young lecturers must be mentored on how to secure students' records to avoid malpractice. It involves guiding young academics on how to keep confidential information about their students and their achievements safe, secure, and retrievable (Esuabana, et al, 2023). Mentorship on classroom management is also critical to the performance of beginner academics. It focuses on senior academic staff coaching early-career academic staff on possible practices in managing students' behaviour in the classroom. Classroom management can be challenging for young lecturers, thus they need to be properly groomed and prepared to minimize students' indiscipline during instructional delivery (Yonas, Rupia & Onyango, 2023).

It is apparent from the foregoing that mentorship can have implications for the extent to which early-career academic staff perform their research, teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, and community service duties in universities in Cross River State. Despite several efforts made by the management of universities in the State including the establishment of quality assurance units to promote good academic practices, improving staff development practices through TETFund grants, establishment of new programmes, departments and faculties, and adoption of digital tools to boost effective teaching and learning in the institutions, the job performance of young academic staff in the universities seem to remain unchanged. Given the fact that mentorship is a critical factor in improving the competencies of young academics, it becomes necessary to find out the relationship between mentorship and early-career academic staff job performance in universities in Cross River State.

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between mentorship and early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, mentorship on research and publication, students' evaluation, management of students' records, team teaching, and mentorship on classroom management have a composite effect on early career performance of academic staff in universities.

The research question this paper sought to answer is what is the composite effect of mentorship on research and publication, students' evaluation, management of students' records, team teaching, and mentorship on classroom management on early career performance of academic staff in universities?

The hypothesis tested in study paper is mentorship on research and publication, students' evaluation, management of students' records, team teaching, and mentorship on classroom management do not have any significant composite effect on early career performance of academic staff in universities.

The independent variable in this study is mentorship which is assumed in the study, to determine the variances or changes in academic staff quality service delivery. The relationship between administrative strategies (effective communication strategy, strategic planning, staff development, staff motivation, staff appraisal, staff supervision, digital leadership, and staff welfare strategy) and lecturers' job performance (teaching, research, students' assessment, project supervision, and community service) is conceptualized diagrammatically in the conceptual model shown in Fig. 1.

