

Mentoring: A Hallmark of Career Development in Public and Private Organisations in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined mentoring as a key factor in career development within organisations in Rivers State, Nigeria. It aimed to ascertain whether increasing access to mentoring opportunities can improve employability skills, professional competence, and career progression among young graduates and workers in Rivers State. Social Exchange Theory was adopted as a theoretical framework to explain the relationship between mentoring and career development. Both primary and secondary sources provided data for the study. Structured questionnaire forms were distributed to one hundred and eighty-one (181) respondents to collect primary data. Respondents for the study were drawn from entrepreneurs, bankers, and civil servants in Rivers State, and were selected through convenience sampling. Presentation of the data was through charts and tables, while analysis of the results was through simple percentages and frequencies. The study revealed that mentoring enhances employability skills, professional competence, and career progression among employees in public and private sectors. While employees in both sectors benefit from mentoring, its impact on skills development and career advancement is stronger in the private sector. In the public sector, mentoring contributed more to knowledge acquisition and professional competence than to career progression. Inadequate mentor availability for practical guidance and psychosocial support during distress are some challenges which undermine the quality of mentoring relationships. The study concludes that mentoring plays a significant role in the career development of young graduates and workers in organisations in Rivers State. The findings suggest that institutionalized mentoring is an effective framework for career development, however, its success largely depends on the quality of mentor engagement with the mentee. It is recommended that organisations should give adequate attention to practical skills development in mentoring processes to ensure that mentees gain practical experience and capabilities that would enhance their job readiness and performance.

Keywords: Career Progression; Employability Skills; Knowledge; Mentoring; Professional Competence and Skill Development

INTRODUCTION

Career development is an important source of motivation and career advancement for individuals, because it enhances their knowledge, skills and capabilities. It also provides better opportunities for career growth and success. Effective career development has however become a significant challenge in contemporary societies worldwide, particularly in developing countries where workers and young graduates contend with unemployment, underemployment, and inadequate

opportunities for professional growth in organisations (Longe, 2017); a situation further influenced by global restructuring, intense competition, technological advancement, and resource constraints. Therefore, organisations continually seek ways to maximise performance with available resources, particularly through high-quality human resources who possess relevant skills, knowledge, and attitudes for organisational effectiveness (Kochan *et al.*, 2013). One such approach is mentoring. Globally, organisations adopt mentoring to develop their workforces and achieve their goals. Thus, mentoring, which has gained popularity among modern organisations, is an institutionalised strategy for promoting career advancement (Prastyaningtyasi *et al.*, 2023; The HR Research Institute, 2022; Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015).

Mentoring is a structured process in which experienced individuals provide guidance, psychosocial support, and knowledge to less-experienced protégés to support their career development, among other objectives (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). It plays a crucial role in enhancing human capabilities, skill development, and promoting professional growth (Babarinde *et al.*, 2022). Earlier, Bally (2007) stated that every successful person has a mentor and that effective leaders are mentors who guide others toward excellence in the workplace. A study by The HR Research Institute (2022) found that organisations encourage workers to seek mentoring, and managers help other employees to achieve professional growth. In essence, mentoring facilitates the transfer of industry-specific knowledge, professional ethics, and career-related skills, which enable mentees to make realistic career decisions and thrive in their professional paths.

Career development is a challenge in Nigeria, a situation worsened by a high unemployment rate, skills mismatch, and inadequate access to professional and institutional support (Ojediran *et al.*, 2025; Longe, 2017). In Rivers State, Nigeria, many individuals struggle to access stable and fulfilling careers after graduating from school (Agi & Lasisi, 2023), despite the establishment of educational institutions and increasing activities in the various economic sectors. Consequently, a significant population of young graduates and early-career employees does not receive adequate guidance, professional support, and exposure. These factors influence their success rates in the labour market. This situation often results in slow career progress, low job satisfaction, and limited professional skills.

