



MENTORSHIP ROLES OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN ENHANCING RESEARCH COMPETENCE AND INNOVATION AMONG EARLY-CAREER LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN SELECTED FEDERAL, STATE, AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mentorship roles of academic librarians in enhancing research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised 154 academic librarians and early-career library professionals. Total enumeration was adopted, and a questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection and 154 self-structured questionnaire was designed and administered, and 147 (95.45%) were received and used as the basis for analysing data. Total enumeration was used to include all 147 academic librarians and early-career library professionals across six selected universities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Findings revealed that academic librarians perform various mentorship roles such as career guidance, technical skill development, professional networking, and emotional support. The study further showed that the level of research competence among early-career library professionals is moderate. While respondents demonstrated strengths in data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research findings, weaknesses were observed in literature review, use of digital research tools, and methodological skills. However, several challenges affecting effective mentorship were identified, including heavy workload, inadequate institutional support, lack of mentorship training, limited resources, and communication gaps. The study concludes that mentorship plays a critical role in improving research competence and fostering innovation among early-career library professionals, but its effectiveness is constrained by institutional and structural challenges. It recommends the development of structured mentorship programmes, improved institutional support, and regular capacity-building initiatives in academic libraries.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where academic libraries are increasingly expected to support rigorous research, knowledge production, and innovative information services, the professional development of library staff has become a cornerstone of organizational effectiveness and scholarly contribution (David-West & Nmecha, 2019). Across **federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria**, academic libraries are experiencing growing pressure to enhance research support services, digital competencies, and user-centred innovations in line with global academic standards. However, the extent to which library professionals, particularly early-career staff, are adequately prepared for these demands



varies across institutional settings due to differences in funding, staffing structures, and professional development opportunities.

Among the many strategies for developing human capital in libraries, mentorship has been identified as a vital mechanism for enhancing professional competencies, fostering innovation, and facilitating career progression among early-career library professionals. Generally, mentorship involves a relational process where experienced professionals (mentors) guide less experienced colleagues (mentees) in acquiring essential skills, professional judgment, and confidence aligned with the expectations of the profession (Monnier & Dalal, 2025). Within the context of university libraries in Osun State, mentorship practices may differ significantly across federal, state, and private institutions depending on organizational culture, leadership structure, and availability of experienced personnel.

Moreover, mentorship within librarianship plays a critical role in shaping research competence, which refers to the ability of library professionals to initiate, conduct, disseminate, and apply research in ways that enhance organizational services and contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline. Through mentorship, early-career librarians are exposed to essential research skills such as identifying research problems, developing methodologies, writing for publication, and engaging in scholarly networking. These competencies are particularly important across university libraries in Osun State, where librarians are increasingly expected to contribute to institutional research visibility and academic rankings. Empirical evidence suggests that mentorship is positively associated with research productivity and competence among young librarians, indicating that structured mentoring can significantly enhance scholarly output and professional confidence (Oso & Olaniyi, 2024).

In Nigeria, academic librarians often face the dual challenge of managing routine library operations while meeting increasing expectations for research productivity and professional development. Studies have shown that mentorship, whether formal or informal, plays a significant role in equipping librarians with the skills required for career advancement and research engagement (Ubogu, 2011; Oluwabiye, 2020). However, the literature also highlights persistent constraints, including the absence of structured mentoring frameworks, inadequate institutional support, and uneven implementation of mentorship practices across universities (Adewuyi et al., 2010; Ubogu, 2011). These challenges are also observable across federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, where mentorship practices are often inconsistent and unstandardized.

Moreover, beyond technical skill development, mentorship has been linked to promoting innovation in library services, particularly in areas such as digital information systems, research support services, and user engagement strategies. Structured mentorship has been shown to enhance librarians' ability to adapt to technological changes and develop innovative service models (Umoh & Umoren, 2025). However, the effectiveness of these mentorship outcomes may vary across institutional types due to differences in resource availability and organizational culture.

