

# ASSESSMENT OF THE MENTORING OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*The study examined the types of mentoring relationship that existed between the mentors and the students (mentees) of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.. It identified the strategies used to mentor the students and assessed the relationship between academic motivation of the students and the strategies used to mentor them. A sample of 211 parts one, two and three undergraduate students was purposively selected from the University from five faculties selected purposively. These were the students who were willing to participate in the study from students accessing a general special elective course in the University. The findings of the study showed that the students had moderate awareness of the mentoring system in the University. The major type of mentoring relationship in the University was academic. The strategy commonly used was school-based method. There was a significant relationship ( $r=0.417$ ,  $p<0.5$ ) between the strategies used by the mentors to mentor their students and students' academic motivation. The study recommended that different mentoring strategies should be put in place by the University to help the students.*

**Keywords:** Mentoring, strategies, university, students, academic motivation.

## **Introduction**

Mentoring takes place in Nigeria just like in any other country of the world, and countries worldwide take varying approaches to the concept based on the values and needs of the adolescents and youth of the country. Mentoring is widely used all over the world and it is operational among individuals who want to acquire certain skills and knowledge. This also applies to undergraduate students in universities who are under the mentorship of the faculty and other significant adults. In the universities, mentors are there to offer advice and guidance on academic matters and other areas of development. They are supposed to be a valuable support for the mentees (Mellon Academic Mentoring Support Project, 2016). According to Philip (2000) mentoring is defined classically as a process whereby an older experienced guide acceptable to the young person helps to ease the transition to adulthood by a mix of support and challenge. In this sense, it is a developmental relationship in which the young person is inducted into the world of adulthood. According to David (2013) mentoring is about changing lives. Mentoring is commonly seen as a situation or relationship where an individual assists another individual to develop himself or herself in a number of key areas. Mentoring supports and encourages people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potentials, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the persons they want to be.

Mentoring can also be described as a technique for allowing the transmission of knowledge, skills and experience in a supportive and challenging environment much like coaching (Adeyanju, 2013). It is the oldest form of knowledge transfer (Stephenson, 1998). It uses the same skills of questioning, listening, clarifying, and reframing. Mentoring therefore is a process that involves the mentor, the mentee and the relationship. A mentor is a guide who helps the mentee to find right direction as well as develop solutions to career issues. Mentors often draw upon their reservoir of experience having at some stage or another undergone a similar process. It affords them empathy and an understanding of the mentees and their issues. Mentoring provides the mentee with an opportunity to decipher a clear career path, options and consequently progress.

For a mentoring process to be complete there is the need for a mentee. A mentee is someone who wants to move up to the academic/career ladder usually following in the footsteps of the mentor (Adeyanju, 2013). The success of any mentoring hinges on the relationship between the mentee and the mentor. In this arrangement, the relationship needs to be defined and it must be meaningful. Setting boundaries is of paramount importance to mentoring as well as commitment to scheduled time, accountability, feedback, organization and enriched relationship. In mentoring, the mentor-mentee relationship is very vital and it is the core of any mentoring relationship programme and it is critical to the success of any mentoring programme. The mentoring relationship is an active relationship. In other words, there are certain behaviours and practices that are specific to the mentoring relationships. The way and manner in which the mentor carries out his role (mentoring style) is also a vital factor in determining the success or failure of a mentoring relationship.

The goal of undergraduate students' mentoring is to improve the well-being of the students by providing a role model that can support them academically, socially and personally. Supportive relationships with non-parent adults can powerfully influence the course and the quality of their lives. Unfortunately, many adolescents and youth never manage to form connections with caring adults. This is not surprising, because traditional sources of intergenerational contact such as extended families, schools, and neighbourhood have changed in ways that have drastically reduced the availability of the caring adults (Scales & Leffert, 1999). It has been observed in research that interacting with faculty in a number of ways is related to academic achievement (Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya, 2010). Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) had earlier found that students who had positive interactions with their faculty have better learning outcomes in college. Mentors are seen as role models to their mentees and often offer advice and suggestions for success. When students therefore interact with faculty outside of the classroom, they are likely to learn from observation in various settings in addition to receiving advice as well.

For effective mentoring of undergraduate, the mentors (lecturers and significant adults) and the mentees (students) have important roles to play. The mentors should instill self confidence in the mentee(s). The mentor needs to creatively apply tools and techniques which may include one-to-one training, facilitating, counselling and networking. He/she also needs to evaluate the outcomes of the process using objective measures wherever possible to ensure the relationship is successful; and encourage mentees to work within the area of personal competence, to continually improve such competencies. In mentoring relationship, the mentees on their own should learn from their mentors to be transformed from a passive receiver of their wisdom to active learners; to expand their perspectives; to use the forum as a platform for accelerated learning; to build confidential relationship and gain different insights

into their career development from the experiences of their mentors; to have ownership of self-development; and to initiate most contacts with their mentors.