This study aims to evaluate the impact of mentoring on career development in public and private organisations in Rivers State. Although mentoring has been examined in various contexts (Okoad *et al.*, 2025; Nwakanma, 2024; The HR Research Institute, 2022; Babarinde *et al.*, 2022), there is

still limited empirical research on its role as a strategic tool for workforce development within Rivers State. This gap raises important questions about how mentoring influences career paths, the degree to which it improves professional competence, and whether access to mentoring opportunities can significantly enhance career advancement for workers and young graduates in the State. By examining mentoring as a hallmark for career development, this study seeks to determine how increased access to mentoring opportunities influences employability skills, professional competence, and career progression among young graduates and workers within Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the impact of mentoring on employability skills among young graduates and workers within organisations in Rivers State.
- ii. To assess the impact of mentoring on professional competence among young graduates and workers within organisations in Rivers State.
- iii. To determine the influence of mentoring on career progression among young graduates and workers within organisations in Rivers State.
- iv. To ascertain the extent to which mentoring enhances knowledge and skills development, professional proficiency and ethics, career progression and emotional support among young graduates and workers within organisations in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization

Mentoring

Mentoring is globally regarded as a developmental relationship where a more experienced and knowledgeable individual guides, supports, and assists a less experienced person to achieve personal, academic, or career development. Furthermore, mentoring is the process whereby knowledge, skills, values, and professional standards are transferred from one person to another through interaction, counselling, and role modelling (Kinge, 2015). Women's Empowerment Principles (2020) describes mentoring as the process in which information is exchanged between two individuals, where one person shares real-world experiences with the other person. Though mentoring is often adopted as a strategy in organisations, not all mentoring relationships are formal, as it also occurs in a relationship between two or more individuals where the person with more knowledge in a field has a positive influence on the less knowledgeable.

Mentoring is also common in medical practice, where Sanfilippo (2025) views it as a relationship that helps individuals to learn and develop relevant capabilities which enable them to maximize their potential for improved productivity. In addition, mentoring is viewed as a developmental relationship that also provides psychosocial support alongside career-related functions that facilitate individual growth trajectories in organisations (Niazi *et al.*, 2024). Career-related functions are regarded as opportunities, such as sponsorship, coaching, and networking, while the psychosocial functions include counselling, empathy, encouragement, and friendship. All these factors boost mentees' self-confidence and sense of identity (Yani *et al.*, 2024; Kram, 1985).

Mentoring is also described by Perera and Kariyapperuma (2020) as a collaborative learning process where both parties (mentor and mentee) partner to achieve professional career development goals. This perspective underscores collaborative learning, trust, and shared responsibility rather than a purely vertical relationship. Mentors are therefore not all-knowing; they can also learn from their mentees (Chopra *et al.*, 2020), which leads to better outcomes for everyone involved. That is why Faccio and Koumouri (2023), and Sluss and Ashforth (2007) suggest that sometimes the mentor meets the mentee at their level and empathizes with their position. This fosters positive relationships and strongly defines the identities of those involved. Furthermore, mentoring is often understood as a social learning process where individuals acquire professional competences through interaction and observation. Albert Bandura's work on Social Learning Theory suggests that people learn behaviours, skills, and attitudes through observing and interacting with experienced individuals (Bandura, 1977).

Career Development

Career development refers to the process by which individuals improve their capabilities or competences, such as skills and knowledge relevant to an occupation. These competences enable them to add value to an organisation and achieve career progression. Career development is a continuous process that begins early in a career and lasts throughout the period individuals spend working in their field. When individuals pass through education, training, and mentoring processes and make career-related decisions, they become more qualified to meet job and organisation-specific requirements to achieve professional competence and advancement.

Thus, career development is a process that increases individuals' ability to understand their skills and knowledge as they make choices that facilitate their career-related transitions in an unstable labour market (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). Through this

process, employees create opportunities for advancement, promotion, and professional growth within their organisation or chosen field, thereby improving organisational performance (Babarinde *et al.*, 2022; Conway & Briner, 2002).

Career development involves continuous learning, active participation in work activities, and movement through different roles and responsibilities to achieve long-term career goals (Xie & Yang, 2021). Workers in modern organisations are increasingly aligning career development activities with active individual participation based on adaptability, identity definition, and experience (Savickas, 2019). Another innovation that shapes career development in modern organisations is the reliance on digital skills, requiring adaptability to the varying technological and economic conditions of a society (World Economic Forum, 2024). This highlights the need for progressive upskilling to sustain career advancement.