At the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, one of the leading federal university libraries in Nigeria, the evolving demands of academic research and digital transformation place additional expectations on early-career library professionals to be research-competent and innovation-driven. However, similar dynamics are also observable in other federal, state, and private university libraries in Osun State, where early-career librarians are expected to contribute meaningfully to institutional research output and service innovation. Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence comparing how mentorship practices influence research competence and innovation across these different categories of universities.

Therefore, this study investigates the mentorship roles of academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria, and examines how these roles influence research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals. By situating the research within both national and institutional contexts, the study aims to generate insights that can inform policy, strengthen structured mentorship frameworks, and enhance professional development practices in academic libraries across Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries in Nigeria are increasingly required to support advanced research activities, promote innovation, and deliver technology-driven information services in line with global best practices. In this context, early-career library professionals are expected to possess strong research competence and innovative capacity to effectively contribute to institutional goals. However, evidence suggests that many of these professionals still struggle with developing adequate research skills such as problem identification, research design, academic writing, publication, and the application of research findings to improve library services. Although mentorship has been widely recognized as



a key strategy for professional development in librarianship, its implementation in many Nigerian academic libraries remains inconsistent and largely unstructured. In several university libraries across Osun State, mentorship practices are often informal, dependent on individual initiative, and lacking institutional frameworks that ensure continuity and effectiveness. This situation creates a gap in the systematic transfer of research knowledge, professional skills, and innovative practices from experienced librarians to early-career staff.

Furthermore, while existing studies have acknowledged the importance of mentorship in enhancing librarians' professional growth (Ubogu, 2011; Oluwabiyi, 2020; Oso & Olaniyi, 2024), there is limited empirical evidence on how mentorship specifically influences research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals across different categories of universities, federal, state, and private, in Osun State, Nigeria. Most previous studies have either focused on single institutions or generalized findings without considering possible variations in mentorship experiences across institutional types. Additionally, the extent to which mentorship contributes to fostering innovative library services, especially in the areas of digital librarianship, research support, and user-centred services, remains underexplored within the context of Osun State university libraries. This gap is significant given the increasing demand for libraries to adopt new technologies and innovative service models in response to changing academic environments. It is therefore unclear whether existing mentorship practices in federal, state, and private university libraries in Osun State are sufficiently structured and effective in enhancing the research competence and innovative capacity of early-career library professionals. This lack of clarity presents a problem for library administrators and policy makers who are responsible for designing staff development programmes that support professional growth and institutional effectiveness.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the mentorship roles of academic librarians and how these roles influence research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The study aims to address the existing empirical and contextual gap by providing evidence that can guide the development of structured mentorship frameworks within academic libraries.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. Identify the types of mentorship roles performed by academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the level of research competence of early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.
- iii. determine the extent to which mentorship influences research skills development among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.
- iv. Assess the contribution of mentorship to innovation in library services and professional practices among early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.
- v. Investigate the challenges affecting effective mentorship relationships between senior and early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Question

1. What are the types of mentorship roles performed by academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of research competence of early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent does mentorship influence research skills development among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?
4. What is the contribution of mentorship to innovation in library services and professional practices among early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?
5. What are the challenges affecting effective mentorship relationships between senior and early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentorship is widely recognized as a critical mechanism for professional growth and knowledge transfer in academic environments. However, in librarianship, mentorship involves an experienced librarian (mentor) providing guidance, support and professional socialization to a less experienced or less positioned colleague (mentee) in order to enhance career development and professional competence. Monnier and Dalal (2025) define mentorship as a continuous relational process that facilitates learning, professional socialization, and capacity development within organizations. However, David-West and Nmecha (2019) describe mentorship as a developmental relationship that promotes skill acquisition, career progression and professional identity formation among academic librarians. Through mentoring, junior librarians gain access to tacit knowledge, institutional culture and professional networks that are not easily acquired through formal education alone.

Moreover, mentorship in academic libraries occurs in both formal and informal forms. Formal mentorship is institutionally organized with defined roles and objectives, while informal mentorship develops naturally through professional interactions (Oluwabiye, 2020). Both forms are beneficial, although structured mentorship programs tend to produce more consistent and measurable outcomes in terms of professional development and research productivity. In federal universities, mentorship is often more stable due to larger staffing structures and experienced librarians, while state universities often face funding and staffing constraints. In private universities, mentorship may be more flexible but limited by smaller staff strength and workload pressures (Ubogu, 2011; Oluwabiye, 2020). These variations suggest that mentorship in academic libraries is context-dependent and influenced by institutional ownership, organizational culture, and resource availability.