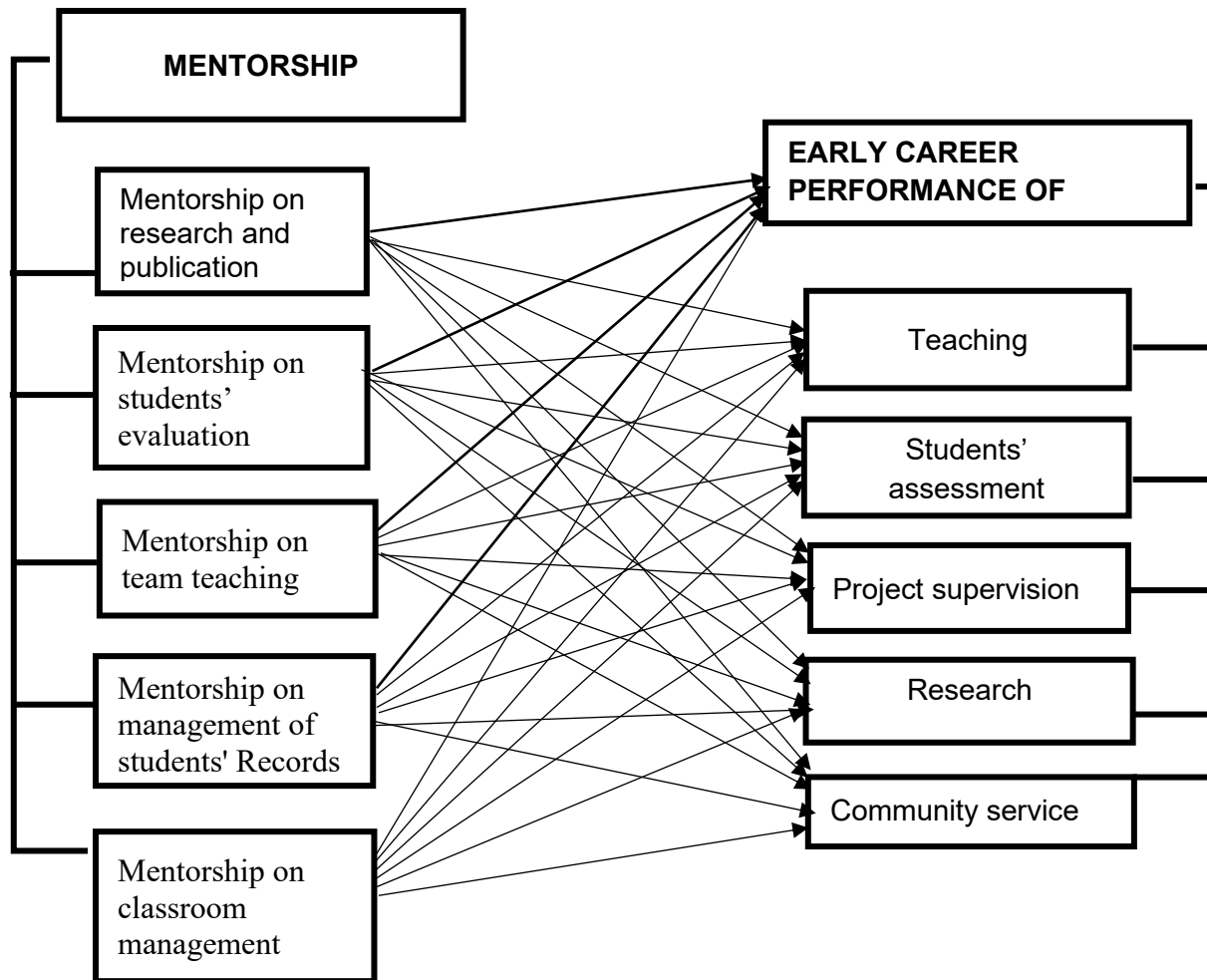


FIG.1: A conceptual framework of the relationship between mentorship and early career performance of academic staff

Source: The Researcher, 2026.

The conceptual framework explains the structure of the research and how each of the independent variables predicts each of the dependent variables. Mentorship has five sub-variables (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on students' evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' records, and mentorship on classroom management) and early career academic staff role performance has five sub-scales (teaching delivery, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service). In the framework, each of the five dependent sub-scales observed in the study was measured against the eight independent sub-

variables relatively and compositely to ascertain the relative and cumulative effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable individually and in overall.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the correlational design. Correlational research design is a research approach that attempts to find the nature of the non-causal relationship existing between a set of variables, of which cannot be determined by the researcher or manipulated, but present naturally within a group or sample. It is appropriate when the interest of the researcher is to explore the nature of the relationship between variables in order to make predictions of future trends of the variables through such approaches as naturalistic observations, survey and archival research (Sunday & Etuk, 2024). This research allows researcher the measure the statistical non-causal relationship between two or more variables observed in a study. This design was considered appropriate for this study because the research was designed to explore the pure relationship existing between mentorship and early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State within the period of this study.

The population of this study comprised all junior academic staff from assistant lecturers to lecturer 1 in public universities in Cross River State. The data gathered from the Academic Planning Units of the two public universities (UNICAL and UNICROSS) (2024) revealed that there are 1,677 early career faculty members in the two public universities (1,432 in UNICAL and 245 in UNICROSS).

The sampling technique that was adopted for the study was a stratified random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling is applied where the population is made of heterogeneous groups and provides a means whereby the entire population of the study is grouped into homogenous sub-groups from which simple random sampling is used to select a representative sample for a study (Isangedighi, 2012). Stratified random sampling was used to divide the entire population of early career academic staff (junior academic staff from (Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer 1) in Cross River State into the two public universities in Cross River State such that each university becomes a stratum. Simple random sampling was applied to select twenty percent (20%) of lecturers in each university (stratum) as the sample for this study. This procedure allowed the researcher to give every junior academic staff in the universities an equal chance of being part of the study.