Forms of Mentoring

Forms of mentoring are highlighted by Women's Empowerment Principles (2020) as follows:

Traditional/One-on-one mentoring: refers to a hierarchical mentoring process where a less experienced person is mentored by a more experienced person who provides personalized guidance, support and advice which facilitate skill and knowledge development, professional competence and networking.

Peer mentoring: occurs between two individuals who often have similar experiences, status, and power. This is often beneficial to both parties, without the challenge of power dynamics, through enhanced learning, emotional support, communication, teamwork, confidence, employability skills, and career growth.

Reverse mentoring: occurs where the mentor is younger and a junior to the mentee, e.g., in technology-related areas. It enhances digital and technological skills, knowledge sharing, innovation and creativity. It also fosters organisational learning, career development and organisational adaptability.

Inter-agency mentoring: occurs when organisations institutionalise mentoring programmes in collaboration with other organisations sharing the same interests, and mentors are selected from different agencies, thus providing mentees opportunities to meet mentors with different career interests and wider networks.

Mentoring circles: on the other hand is where one or more mentors guide a small group of mentees through structured discussions and shared learning. Participants of all levels and characteristics benefit from topics of interest proposed for discussion within a group.

While in reciprocal mentoring, both parties work together to develop in knowledge and skills, and advance with mutual benefits. Knowledge flows in both directions to enhance career growth, collaboration and professional relationships.

Empirical Review

Impact of Mentoring on Employability Skills

Mentoring plays a critical role in developing employability skills that enable workers to perform effectively and meet workplace demands. Babarinde *et al.* (2022) examined the impact of mentoring programmes on the career development of junior university lecturers in Nigerian public universities. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 200 respondents. The study found that mentoring has a positive impact on the career development of academic staff by enhancing their capabilities and job performance. The authors concluded that mentoring relationships provide remarkable opportunities to improve workers' capabilities and knowledge transfer thus equipping them with relevant skills to meet job demand.

A mentee is an individual who is guided and supported by a more experienced worker within an organisation. As such, the mentee is expected to follow the mentor's guidance and instructions to enhance learning and professional development. Throughout the mentoring relationship, the mentee gradually shifts from relying solely on personal knowledge to collaborating with the mentor to expand their knowledge and skills. The mentor serves as a guide rather than a career saviour, since the mentee also bears responsibility for personal career advancement through the effective application of the knowledge and skills acquired (Haggins *et al.*, 2026; Women's Empowerment Principles, 2020).

A mentee is therefore expected to acknowledge personal areas of strength and weakness. This openness encourages learning and enables mentees to develop new skills and techniques relevant to their various fields (Perera & Kariyapperuma, 2020). Ragins (2016) further argues that mentees should perceive themselves as individuals with great potential that can be developed through the mentor's guidance while also maintaining confidence in their own abilities to excel.

High-quality mentoring interactions aid individuals in acquiring relevant competencies, such as showing understanding and active listening, viewpoint taking, responsiveness, minimizing conflict

and communicating effectively. Skills learnt from a mentor can be subsequently transferred to other workers or colleagues through observation and imitation and contribute to a broader organisational learning (Ogunsola *et al.*, 2023; Ragins, 2016). The longer knowledge is transferred and practiced in an organisation, the more advanced the quality of relationships and work processes.

The effectiveness of mentoring in developing employability skills is however influenced by the quality of mentor-mentee relationship. Haggins *et al.* (2026) opined that successful mentoring is influenced by effective communication, self-realization, and adaptability, where mutual respect and active engagement between the mentor and mentee are paramount. In the same vein, Jyoti and Sharma (2015) noted that mentors do not necessarily need to be the supervisor of the mentee before the mentoring relationship becomes established, but the relationship should be structured to enhance learning, guidance and career advancement.

Impact of Mentoring on Professional Competence

Mentoring has been widely acknowledged as a strategy for enhancing professional competence among employees. Mentoring relationships enable mentees to acquire professional knowledge, expertise and practical experience from seasoned professionals. The importance of adopting mentoring strategies in fostering professional competence is revealed in programme evaluation studies. A study by Ogunsola *et al.* (2023) to assess the role of mentoring and skill transfer in enhancing employee performance among employees in financial and energy sectors adopted a literature review and content analysis approach. The study found that mentoring and skill transfer strategy is critical in the sustainability and sharing of organisational expertise as it develops skilled and adaptable human resources. This finding corroborates Ponnumanu and Vishinu (2025), who aver that mentoring fosters individual and professional development.