Research competence refers to the ability to design, conduct, analyze and disseminate scholarly investigations. In academic librarianship, research competence is essential for evidence-based practice, service innovation and institutional research support. However, Oso and Olaniyi (2023) assert that librarians who possess strong research competence are better equipped to support academic staff and students, contribute to scholarly communication and improve library services. Hence, early-career library professionals often face difficulties in developing research competence due to limited exposure to research methods, lack of confidence in scholarly writing, and insufficient mentorship. According to Adewuyi, Nduka, and Ojo (2010), many young librarians in Nigerian universities struggle with conducting and publishing research because they lack guidance from experienced colleagues. This highlights the importance of mentorship as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical research skills.

Mentorship has been widely identified as a critical mechanism for developing research competence among library professionals. It provides a structured or informal learning environment where experienced librarians guide early-career professionals in developing research-related skills, scholarly confidence, and academic identity. According to Sulyman, Eiriemiokhale, and Olarongbe (2025), mentorship plays a vital role in career development and professional growth in librarianship, particularly by enhancing exposure to research activities and academic expectations. Similarly, mentoring relationships help librarians to focus on research agendas, identify suitable publication outlets, and improve academic writing skills, thereby strengthening their research productivity. Mentorship also contributes to cognitive and behavioural development in research through guidance on research design, data interpretation, and publication strategies. In many academic libraries, mentors provide direct support such as reviewing manuscripts, suggesting research topics, and collaborating on scholarly projects (Adekoya & Fasae, 2021).

Innovation in academic libraries refers to the development of new services, the adoption of emerging technologies and the improvement of user-centered information delivery. Mentorship plays a vital role in fostering innovation by encouraging creativity, risk-taking and continuous learning among early-career librarians. Better still, Umoh and Umoren (2025) argue that mentoring enables librarians to acquire digital skills and adapt to technological changes, thereby enhancing innovative service delivery. Through mentorship, senior librarians' model innovative thinking and problem-solving approaches, which mentees then replicate in their professional practice. This process contributes to the sustainability and relevance of academic libraries in the digital age.

The effectiveness of mentorship in enhancing research competence is influenced by institutional context. In federal universities, mentorship tends to be more structured due to larger staffing capacity and availability of senior researchers. In contrast, state universities often face funding and staffing limitations, while private universities may experience variability depending on institutional priorities and resource allocation. Research has shown that librarians in well-structured institutions tend to receive more consistent mentorship, leading to higher research productivity and competence development (Oluwabiye, 2020). Conversely, in institutions where mentorship is informal or poorly



structured, early-career librarians often struggle to develop strong research skills and scholarly confidence.

Among several studies that established a positive relationship between mentorship and research productivity in academic libraries is according to David-West and Nmecha (2019) that found that mentored librarians were more likely to publish scholarly articles, participate in conferences and engage in collaborative research than their non-mentored counterparts. Similarly, Oso and Olaniyi (2023) reported that mentoring significantly improved the research output and scholarly confidence of young librarians in selected Nigerian universities. Mentorship supports research productivity by exposing early-career professionals to research opportunities, peer review processes, co-authorship, and professional networking. Through regular interactions with mentors, mentees learn how to identify researchable problems, apply appropriate methodologies and navigate the publication process.

Therefore, despite its benefits, mentorship in Nigerian academic libraries faces several challenges. Adewuyi et al. (2010) identified lack of formal mentoring structures, heavy workload and limited institutional support as major barriers to effective mentorship. In a similar way, Oluwabiyi (2020) also noted that mentorship is often voluntary and informal, making it difficult to monitor and evaluate its impact on professional development. These challenges can limit the ability of early-career librarians to fully benefit from mentorship, thereby affecting their research competence and innovative capacity. Addressing these challenges is therefore necessary for maximizing the developmental potential of mentorship in academic libraries in higher education of learning.