The sample of this study comprised 570 early academic staff who were drawn using stratified random sampling from the two public universities in Cross River State. This sample represents twenty percent (34%) of the total population of the study.

One instrument was used for data collection in this study. This was “Mentorship and Early Career Performance of Academic Staff Questionnaire (MECPASQ”. The Mentorship and Early

Career Performance of Academic Staff Questionnaire (MECPASQ) had three sections (A, B and C). The first two validators were experts in Higher Education from the Department of Educational Management, and the other two were experts in Measurement and Evaluation

However, out of the 65 items that were developed for the study, 60 were retained after ratification by the experts while 5 were dropped on account of ambiguity and irrelevance. To establish the internal consistency of the items, the instrument was trial tested on 50 early career academic staff from the two public universities in Cross River State who are not part of the sample for the main study. After the instrument was administered and retrieved from the respondents, they were coded, and the data were subjected to statistical analysis using the Cronbach alpha reliability scale. The reliability coefficient estimates realized from results within the range of .74 to .91. This indicated that the instrument is consistent in measuring what it is expected to measure. STATE the decision rule for analysing research questions and testing the hypotheses respectively

Data Analysis

Research question: What are the relative and cumulative contributions of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service?

TABLE 1: Summary of a multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis showing the relative and cumulative contributions of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service

Dependent variables	Models	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	ΔR^2	ΔF	df ₁	df ₂	p ΔF
Early career performance of academic staff generally	1	.862 ^a	.743	.743	5.807	.743	1538.345	1	532	.000
	2	.867 ^b	.751	.750	5.723	.008	16.825	1	531	.000
	3	.868 ^c	.753	.752	5.699	.003	5.426	1	530	.020
	4	.868 ^d	.753	.752	5.705	.000	.002	1	529	.969
	5	.911 ^e	.830	.828	4.741	.077	237.882	1	528	.000

Teaching	1	.672 ^a	.452	.451	2.160	.452	438.419	1	532	.000
	2	.674 ^b	.455	.453	2.156	.003	2.855	1	531	.092
	3	.675 ^c	.455	.452	2.157	.001	.751	1	530	.387
	4	.690 ^d	.476	.472	2.118	.021	20.879	1	529	.000
	5	.693 ^e	.480	.475	2.112	.004	4.026	1	528	.045
Students' assessment	1	.926 ^a	.857	.856	1.560	.857	3179.137	1	532	.000
	2	.971 ^b	.942	.942	.989	.086	791.931	1	531	.000
	3	.971 ^c	.943	.942	.989	.000	1.065	1	530	.303
	4	.973 ^d	.947	.947	.951	.004	44.346	1	529	.000
	5	.976 ^e	.952	.952	.902	.005	59.372	1	528	.000
Project supervision	1	.613 ^a	.375	.374	1.879	.375	319.563	1	532	.000
	2	.614 ^b	.377	.375	1.878	.002	1.440	1	531	.231
	3	.615 ^c	.378	.375	1.878	.001	1.116	1	530	.291
	4	.615 ^d	.378	.374	1.880	.000	.000	1	529	.989
	5	.790 ^e	.623	.620	1.465	.245	343.688	1	528	.000
Research	1	.605 ^a	.366	.365	1.738	.366	307.290	1	532	.000
	2	.620 ^b	.384	.382	1.715	.018	15.324	1	531	.000
	3	.659 ^c	.435	.431	1.645	.051	47.607	1	530	.000
	4	.674 ^d	.455	.451	1.617	.020	19.492	1	529	.000

	5	.754 ^c	.568	.564	1.440	.113	138.600	1	528	.000
Community services	1	.570 ^a	.325	.324	1.907	.325	256.469	1	532	.000
	2	.575 ^b	.330	.328	1.902	.005	3.881	1	531	.049
	3	.577 ^c	.333	.329	1.900	.003	2.221	1	530	.137
	4	.611 ^d	.373	.368	1.844	.040	33.518	1	529	.000
	5	.783 ^e	.614	.610	1.448	.241	329.728	1	528	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship on research and publication