Mentoring plays a critical role in increasing employee learning and development for organisational growth (Yani *et al.*, 2024). For this reason, many organisations deliberately introduce mentoring programmes within their management structures. A commonly adopted approach is structured mentoring where the mentor typically sets clear goals to be achieved within a given period and communicates such objectives to the mentee. Structured mentoring is therefore a formal developmental relationship designed to accomplish specific professional outcomes (Perera & Kariyapperuma, 2020; Jyoti & Sharma, 2015). Effective implementation of structured mentoring

leads to efficiency and higher performance among mentees. Moreover, the human capabilities, experience, and professionalism of both the mentor and mentee become broadened.

When mentees understand that the mentoring relationship is not based on judgment, their fears and anxieties are reduced, thereby fostering an enabling environment that encourages open interaction and engagement in what is known as ‘diversity dialogues.’ Diversity dialogues involve candid and open discussions about diversity issues and professional experiences, which provide a forum where mentees are introduced to other experienced individuals in the field, senior decision-makers, and an external network of career achievers, thereby strengthening their expertise and career readiness (Daher-Armache & Armache, 2024; Ragins, 2016; Jyoti & Sharma, 2015).

However, certain personal qualities predispose mentors to achieving a successful mentoring. Effective mentors are more knowledgeable, experienced, approachable, influential, humble and psychologically mature than their mentees. These attributes enable them to provide effective guidance and facilitate the development of professional capabilities for their mentees (Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2020).

Impact of Mentoring on Career Advancement

A substantial body of literature highlights the significant role of mentoring in career advancement. Primary data were utilized in a study by Ndung’u (2016) to ascertain the impact of mentoring on the career success of workers in Nairobi hotels. The study participants were personnel managers in 156 hotels. The regression analysis revealed a significant positive nexus between mentoring and employee career success, leading to the recommendation that organisations should utilise mentoring as a human resource development strategy. Nevertheless, the study relied only on the perspectives of personnel managers, excluding the experiences of mentees and limiting its findings.

Another study by Balinda (2023) examined the impact of mentorship schemes on career advancement in the USA, Canada, Europe and Africa by reviewing existing literature. Findings revealed that institutionalised mentorship programmes have positive impact on skill enhancement, networking opportunities and career advancement. In the same vein, Babarinde *et al.* (2022) maintained that career advancement is often enhanced when individuals who are higher level professionals in their field guide and share their experiences with others at lower levels. In essence, employees gain critical insights, developmental opportunities, and professional connections that promote career progression through mentoring.

In the same vein, Nwakanma (2024) emphasised that mentoring activities have a high impact on the career progression of workers and recommended the establishment of structured and supported mentoring programmes for optimum outcomes. High-quality mentorship leads to an increase in members' self-confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency, in addition to vitality, energy, and creativity, all of which contribute to career advancement. Furthermore, mentoring programmes integrate individuals into the core work of the organisation, and improve performance (Wichey & Ernestina, 2023).

Mentoring is therefore regarded as an important human resource development strategy in organisations, educational institutions, and professional environments. In the context of workforce and career development, mentoring helps individuals gain professional networks, develop competencies, and navigate career paths. However, barriers to effective mentoring undermine its positive impact on organisations. These include ineffective communication between the mentor and mentee; limited of institutional support; lack of time for mentoring; avoiding discussion on difficult issues; difficulties linking mentorship with other developmental programmes, limited access to resources and inconsistencies in mentoring training, as many leaders do not receive mentoring-specific training. Consequently, an effective mentor needs regular training, incentives, and recognition to remain motivated, while more time and resources should be allotted to mentoring activities to achieve maximum contribution to employee career advancement (Okoad *et al.*, 2025; The HR Research Institute, 2022; Perera & Kariyapperuma, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