In mentoring relationship, there are different types of mentoring that can be used. None of these mentoring types is ideal for all situations and for all mentoring relationships. The appropriate mentoring, in any given situation must depend on the mentee's level of competence and development, the issues at stake and the urgency of the solution required. The most proficient mentors are those who can switch between various mentoring styles in response to the mentee's changing needs. Thus, in mentoring, for the same mentee, a mentor may need to use many types of mentoring. Some types of mentoring are academic, career, personal development, and informal mentoring. Buell (2004) was of the view that mentoring is often divided into two types which are informal and formal mentoring. According to DeSimone and Werner, (2012), these two types of mentoring can further be divided into two forms which are traditional and special project mentoring. In addition, mentoring can also be internal whereby it is managed inside the organization. It can also be external where it is developed outside the organization, and it can be a combination of the two (Buell, 2004).

For effective mentoring of undergraduate students, many strategies have been proposed. They include: school-based approach. Using this approach, the mentor meets with the adolescents in schools and facilitates school work while acting as a supportive role model (the mentor can be a school teacher or a professional from outside the school). They may also play games, do crafts or partake in non-academic activities (Herrera, Grossmen, Kauh & McMaken (2011). In community-based approach setting, a mentor takes or meets youth in the community such as church, community facility or by taking them to community event (Pryce, Goins, & Reiland, 2011). Community-based approach may be culturally specific depending on what obtains in the cultural set-up of the adolescents. Individual approach, which is a one on one setting, is where there is one mentor who repeatedly meets with the same mentee for the duration of their programme. These partnerships can take place both in school and community. (Farruggia, Bullen, Davidson, Dunphy, Solomon & Collins 2011).

Another approach is group approach, which can be beneficial in places where there is a shortage of mentors. This works with career oriented mentoring, when the focus is to encourage future success of the individual by bringing in successful professionals as mentors. This has been found to a successful approach in the Roma Mentor Project throughout Europe. It is able to build self-confidence, and social skills while also teaching about the culture of that society (Gruber, 2012). This type of mentoring is also done in Nigeria, whereby professionals are invited to schools to interact with the adolescents.

Volunteer mentoring approach helps to address the problems associated with the diminished availability of natural mentors, volunteer mentoring programmes have been proliferated. As with natural mentoring, volunteer mentoring typically involves relationships between youth and adults who offer assistance in meeting the youth's academic, social, career, and/or personal goals (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). A growing number of evaluations suggests that volunteer mentoring relationships can positively have a range of outcomes, including improvements in peer and parental relationships, academic achievements, and self-concepts, as well as lower recidivism rates among juvenile delinquents and reduction in substance use (Davidson & Redner, 1998).

Mellon Academic Mentoring support Project (2016) also proposed some mentoring strategies across three categories which are institutional strategies, personal issue strategies and career development strategies. They observed that these strategies had strong correlation

with the learning outcomes of undergraduate students. College, institutional strategies involve helping the students to understand the working dynamics of both formal and informal systems within the institutions, such as helping the students with registration, filling forms advising them and explaining the role of support staff. Personal issues strategies deal with helping the protégé to resolve difficulties and conflicts they may be facing and devising methods to sharpen the protégé's intellectual skills. Career development strategies involve helping students articulate and develop their career goals and explaining the need and importance of attending seminars and workshops.

It is pertinent to investigate the relationships of the monitoring strategies with a component of learning outcomes of the students. Therefore, the relationship between academic motivation of the students and the strategies used to mentor them was examined. Academic motivation refers to a student's desire (as reflected in approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subjects when the student's competence is judged against a standard of performance or excellence (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). Usher and Morris (2012) defined academic motivation as the cause of behaviours that are in some ways related to academic functioning and success, such as how much efforts students put forth, how effectively they regulate their studies, which endeavor they choose to pursue and how persistent they are when faced with problems. Komarraju *et al.* (2010) and Okeowo (2017) observed that involvement of experienced and competent learners and faculty in students' learning could increase the academic motivation of the students.

Over the years, there have been increased concerns from stakeholders in Nigeria such as parents, lecturers, educators and government on students' poor interest in academic matters and incessant depletion of grade point averages. It is common knowledge that many undergraduate students show perfunctory attitude to their academic work by coming late to lectures, absconding from school without reasonable excuses and obtaining poor grades in their continuous assessments. These are indicators that in the increasingly demanding and challenging world of today, undergraduate students' success in the university is an important aspect of their intellectual and social development. It is therefore important to assess the mentoring system in operation in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and the strategies used by the mentors to mentor the undergraduate students.