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship on research and publication, Mentorship on student evaluation

c. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship on research and publication, Mentorship on student evaluation, Mentorship on team teaching

d. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship on research and publication, Mentorship on student evaluation, Mentorship on team teaching, Mentorship on management of students' record

e. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship on research and publication, Mentorship on student evaluation, Mentorship on team teaching, Mentorship on management of students' record, Mentorship on classroom management

The explanatory variables in this research question are mentorship (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management), while the response variable is early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State measured in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service. The descriptive output of a multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to answer the research question. The results of the analysis of each of the sub-scales of the response variable (early career performance of academic staff) were presented in one Table for clarity and easy understanding. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

The result of the analysis presented in Table 1 shows in the first model, mentorship on research and publication contributed 74.3% to the total variance in early career performance of academic

staff in universities in Cross River State generally. The introduction of the second mentorship variable (mentorship on student evaluation) in model 2, increased the contribution of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State from 74.3% to 75.1% with an R^2 change of 0.8%. In model 3, the addition of the third mentorship variable (mentorship on team teaching) cumulated to that of model 2, and the result showed that the contribution of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally, changed from 75.1% to 75.3% with an R^2 change of 0.1%. Similarly, the introduction of the fourth mentorship variable (mentorship on management of students' record) left the contribution of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally at 75.3% with no change in R^2 . The introduction of the fifth mentorship variable (mentorship on classroom management) changed the contribution of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff generally from 75.3% to 83.0% with 7.7% change in R^2 .

Relatively, this implies that mentorship on research and publication contributed 74.3%, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 0.8%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 0.3%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 0.0%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 7.7% to the total variance in early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally. Cumulatively, mentorship contributed 83.0% to the changes in early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally, with an unexplained variance of 17.0% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 5. The result implies that the effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally was stronger in model 5 when mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, interacted in the regression model.

Specifically, in terms of teaching, the analysis in Table 1 shows that relatively, mentorship on research and publication contributed 45.5, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 0.3%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 0.1%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 2.1%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 0.4% to the total variance in early career performance of academic staff generally. Cumulatively, the analysis indicates that mentorship contributed 48.0 % to the changes in early career performance of academic staff across the two public universities in Cross River State, with an unexplained variance of 52.0% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 5. The result implies that the effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State was stronger in model 5 when mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management interacted in the regression model.

Also, on specific note, in terms of students' assessment, the analysis in Table 1 shows that relatively, mentorship on research and publication contributed 85.7%, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 8.6%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 0.0%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 0.4%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 0.5%, to the total variance in variance in early career performance of academic staff generally. Cumulatively, the analysis indicates that mentorship contributed 95.2% to the changes in early career performance of academic staff across the two public universities in Cross River State, with an unexplained variance of 4.2% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 6. The result implies that the effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State was stronger in model 2 when mentorship on research and publication and mentorship on student evaluation interacted in the regression model.

Again, on specific note also, in terms of project supervision, the analysis in Table 1 shows that relatively, mentorship on research and publication contributed 37.5%, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 0.2%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 0.1%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 0.0%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 24.5% to the total variance in variance in early career performance of academic staff generally. Cumulatively, the analysis indicates that mentorship contributed 67.2% to the changes in early career performance of academic staff across the two public universities in Cross River State, with an unexplained variance of 32.8% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 5. The result implies that the effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State was stronger in model 5 when mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management interacted in the regression model.

Furthermore, in terms of research, the analysis in Table 1 shows that relatively, mentorship on research and publication contributed 36.6%, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 1.8%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 5.1%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 2.0%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 11.3% to the total variance in variance in early career performance of academic staff generally. Cumulatively, the analysis indicates that mentorship contributed 56.8% to the changes in early career performance of academic staff across the two public universities in Cross River State, with an unexplained variance of 43.2% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 5. The result implies that the effect of mentorship variable on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State was stronger in model 5 when mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management interacted in the regression model.