George Homans' Social Exchange Theory propagated in 1958, was adopted for this study. The theory incorporated social, psychological, sociological, and philosophical views on human interactions (Allen & Ebby, 2007). The social exchange theory posits that relationships are established and sustained based on their perceived cost and benefit. In essence, parties in a relationship assess what they stand to gain and forfeit when the outcome is compared with likely options. When the benefit exceeds the cost, the relationship is considered valuable and continues (Cook *et al.*, 2013). Social exchanges occur daily as humans engage in activities within groups, organisations, or networks. This theory explains the relationship between a mentor and a mentee. For mentors, costs are represented by investments and sacrifices in the form of the time, energy and effort they expend in the mentoring relationship, and are rewarded with positive outcomes such as fulfillment, recognition, and professional satisfaction from helping someone grow. On the

other hand, mentees sacrifice time and commitment to learning, accept the mentor's guidance and criticism, and work towards meeting expectations while they gain learning, support, broader networks and opportunities. The relationship is strengthened, becomes more productive and sustained when a mentor and mentee perceive that the value they receive is higher than the cost. Both parties benefit from the relationship at the end of the day, where the mentee gains career success while the mentor is recognised for the mentee's career success. This corroborates Colquitt *et al.*'s (2014) view that mentoring relationships produce mutual benefits for both parties.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the impact of mentoring on career development in both public and private organisations in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised entrepreneurs, bankers, and civil servants in Rivers State, whose total population could not be ascertained at the time of research due to the mixed target population whose expected responses would enable the researchers ascertain the varied experiences of mentees in both sectors. The researchers were interested in accessing more young graduates and workers in these organisations, comprising three (3) banks, oil and gas servicing companies, Tech companies, consultancy service companies, Rivers State Civil Service, and two (2) public secondary schools. Selection of the organisations was influenced by proximity and accessibility factors. Respondents were selected through a convenience sampling technique, based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. Structured questionnaire were distributed to 181 respondents, out of which 174 copies were retrieved, comprising 75 and 99 respondents for public and private organisations respectively. The questionnaire utilised a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), in addition to a scale of A Great Deal, Significantly, Little, and By No Means. The data were analysed using simple percentages and frequencies, while the results were presented with charts and tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Figure 1: Categories of Respondents

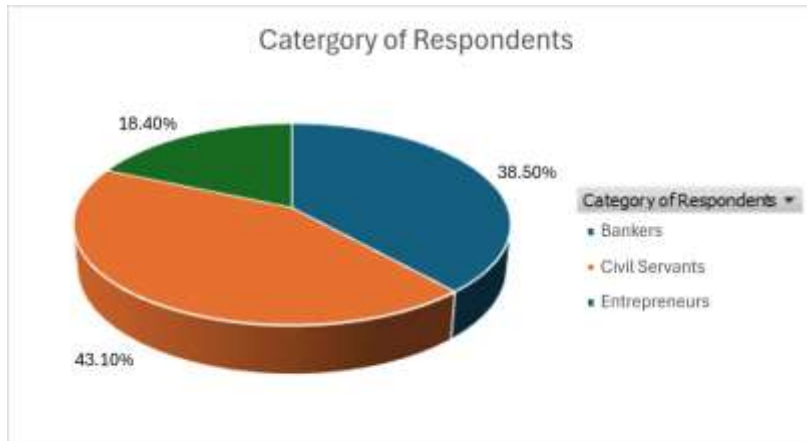


Figure 1: Respondent Category Distribution

Figure 1 shows the result of the categories of the respondents surveyed, indicating that the highest percentage of respondents were civil servants (43.1%); Bankers came next with 38.5%, while 18.4% of the respondents were entrepreneurs. This distribution indicate that the respondents in the public sector were 75 while the private sector is 99.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