Innovation in academic libraries involves the adoption of new technologies, services, and practices that improve information access, research support, and user engagement. Mentorship contributes to innovation by enabling the transfer of tacit knowledge and technical skills. Umoh and Umoren (2025) argue that mentorship enhances librarians' adaptability and creativity in adopting new technologies and service models. Through mentorship, early-career librarians learn how to implement digital tools such as electronic databases and institutional repositories. However, innovation outcomes differ across federal, state, and private universities. Federal universities often have better infrastructure for innovation, state universities face funding challenges, while private universities may be more flexible but resource-limited. These differences affect how mentorship translates into innovative library services.

This study is anchored on three complementary theories: Social Learning Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory. These theories provide a solid foundation for explaining how mentorship influences research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in academic libraries. However, the Social Learning Theory, propounded by Bandura (1977), posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and interaction with more experienced individuals within a social environment. The theory emphasizes that learning is not only a product of direct experience but also occurs through modeling behaviours, attitudes, and skills exhibited by others. In the context of academic libraries, this theory explains how early-career library professionals acquire research competence and professional skills by observing and interacting with senior librarians. Through mentorship relationships, mentors serve as role models who demonstrate research practices such as problem identification, methodology development, academic writing, and publication strategies. Across federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, early-career librarians are exposed to different mentoring environments, which may influence the effectiveness of observational learning. For instance, in institutions with experienced research-active librarians, mentees are more likely to develop stronger research competence through active engagement and modelling. Thus, Social Learning Theory provides a framework for understanding mentorship as a process of experiential and observational learning that enhances professional development.

Moreover, the Human Capital Theory, developed by Becker (1964), posits that investment in education, training, and skill development leads to improved productivity, efficiency, and performance. The theory views individuals' knowledge and competencies as valuable assets that contribute to organizational growth and effectiveness. In this study, mentorship is conceptualized as a form of human capital investment in academic libraries. Through mentorship, early-career librarians develop critical research competencies such as data analysis, scholarly writing, research design, and dissemination of findings. These skills enhance their productivity and contribute to the overall performance of the library. The application of this theory is particularly relevant across federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, where differences in institutional investment in staff development may influence mentorship effectiveness. Institutions that prioritize mentorship programmes and professional training are more likely to produce competent and research-active librarians. Therefore, Human Capital Theory explains how mentorship contributes to building the intellectual capacity of library professionals and improving institutional outcomes.

More so, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, proposed by Rogers (2003), explains how new ideas, technologies,



and practices spread within an organization or social system over time. The theory highlights the role of communication channels, social interactions, and change agents in facilitating the adoption of innovations. In academic libraries, mentorship serves as a key mechanism for the diffusion of innovative practices. Senior librarians act as change agents who introduce early-career professionals to emerging trends such as digital librarianship, institutional repositories, data management tools, and user-centred service models. Within federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, the adoption of innovative library services may vary depending on infrastructure, funding, and institutional policies. Mentorship helps bridge this gap by transferring knowledge and skills necessary for innovation, even in resource-constrained environments. This theory therefore explains how mentorship promotes innovation in library services by facilitating knowledge transfer and encouraging the adoption of new practices among early-career librarians.

The integration of these three theories provides a comprehensive understanding of the study: Social Learning Theory explains “how” mentorship facilitates learning and skill acquisition; Human Capital Theory explains “why” mentorship is important for improving productivity and professional competence; Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains “how mentorship drives innovation” in library services. Together, these theories support the assumption that mentorship plays a critical role in enhancing both research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in academic libraries.

However, several empirical studies have examined the role of mentorship in enhancing research competence and innovation among librarians, particularly in Nigerian academic libraries. A recent study by Sulyman, Eiriemiokhale, and Olarongbe (2024) revealed that mentoring culture is still weak in Nigerian libraries, as many institutions have not fully institutionalized structured mentoring programmes. This finding supports your study, which shows that mentorship is not strongly influencing innovation and professional practices. Similarly, a study by Adewuyi, Nduka, and Ojo (2010) found that mentorship is not widely practised in Nigerian university libraries due to constraints such as poor leadership, lack of formal mentoring structures, and unwillingness to share knowledge. This aligns with your finding that mentorship is not effectively driving innovation.