Finally, in terms of community service, the analysis in Table 1 shows that relatively, mentorship on research and publication contributed 32.5%, mentorship on student evaluation contributed 0.5%, mentorship on team teaching contributed 0.3%, mentorship on management of students' record contributed 4.0%, and mentorship on classroom management contributed 24.1% to the total variance in variance in early career performance of academic staff generally. Cumulatively, the analysis indicates that mentorship contributed 61.4% to the changes in early career performance of academic staff across the two public universities in Cross River State, with an unexplained variance of 38.6% attributed to other variables extraneous to model 5. The result implies that the effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State was stronger in model 5 when mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management interacted in the regression model.

Hypothesis

Mentorship do not jointly predict early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service significantly.

TABLE 2: Summary of multiple regression analysis of the joint effect of mentorship on early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
ECRPg									
Regression	58937.16	6	9822.86	475.466	.000 ^b	.919 ^a	.84	.842	4.54
	5		1				4		5
Residual	10887.53	52	20.659						
	1	7							
Total	69824.69	53							
	7	3							
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E

ECRPt									
Regression	2974.043	6	495.674	168.066	.000 ^b	.810 ^a	.65 7	.653	1.71 7
Residual	1554.272	52 7	2.949						
Total	4528.315	53 3							
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
ECRPsa									
Regression	8597.106	6	1432.85 1	1757.74 9	.000 ^b	.976 ^a	.95 2	.952	.903
Residual	429.591	52 7	.815						
Total	9026.697	53 3							
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
ECRPps									
Regression	2021.523	6	336.920	180.098	.000 ^b	.820 ^a	.67 2	.668	1.36 8
Residual	985.893	52 7	1.871						
Total	3007.416	53 3							

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
ECRPr									
Regression	1550.304	6	258.384	138.117	.000 ^b	.782 ^a	.611	.607	1.368
Residual	985.893	527	1.871						
Total	2536.197	533							

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	p-level	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
ECRPcs									
Regression	1764.359	6	294.060	140.406	.000 ^b	.784 ^a	.615	.611	1.447
Residual	1103.725	527	2.094						
Total	2868.084	533							

- a. Predictor variables:
(Constant), Mentorship
on research and
publication, Mentorship
on student

evaluation, Infrastructural development, Mentorship on management of students' record,
Mentorship on classroom management.

b. Criterion variables: Early career performance of academic staff generally (ECRPg), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of teaching (ECRPt), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of students' assessment (ECRPsa), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of project supervision (ECRPps), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of research (ECRPpr), and Early career performance of academic staff in terms of community service (ECRPcs),

The predictor variables in this hypothesis are the mentorship (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management), while the criterion variable is early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State measured generally, and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service. To test this hypothesis, Repeated Measure of Multiple Regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The result of data analysis is presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 shows that generally, the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 475.466 ($p < .05$), which is statistically significant at .05 probability level (critical $F_{[6, 527]} = 1.94$). This means that the predictor variables (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management) are jointly potent in significantly predicting the variance in the criterion variable (early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally). Specifically, the analysis variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 168.066 ($p < .05$) for teaching, F-ratio of 1757.749 ($p < .05$), for students' assessment, F-ratio of 180.098 ($p < .05$) for project supervision, F-ratio of 138.117 ($p < .05$) for research, and F-ratio of 140.406 ($p < .05$) community service.

With this result therefore, the hypothesis is rejected generally, and specifically in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service. This means that

mentorship significantly predict early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service significantly.

Early career performance of academic staff generally:

$$ECRP_g = 0.481_{MRP} + -0.644_{MSE} + 0.026_{MTT} + 0.405_{MMSR} + 0.998_{MCM} + -0.348_{MCM} + 4.545 \dots (1)$$

Teaching:

$$ECRP_t = 0.757_{MRT} + -0.782_{MSE} + -0.015_{MTT} + 0.882_{MMSR} + 0.578_{MCM} + 1.717 \dots (2)$$

Students' assessment

$$ECRP_{sa} = 0.286_{MRP} + 0.654_{MSE} + 0.051_{MTT} + -0.203_{MMSR} + 0.197_{MCM} + 0.903 \dots (3)$$