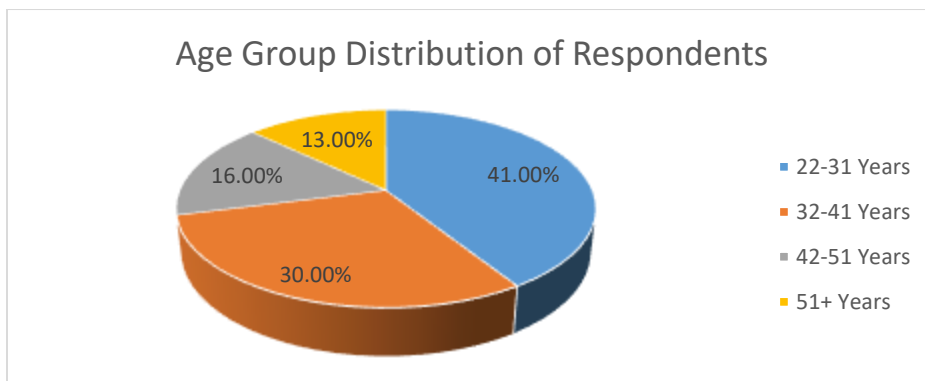


Figure 2: Distribution of Age Groups of Respondents

Respondents' age distribution is presented in Figure 2. The results show that 41% of respondents were between the ages of 22 - 31 years, 30% were between 32 – 41 years, 16% were between 42 – 51 years, while the lowest age range is between 51 and above, representing 13% of respondents.

Table 1: Impact of Mentoring on Employability Skills among Young Graduates and Workers in Rivers State

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)
1	Before I got a job, I developed work-related skills through my mentor.	97 (55.7)	58 (33.3)	14 (8.1)	5 (2.9)
2	My mentor helped me to develop relevant knowledge and skills in my job.	83 (47.7)	65 (37.4)	10 (5.7)	16 (9.2)
3	My mentor offers me many valuable ideas on addressing unambiguous difficulties.	85 (48.9)	49 (28.2)	15 (8.6)	25 (14.3)
4	My mentor helped me to become more industrious.	91 (52.2)	20 (11.5)	41 (23.7)	22 (12.6)
Total		174 (100)			

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

The items in table 1 assess how mentoring contributes to the acquisition of work-related skills, problem-solving abilities, knowledge development, and work ethic, which are essential employability skills. About 89% of respondents said they gained work-related skills from their mentors before starting their jobs, and 85.1% agreed that their mentor helped them gain relevant knowledge and skills on the job. These results show that mentoring offers practical, career-related learning, preparing mentees with the tools needed for professional success. The provision of ideas and problem-solving is another important benefit of mentoring. A significant number of respondents 77.1% agreed that their mentor provides advice in solving well-defined problems. These results suggest that mentoring enhances technical skills, and provides practical solutions to problems. Mentors are also perceived as motivators. Sixty-three-point seven percent of respondents (63.7%) reported increased diligence due to mentoring.

Generally, the findings revealed that mentoring has a favourable impact on career development by enhancing employability capabilities and knowledge among mentees. These findings corroborate the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) assertion that career development encompasses the processes that enable individuals to understand their skills and areas of interest, make informed career choices, and successfully transition in a dynamic labour market.

Table 2: Impact of Mentoring on Professional Competence among Young Graduates and Workers in Rivers State

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)
1	My mentor is experienced in my field.	81 (46.6)	53 (30.5)	31 (17.8)	9 (5.1)
2	My mentor is distinguished by expertise and integrity.	110 (63.2)	49 (28.2)	14 (8.1)	1 (0.5)
3	My mentor creates time for me.	50 (28.7)	57 (32.8)	22 (12.6)	45 (25.9)
4	My mentor answered my questions satisfactorily.	67 (38.5)	52 (29.9)	28 (16.1)	27 (15.5)
5	Mentoring permits the exchange of ideas.	85 (48.9)	72 (41.4)	5 (2.9)	12 (6.8)
6	When something worries me, my mentor gives me attention.	70 (40.2)	27 (15.5)	8 (4.6)	69 (39.7)
Total		174(100)			