In terms of research competence, Oso and Olaniyi (2023) found a significant relationship between mentorship and research productivity among young librarians in Nigeria ($r = 0.488$, $p < 0.05$). However, despite this positive relationship, the study emphasized that mentorship must be properly structured to yield meaningful outcomes—supporting your finding that weak mentorship leads to limited impact. Furthermore, Ubogu (2019) reported that while mentorship helps librarians develop professionally, major challenges such as a lack of facilities, funding, and awareness limit its effectiveness in Nigerian university libraries. This reinforces your result that mentorship has not significantly contributed to innovation.

In the area of skill development and innovation, a study on cataloguers in Nigerian academic libraries revealed that mentorship is often underutilized despite its importance for skill acquisition, leading to deficiencies in professional competence. This supports your finding that mentorship does not strongly enhance innovative practices. However, some studies present a contrasting perspective. For example, Umoh and Umoren (2025) found that structured mentorship programmes can enhance technological skills, innovation, and adaptability among librarians. This suggests that the problem is not mentorship itself, but the lack of structured and innovation-driven mentorship systems, which aligns with your conclusion.

The reviewed literature shows that mentorship plays a critical role in enhancing research competence and innovation among academic librarians. However, existing studies are largely generalized and do not adequately examine differences across federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how institutional ownership influences the effectiveness of mentorship and its outcomes on research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals. This study therefore fills this gap by providing a comparative analysis of mentorship practices across different university types in Osun State.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Osun State, Nigeria, which hosts a mix of federal, state, and private universities. These institutions provide a suitable context for examining variations in mentorship practices across different ownership structures. The state is known for its concentration of higher institutions with active academic libraries that support teaching, learning, and research activities. The population of the study comprises academic librarians and early-career library professionals working in selected federal, state, and private university libraries in Osun State, Nigeria. The target population includes Senior librarians (mentors) and early-

career library professionals (assistant librarians, library officers, and graduate assistants). A multistage sampling technique is adopted for this study. In the first stage, stratified sampling is used to group universities into three categories: federal, state, and private universities. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique is employed to select two universities from each stratum. This results in a total of **six** (6) universities, comprising two federal universities (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila-Orangun; two state universities (Osun State University, Osogbo and University of Ilesha, Ilesha); and two private universities (Adeleke University, Ede and Bowen University, Iwo). All these universities are domiciled in Osun State, Nigeria. The selection of two universities from each category is intended to enhance representativeness and allow for meaningful comparison across institutional types. In the third stage, a purposive sampling technique is used to identify respondents within the selected universities. The study specifically targets Senior librarians (mentors) and Early-career library professionals. Finally, due to the relatively manageable size of the study population, the study adopts a total enumeration (census) sampling technique, where all eligible respondents within the selected universities are included in the study. This approach eliminates sampling bias and ensures that every member of the population has an equal opportunity to contribute to the findings. The instrument used for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled: "Mentorship Roles, Research Competence and Innovation Questionnaire (MRRCIQ)" The questionnaire is divided into sections: Section A: Demographic information; Section B: Mentorship roles of academic librarians; Section C: Research competence of early-career librarians; Section D: Mentorship and research skills development; Section E: Mentorship and innovation; and Section F: Challenges of mentorship. The items in the questionnaire were measured using a ranging from *Strongly Agree* (4) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity to ensure its adequacy in measuring the constructs of the study. Experts in Library and Information Science and 4-point Likert-type scale Educational Research reviewed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument. To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted among librarians and early-career professionals in a university library outside the study area. Data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.70 and above, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to the respondents to ensure a high response rate and proper clarification of items where necessary. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation. These statistical tools were used to summarize the data and provide answers to the research questions. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Population of the Study and Questionnaire Response Rate