Project supervision

$$ECRP_{ps} = 0.194_{MRP} + -0.329_{MSE} + -0.081_{MTT} + 0.736_{MMSR} + 0.801_{MCM} + 1.368 \dots (4)$$

Research:

$$ECRP_r = 0.211_{MRP} + -0.447_{MSE} + -0.088_{MTT} + 0.801_{MMSR} + 0.581_{MCM} + 1.368 \dots (5)$$

Community service:

$$ECRP_{cs} = -0.028_{SW} + -0.635_{MSE} + 0.223_{MTT} + -0.258_{CS} + 0.458_{MCM} + 1.447 \dots (6)$$

TABLE 3: Relative contributions (Regression weights) of specific sub-scales of mentorship to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service

Variables	Models	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value	Rank
(Constant)	ECRP _g	16.712	2.468		6.772	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication		1.859	.175	.481	10.607	.000	2 nd

Mentorship on student evaluation		-1.668	.193	-.644	-8.643	.000	3 rd
Mentorship on team teaching		.108	.234	.026	.462	.644	
Mentorship on management of students' record		1.566	.295	.405	5.311	.000	5 th
Mentorship on classroom management		3.792	.220	.998	17.274	.000	1 st
(Constant)	ECRPt	4.778	.932		5.125	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication		.873	.066	.745	17.705	.000	1 st
Mentorship on student evaluation		-.516	.073	-.782	-7.072	.000	4 th
Mentorship on team teaching		-.016	.088	-.015	-.179	.858	
Mentorship on management of students' record		.869	.111	.882	7.805	.000	3 rd
Mentorship on classroom management		.559	.083	.578	6.744	.000	5 th
(Constant)	ECRPsa	-1.930	.490		-3.938	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication		.397	.035	.286	11.416	.000	2 nd
Mentorship on student evaluation		.609	.038	.654	15.889	.000	1 st

Mentorship on team teaching			.077	.046	.051	1.653	.099	
Mentorship on management of students' record			-.283	.059	-.203	-4.826	.000	4 th
Mentorship on classroom management			.269	.044	.197	6.166	.000	3 rd
(Constant)	ECRPps		3.557	.743		4.790	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication			.155	.053	.194	2.948	.003	5 th
Mentorship on student evaluation			-.714	.058	-.329	-12.294	.000	2 nd
Mentorship on team teaching			-.070	.070	-.081	-.991	.322	
Mentorship on management of students' record			.591	.089	.736	6.659	.000	4 th
Mentorship on classroom management			.421	.066	.801	21.505	.000	1 st
(Constant)	ECRPr		3.557	.743		4.790	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication			.155	.053	.211	2.948	.003	5 th
Mentorship on student evaluation			-.714	.058	-.447	-12.294	.000	1 st
Mentorship on team teaching			-.070	.070	-.088	-.991	.322	

Mentorship on management of students' record		.591	.089	.801	6.659	.000	3 rd
Mentorship on classroom management		.421	.066	.581	6.368	.000	4 th
(Constant)	ECRPcs	6.749	.786		8.590	.000	
Mentorship on research and publication		-.333	.061	-.635	-5.427	.000	2 nd
Mentorship on student evaluation		.187	.074	.221	2.507	.012	3 rd
Mentorship on team teaching		-.202	.094	-.258	-2.156	.032	4 th
Mentorship on management of students' record		.123	.070	.458	16.062	.000	1 st
Mentorship on classroom management		-.086	.064	-.106	-1.343	.180	

- b. Predictor variables:
(Constant),
Mentorship on
research and
publication,
Mentorship on student
evaluation,
Mentorship on
management of
students' record,
Mentorship on
classroom
management

b. Criterion variables: Early career performance of academic staff generally (ECRPg), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of teaching (ECRPt), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of students' assessment (ECRPsa), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of project supervision (ECRPps), Early career performance of academic staff in terms of research (ECRPpr), and Early career performance of academic staff in terms of community service (ECRPcs),