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

Table 2 examines the mentor's professional competence, accessibility, knowledge-sharing sensitivity, support role, towards improving the mentee's professional competence. The results indicate that mentoring has a significant contribution to the professional competence of young graduates and workers within organisations Rivers State. The results reveal that 44.3% of the responses aligns with Strongly Agree while 29.7% agreed, meaning that 74.0% of respondents perceive that mentoring enhances professional competence. Further, 46.6% strongly agreed and 30.5% opined that their mentors were professionals in their fields, revealing that mentors possess relevant professional experience to guide mentees successfully. In addition, 91.4% (63.2% strongly agree and 28.2% agree) acknowledged the expertise and integrity of their mentors. The views for mentor accessibility were rather varied. While 61.5% of respondents agreed that their mentors spent time with them, up to 38.5% disagreed. The results also show that mentees receive quality professional guidance as 68.4% agreed that their mentors provide satisfactory answers to mentees' questions, thus emphasizing the role of mentoring in promoting progressive learning and problem-solving in professional environment. Furthermore, 90.3% of respondents affirmed that mentoring fosters the exchange of ideas, suggesting that mentoring interactions provide opportunities for quality collaborations regarding knowledge sharing and professional learning. However, views on the emotional and personal support dimensions were varied as 55.7% affirmed that their mentors gave them attention when they were worried, but up to 44.3% disagreed.

The findings demonstrate that mentoring has a strong positive impact on professional competence which corroborates Sanfilippo (2025) who describes mentoring programmes as a supportive relationship that enable individuals to learn, explore their potential, upgrade their competencies, and perform better. Ponnumani and Vishinu (2025) also maintain that structured mentoring programmes foster professional and talent development among workers. However, while mentors are recognized for their professionalism and integrity, some mentees contend with limitations in the area of mentor availability and psychosocial support, suggesting areas where mentoring programmes could be improved to maximize benefits. Effective and impactful mentoring in Haggins *et al.* (2026) is influenced by effective communication, self-discovery, and active engagement.

Table 3: Impact of Mentoring on Career Progression among Young Graduates and Workers in Rivers State

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)
1	I have a mentor in my field.	78 (44.8)	37 (21.3)	18 (10.3)	41 (23.6)
2	By means of mentoring, workers receive career direction.	110 (63.2)	45 (25.9)	7 (4.0)	12 (6.9)
3	Mentoring fosters the career growth of protégés (mentees).	106 (60.9)	35 (20.1)	19 (10.9)	14 (8.1)
Total		174(100)			

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

The results from Table 3 show that most respondents (66.1%) reported having a mentor in their field. This indicates that mentoring is a common practice among the participants. Additionally, mentoring greatly contributes to career direction and overall growth. A total of 89.1% of respondents agreed that mentoring provides career guidance, while 81% said it encourages their career growth. These findings highlight the role of mentoring in providing career guidance, enabling career growth, and promoting long-term career advancement in consonance with Nwakanma (2024) and Balinda (2023) who maintain that mentoring has a positive impact on the career progression of mentees.

Public-Private Organisation Disaggregation of Mentoring Impact on Mentees

Table 4: The Extent to Which Mentoring Impacts Mentees in Various Capacities in Public Organisations in Rivers State

Dimensions	A Deal F(%)	Great Significantly F(%)	Little F(%)	By Means F(%)	No Total Respondents F(%)
Skills Development	8 (10.7)	18 (24.0)	28 (37.3)	21 (28.0)	75 (100.0)
Knowledge Development	43 (57.3)	18 (24.0)	6 (8.0)	8 (10.7)	75 (100.0)
Professional Proficiency & Ethics	42 (56.0)	26 (34.7)	5 (6.7)	2 (2.6)	75 (100.0)
Career Progression	23 (30.7)	24 (32.0)	10 (13.3)	18 (24.0)	75 (100.0)
Emotional Support	18 (24.0)	10 (13.3)	11 (14.7)	36 (48.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

Table 5: The Extent to Which Mentoring Impacts Mentees in Various Capacities in Private Organisations in Rivers State

Capacities	A Deal F(%)	Great Significantly F(%)	Little F(%)	By Means F(%)	No Total Respondents F(%)
Skills Development	15 (15.2)	28 (28.3)	30 (30.3)	26 (26.3)	99 (100.0)
Knowledge Development	51 (51.5)	26 (26.3)	9 (9.1)	13 (13.1)	99 (100.0)
Professional Proficiency & Ethics	46 (46.5)	44 (44.4)	6 (6.1)	3 (3.0)	99 (100.0)
Career Progression	38 (38.4)	29 (29.3)	12 (12.1)	20 (20.2)	99 (100.0)
Emotional Support	33 (33.3)	19 (19.2)	12 (12.1)	35 (35.4)	99 (100.0)