S.N.	Institution	Category of Respondents	Population	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Received	Response Rate (%)
1	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Federal)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	45	45	45	100
2	Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila-Orangun (Federal)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	27	27	25	92.59
3	Osun State University, Osogbo (State)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	31	31	29	93.55
4	University of Ilesha, Ilesha (State)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	19	19	17	89.47
5	Adeleke University, Ede (Private)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	15	15	15	100
6	Bowen University, Iwo (Private)	Librarians & Early-Career Professionals	17	17	16	94.12
Total (ΣX)	Six Universities	—	154	154	147	95.45

Table 1 presents the distribution of the population, questionnaires administered, and response rates among academic librarians and early-career library professionals at selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The total population for the study comprised 154 respondents, all of whom were administered questionnaires based on the use of total enumeration due to the manageable population size. Out of the 154 questionnaires distributed, 147 were successfully retrieved, resulting in an overall response rate of 95.45%, which is considered adequate for data

analysis. However, a breakdown of the responses shows that Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, recorded a 100% response rate with all 45 questionnaires retrieved. Similarly, Adeleke University, Ede, also recorded a 100% response rate with all 15 questionnaires returned. At the Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila-Orangun, 25 out of 27 questionnaires were retrieved, representing a response rate of 92.59%. Osun State University, Osogbo, recorded a response rate of 93.55%, with 29 out of 31 questionnaires returned. Furthermore, the University of Ilesa, Ilesa, had 17 out of 19 questionnaires retrieved, representing 89.47%, while Bowen University, Iwo, recorded a response rate of 94.12%, with 16 out of 17 questionnaires returned. Overall, the high response rate across the selected institutions indicates a strong level of participation and enhances the reliability and validity of the data collected for the study.

Research question one: What are the types of mentorship roles performed by academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 2 presents the types of mentorship roles performed by academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Types of Mentorship Roles Performed by Academic Librarians in Selected Federal, State, and Private Universities

S.N.	Mentorship Role	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std Dev
1	Providing guidance on career development	33	41	53	20	2.59	0.98
2	Assisting with research skills and strategies	35	38	43	31	2.52	1.07
3	Offering emotional and professional support	42	35	43	27	2.63	1.08
4	Facilitating professional networking opportunities	41	37	49	20	2.67	1.03
5	Modelling best practices in librarianship	43	33	41	30	2.61	1.11
6	Supporting the development of technical competencies (e.g., digital tools, database management)	49	31	45	22	2.73	1.08
7	Providing feedback on academic and professional performance	34	41	43	29	2.54	1.05
8	Encouraging innovation and creative problem-solving	51	32	43	21	2.77	1.08
Total Weighted Mean = 2.63							

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceptions of the mentorship roles performed by academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on a 4-point Likert scale, with a criterion mean of 2.50. The results show that all the listed mentorship roles have mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50, with a grand (total weighted) mean of 2.63, indicating that respondents generally agree that academic librarians perform these mentorship roles. Specifically, encouraging innovation and creative problem-solving recorded the highest mean score (2.77), suggesting that respondents strongly perceive this as a key role played by academic librarians. This is closely followed by supporting the development of technical competencies (2.73) and facilitating professional networking opportunities (2.67), indicating that mentorship significantly contributes to skill development and professional exposure. Furthermore, roles such as offering emotional and professional support (2.63), modelling best practices in librarianship (2.61), and providing guidance on career development (2.59) were also positively rated, showing that mentorship extends beyond technical skills to include professional growth and behavioural development. However, relatively lower mean scores were recorded for providing feedback on academic and professional performance (2.54) and assisting with research skills and strategies (2.52), although they still fall within the agreed range. This suggests that while these roles are performed, they may not be as strongly emphasized as others. The standard deviation values, which range approximately from 0.98 to 1.11, indicate a moderate level of variability in respondents' opinions, suggesting some differences in experiences across the selected institutions. Hence, the findings imply that academic librarians in the selected universities actively engage in multiple mentorship roles, particularly in fostering innovation, technical competence, and professional networking, although more attention may be needed in strengthening research-related mentorship and performance feedback.