Several factors had been identified as contributing to decline in students' academic performance, moral decadence and academic motivation among undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Among others, the factors could be infrastructure, deplorable condition of hostels and examination standards which are higher and students' seemingly unfamiliarity with the grading and assessment methods (Okeowo, 2017). Some of the students who gained admission into OAU got thrown out because they had Cumulative Point Average (CGPA) of less than 1.00 for two consecutive semesters or as a result of misbehaviour. There have also been concerns about the drop-out and expulsion rates among the students. One of the factors that might be responsible for this could be lack or low mentoring of the students. The objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the types of mentoring relationship that exist between the undergraduate students and their mentors in the University;
2. assess the strategies used to mentor the undergraduate students in the University; and
3. assess the relationship between the strategies for mentoring the undergraduate students and their academic motivation in the University.



### **Research Questions**

1. What are the types of mentoring system existing in the University?
2. What are the strategies used to mentor the undergraduate students?

### **Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between the strategies for mentoring undergraduate students and their academic motivation in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

### **Methodology**

The study which was a descriptive research made use of 211 undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. There were 94 (44.5%) male students and 117 (55.5%) female students who participated in the study. They were parts one, two and three students who were purposively selected from the University. These were the students who were willing to participate in the study from students accessing a general special elective course in the University. They were selected from five faculties. The faculties were selected using simple random sampling technique. The faculties were Arts, Education, Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology. Questionnaire on Undergraduate Students' Mentoring (QUSM) and Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) were used to elicit information from the students. The QUSM was used to examine the types of mentoring relationship that existed between the students and the mentors and the strategies used to mentor the students in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was used to assess the academic motivation of the students.

The QUSM was made up of three sections. Section A comprised the personal information on the respondents such as their sex, part or level in the University and Faculty. Section B measured the types of mentoring system in the University where the students indicated which of the four types of mentoring existed in the University. It was made up of six items, the students were to indicate the areas their mentor provided mentorship. They were to choose as many as applied to them from academic, social, psychological and financial mentoring.

Section C comprised five items on strategies used by the University to mentor the students. The response format was a 3-point Likert type scale ranging from "Agree" which was scored 3 to "Disagree" which was scored 2 and "Not Sure" which was scored 1. The statements in this section included "Our lecturers and some other significant adults in the University meet with us to facilitate our academic work", the University organizes our meeting relevant people in the community to help us" and "We organize group works and discussions ourselves". The statements were categorized as school-based, community-based, individual, group approaches and volunteer mentoring. The AMS consisted of 10 items. Examples of the items are "When working towards a goal, I regularly evaluate my progress", "I seem to achieve what I set out to accomplish", and "the ways my lecturers teach me encourage me". The AMS was a scale scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 for "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" respectively.

The instruments were administered personally by the researcher. The validity and reliability of the instruments were also determined. To ensure the face and content validity of the instruments, they were presented to experts in the fields of Psychology of Education and Tests and Measurement. The experts perused the contents of the instruments, corrected some

mistakes there and made suggestions to improve the contents of the instruments. In order to determine the reliability of the instruments, they were administered on 20 respondents from a different university. Their responses were subjected to Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The QUSM has a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84 while that of AMS is 0.75. These values are significant at 0.05 level.

## Results

### Research Question One: *What are the types of mentoring system existing in the University?*

To examine the types of mentoring relationship that existed in the University, the responses of the students were subjected to frequency counts and percentages. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Mentoring Relationships that Existed between the Mentors and the Mentees (Students)

Variable	Responses	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Course Advisory System	Academic	150	71.1
	Academic and Psychological	17	8.1
	Academic, Psychological and Financial	1	0.5
	Academic and Social	10	4.7
	Academic, Social and Psychological	4	1.9
	Academic, Social, Psychological and Financial	15	7.1
	Financial	4	1.9
	Social	10	4.7

Table 1 shows the types of mentoring relationship that existed between the mentors and the mentees. It shows that majority of the respondents, 150 (71.1%), had only an academic mentoring relationship with their mentors, 17 (8.1%) respondents had both academic and psychological mentoring relationship with their mentors and 1 (0.5%) respondent had academic, psychological and financial mentoring relationship with their mentors. Ten (4.7%) respondents have academic and social mentoring relationship with their mentors, 4 (1.9%) respondents had academic, social and psychological mentoring relationship with their mentors and 15 (7.1%) respondents had all four mentoring relationships with their mentors. Four (1.9%) respondents had only a financial mentoring relationship with their mentors and 10 (4.7%) respondents had only social mentoring relationship with their mentors. The results indicate that the major type of relationship that occurred between the students and their mentors was academic. The results also indicate that it is possible for the students to have more than a type of relationship with their mentors.