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

Tables 4 and 5 disaggregate the responses on the extent of mentoring impact on young graduates and workers in public and private organisations in Rivers State. The responses indicate that mentoring has a positive contribution to organisations in both sectors, although some variations are observed. Reports from both sectors reveal significant benefits in knowledge development and professional proficiency and ethics, accounting for 57.3% and 56.0% responses respectively for public organisations, and 51.5% and 46.5% responses respectively for private organisations. This implies that mentoring enhanced mentees knowledge and professional development a great deal

in line with Ogunsola (2023) who states that mentoring sustains the acquisition and transfer of expertise knowledge among workers.

However, respondents in organisations in the private sector (Table 5) view mentoring as more beneficial in the areas of skills development and career progression. About 38.4% opined that mentoring has greatly improved their career progression compared to public organisations which recorded 30.7%. The competitive and performance-driven nature of many private organisations in Nigeria promotes mentoring which often focuses on career progression and practical skills development.

Tables 4 and 5 also recorded the weakest ratings in public and private organisations for emotional support at 48.0% and 35.4% respectively. The responses indicate that mentoring provided no emotional support. This suggests a gap in the mentoring programmes and processes, revealing that while mentoring addresses knowledge, skills, and professional proficiency and ethics effectively, it may not meet the emotional and psychological needs of mentees adequately.

Generally, the findings reveal that mentoring has a positive impact on young graduates and workers' career development in Nigerian organisations in both public and private sectors. Nonetheless, the degree of its impact is not consistent across both sectors and selected dimensions. Specifically, mentoring was found most effective in enhancing knowledge development and professional proficiency across the sectors, indicating that mentoring plays an immense role in improving professional competence and sustaining compliance with workplace ethics. The impact on career progression is moderate, with private organisations experiencing relatively higher beneficial outcomes, influenced by their more structured career development and performance-driven organisational systems which foster professional and talent development among workers, according to Ponnumani & Vishinu (2025).

Furthermore, mentoring has low effectiveness in promoting skills development and providing psychosocial support, especially in public organisations which are often characterised by limited resources and less or lack of institutionalised mentoring programmes, invariably limiting the scope of mentor–mentee relationships. Okoed *et al.* (2025) supports this finding by arguing that inconsistency in institutional support is unfavourable to mentoring relationships.

While institutionalised mentoring significantly increases professional and cognitive benefits among young graduates and workers in public and private organisations in Rivers State, the study reveals that giving more attention to mentoring in organisations will enhance its role in practical

skills development and psychosocial support required for a more inclusive career development among employees. This agrees with Prastyaningtyasi *et al.* (2023) view that mentoring fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity among employees.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that mentoring plays a significant role in the career development of young graduates and workers in public and private organisations in Rivers State by enhancing employability skills, professional competence and career progression. Mentoring improves work-related knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and professional expertise through guidance, knowledge sharing, and ethical support. While both public and private sectors employees benefit from mentoring, its impact on skills development and career advancement is stronger in the private sector. In the public sector, mentoring contributed more to knowledge acquisition and professional competence than to immediate career progression, for example through promotion. The study also identifies challenges such as limited mentor availability and inadequate emotional support, which affect the quality of mentoring relationships. Generally, the findings suggest that institutionalised mentoring is an effective career development strategy, with its success largely dependent on mentor commitment and the quality of mentor-mentee interface. This study recommends the following based on the findings:

- i. Organisations should improve mentor availability and level of engagement with mentees by formally allocating adequate time for mentoring activities to respond to mentees' needs.
- ii. Organisations should give priority attention to practical skills development in mentoring programmes and processes to ensure that mentees gain practical experience and capabilities that would enhance their job readiness and performance.
- iii. Organisations should make an effort to integrate psychosocial support into mentoring activities by incorporating employee well-being, emotional support and work-life balance components into mentoring relationships in all fields.
- iv. Public organisations should establish formal mentoring structures and integrate mentoring outcomes into staff development policies for maximum results.
- v. Career progression indicators such as promotion, performance evaluation, and higher responsibility should be tied to mentoring outcomes to promote career advancement opportunities in public organisations.

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