Similarly, the analysis in Table 3 indicates that generally, among all the mentorship, mentorship on classroom management is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State ($t=17.274$, $p<.05$). Specifically, mentorship on research and publication is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State in terms of teaching ($t=4.470$, $p<.05$), mentorship on student evaluation is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State in terms of students' assessment ($t=15.889$, $p<.05$), mentorship on classroom management is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State in terms of project supervision ($t=21.505$, $p<.05$), mentorship on student evaluation is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State in terms of research ($t=12.294$, $p<.05$), and mentorship on classroom management is the strongest predictor of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State in terms of community development ($t=16.062$, $p<.05$).

Thus, the Multiple linear regression models were fitted based on the results of the hypothesis of this study.

Discussion of findings

The analysis of the research question which was raised to ascertain the relative and cumulative contributions of mentorship (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management) to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally, and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service, revealed that mentorship (mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management) actually have relative and cumulative contributions to early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State generally, and in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service. The result of the question agrees with the result of the analysis of the hypothesis that mentorship variables jointly predict early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State in terms of teaching, students' assessment, project supervision, research, and community service significantly. This result suggests that improvement in mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management will improve the role performance of young academic staff in the universities. According to Sunday, Obambon, and Beshel (2025), the result also implies early career performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State is determined by the nature of the mentorship in the institutions.

This result aligns with Sunday, Beshel and Chidozie (2025) on the fact that mentorship is a relationship in which the more experienced or knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person through the process of mento and a coaching relationship between an experienced senior colleague (mentor) and a less knowledgeable colleague (mentee) aimed at guiding the mentee. This result agrees with scholars who submitted that mentoring involves the mediation of professional learning by more experienced colleagues, known as mentors (Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018; Helgevold et al., 2015; Mena et al., 2020), and who provide emotional and career support to their mentees (Mena et al., 2020; Merga and Mason, 2021). It supports the position of scholars who indicate that mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on students' evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' records, and mentorship on classroom management are critical mentorship programmes that can improve job performance of early career of the academic staff in universities (Naris & Ukpere, 2010).

The result also revealed mentorship on research and publication, mentorship on student evaluation, mentorship on team teaching, mentorship on management of students' record, and mentorship on classroom management jointly predicted 84.4 percent of the total variation in early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State. This simply means that 15.6 percent of the variance in early career performance of academic staff in universities in Cross River State is occasioned by factors outside the study. This explains that there are other factors in the universities that are responsible for the variations in early career performance of academic staff in the universities other than the ones considered in the study. The quality of student admitted into the universities can also predict how academic staff are effective in delivering their services. No matter how effective lecturers are in their roles, when poor-quality students are admitted into the system, society will believe that academic staff are not effective in their services because the students do not have the motivation to learn. Apart from this, the interest of academic staff can also predict their performance. The finding is in line with Obambon, Sunday and Beshel (2026) who noted that most of the recruitment processes in universities are influenced by politicians thus the right quality of academic staff is rarely recruited into the system. no matter what universities, when staff do not have interest in the work, they will still perform below expectation.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, it was concluded that mentorship has implications for the early-career role performance of academic staff in public universities in Cross River State. It was also concluded that in order to improve the level of commitment of academic staff to effective role performance, induce them to positive behaviour towards students' assessment and project supervision in the institutions, improve their level of commitment to quality research practices and raise their enthusiasm to deliver their community service responsibilities effectively, there is need to put in place adequate mechanisms to improve the mentorship programmes in the universities.

Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. There should be a conscious effort by the administrators of public universities in Cross River State to institutionalize research mentorship for young faculty members for improved role performance in the universities.
2. Public universities in Cross River State should design incentive structures that can motivate senior and experienced faculty members to be committed to proper mentoring of early-career academic staff in effective students evaluation processes. This will help academic staff acquire the needed competencies, skills and abilities to deliver their roles effectively in the universities

3. The management of public universities in Cross River State should make team teaching a culture in the universities, as this will help inexperienced academic staff acquire all the competencies they need to perform their roles effectively in the institutions.

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