### Research Question Two: *What are the strategies used to mentor the undergraduate students?*

In order to assess the strategies used to mentor the undergraduate students in OAU, Ile-Ife, and the responses of the students on this variable were subjected to frequency counts and percentage analysis. The results are presented in Table 2

**Table 2:** Strategies used to Mentor the Undergraduate Students in OAU, Ile-Ife

Strategies	Responses	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
School-Based Method	Agreed	174	82.5
	Disagreed	32	15.1
	Not Sure	5	2.4
Community Based Method	Agreed	72	34.1
	Disagreed	137	64.9
	Not Sure	2	0.9
Individual Approach	Agreed	129	61.1
	Disagreed	75	35.5
	Not Sure	7	3.4
Group Approach	Agreed	123	58.3
	Disagreed	83	39.3
	Not Sure	5	2.4
Volunteer Mentoring	Agreed	136	64.5
	Disagreed	73	34.6
	Not Sure	2	0.9

Table 2 shows the strategies used to mentor the adolescents in the University, 174 (82.5%) respondents claimed that school-based method was the strategy used by their university to assist them to mentor them while 32 (15.1%) respondents disagreed and 5 (2.4%) were not sure. It also reveals that concerning the community based method, 72 (34.1%) respondents agreed that it was a strategy used by the University to mentor them whereas majority of the respondents, 137 (64.9%) disagreed and 2 (0.9%) were not sure. Based on the individual approach, the Table shows that 129 (61.1%) respondents agreed that it was a strategy used by their university to mentor them while 75 (35.5%) respondents disagreed and 7 (3.4%) were not sure. The Table further shows that 123 (58.3%) respondents agreed that the group approach was a method used by their University to mentor them while 83 (39.3%) respondents disagreed and 5 (2.4%) were not sure. Finally, the Table indicates that 136 (64.5%) respondents agreed that their University used volunteer mentoring to mentor them while 73 (34.6%) respondents disagreed and 5 (0.9%) were not sure.

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant relationship between the strategies for mentoring undergraduate students and their academic motivation in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.*

In order to investigate the relationship between academic motivation and strategies for mentoring the undergraduate students, the responses of the students on the items in Academic Motivation Scale was subjected to Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 3

**Table 3:** Relationship between Strategies used for Mentoring Undergraduate students and their Academic Motivation in OAU, Ile-Ife

Variables	N	R	Sig.
Academic Motivation	211	.417*	.000
Strategies for Mentoring	211		

\*significant at 0,05 level.

From Table 3, the number of respondents is 211; the r value is .417 which is significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is a significant relationship between

### Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study on the types of mentoring relationship in OAU, Ile-Ife showed that the major type of mentoring relationship that existed between the mentors and the undergraduate students in this University was academic. This finding suggests that the mentors in the University were mainly concerned with the academic matters. All other issues in the life of the students such as psychological, social and financial might not interest them much. There are other types of mentoring such as formal and informal mentoring (Buell, 2004). This finding also suggests that there are some cases of mixed and other types of mentoring enjoyed by some of the undergraduate students in the University. This might be due to some other factors not investigated in this study such as level of closeness and being related to the mentors.

The second finding of study is that the strategy commonly used by the mentors was school-based method. This finding confirms the first finding that the mentors were mainly concerned with the academic matters. This type of mentoring and strategy used for mentoring is what Buell (2004) called internal mentoring. This may be so, because the mentors are based in the university, they may see it as burdens to employ other strategies such as community based approach (Pryce, Goins & Reiland, 2011; individual approach (Farrugia, Bullen, Davidson, Dunphy, Solomon & Collings, 2011 and group approach (Gruber, 2012).

The third finding showed that there was a significant relationship between the strategies used to mentor the students and their academic motivation. This finding suggests that when the strategies that are used for mentoring the students get better and increase, the students' academic motivation will increase. The study is in line with the studies of Komarraju *et al.* (2010) and Okeowo (2017). Komarraju *et al.* in their study explained that involvement of experienced and competent learners and faculty would increase the academic motivation of the learner. The study also corroborate the finding of Okeowo (2017) who also found a significant relationship between mentoring and academic motivation.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that undergraduate students' mentoring provides opportunity for a less experienced student to learn from more experienced significant adults over a period of time. There are many and varying strategies through which this can be done. When these strategies are effectively employed, they can bring increase in the academic motivation of the undergraduate students.



## Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study the following recommendations are made though they may may not generalized to other universities because of the limited number of students who participated in the study. However, it would provide useful information to all stakeholders in universities most especially to the authority of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

1. The University should ensure that different types of mentoring relationships are explored for use.
2. The University should also ensure that different strategies are utilized to mentor the students. If fund is needed, the University should be ready to make it available.
3. For the students to be academically motivated the University must take mentoring relationships seriously.

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