Research question two: What is the level of research competence of early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 3 shows the level of research competence of early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria

Table 3: Level of Research Competence of Early-Career Library Professionals in Selected Federal, State, and Private Universities

S.N.	Research Competence Indicator	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Mean	Std Dev
1	Ability to conduct literature review effectively	35	33	41	38	2.4	1.11
2	Skill in identifying appropriate research methodologies	37	32	43	35	2.5	1.1
3	Competence in data collection and analysis	37	39	47	24	2.6	1.03
4	Academic writing and scholarly communication	41	31	40	35	2.5	1.12
5	Use of digital tools and databases for research	31	37	43	36	2.4	1.08
6	Critical thinking and problem-solving in research	35	37	39	36	2.5	1.1
7	Ability to disseminate research findings effectively	41	32	41	33	2.6	1.12
Total weighted mean = 2.50							

Table 3 presents the level of research competence of early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on a 4-point Likert scale with a criterion mean of 2.50. The results show a total weighted mean of 2.50, indicating that the overall level of research competence among early-career library professionals is moderate. Specifically, competence in data collection and analysis recorded the highest mean score (2.61), suggesting that respondents perceive themselves as relatively more competent in handling data-related aspects of research. This is followed by ability to disseminate research findings effectively (2.55) and academic writing and scholarly communication (2.53), indicating moderate strength in communicating research outputs. However, several areas recorded mean scores below the benchmark of 2.50 include skill in identifying appropriate research methodologies (2.48) and critical thinking and problem-solving in research (2.48), suggesting that respondents experience some limitations in these areas. More notably, ability to conduct literature review effectively (2.44) and use of digital tools and databases for research (2.43) recorded the lowest mean scores, indicating relatively weak competence in these aspects of research. The standard deviation values, ranging from approximately 1.03 to 1.12, indicate a moderate spread in responses, suggesting some variation in the level of research competence among respondents across the selected institutions. Hence, the findings imply that while early-career library professionals possess a moderate level of research competence, there are notable gaps in critical areas such as literature review, use of digital research tools, and methodological skills. This underscores the need for enhanced mentorship and targeted capacity-building initiatives to strengthen research capabilities across the selected universities.

Research question three: To what extent does mentorship influence research skills development among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 4 shows the extent of mentorship influence on research skills development among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Extent of Mentorship Influence on Research Skills Development among Early-Career Library Professionals

S/N	Mentorship Influence Indicator	Very Highly Extent	Highly Extent	Low Extent	Very Low Extent	Mean	Std Dev
1	Mentorship enhances ability to identify research problems	51	39	32	25	2.79	1.08
2	Mentorship improves literature review skills	49	31	38	29	2.68	1.12
3	Mentorship strengthens data collection and analysis skills	48	31	36	32	2.65	1.14
4	Mentorship improves academic writing and reporting	51	33	29	34	2.69	1.17
5	Mentorship increases proficiency in using research tools and databases	53	35	30	29	2.76	1.10

6	Mentorship encourages critical thinking in research	51	33	29	34	2.69	1.17
7	Mentorship fosters confidence in presenting and disseminating research findings	53	35	32	27	2.78	1.08
Total weighted mean = 2.72							

Table 4 presents the extent to which mentorship influences research skills development among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on a 4-point Likert scale with a criterion mean of 2.50. The results show a total weighted mean of 2.72, indicating that mentorship influences research skills development among early-career library professionals to a high extent. Specifically, mentorship enhances the ability to identify research problems recorded the highest mean score (2.79), suggesting that mentorship plays a significant role in helping early-career librarians define and conceptualize research issues. This is closely followed by mentorship fostering confidence in presenting and disseminating research findings (2.78) and increasing proficiency in using research tools and databases (2.76), indicating strong influence in both communication and technical aspects of research. Furthermore, mentorship improves academic writing and reporting (2.69) and encourages critical thinking in research (2.69), highlighting its contribution to intellectual development and scholarly communication. Similarly, mentorship improves literature review skills (2.68) and strengthens data collection and analysis skills (2.65) also recorded mean scores above the benchmark, though relatively lower compared to other indicators. However, the standard deviation values, ranging from approximately 1.08 to 1.17, indicate a moderate variation in responses, suggesting that while most respondents agree on the positive influence of mentorship, there are slight differences in their experiences across institutions. Hence, the findings reveal that mentorship has a significant and positive influence on the development of research skills among early-career library professionals. This underscores the importance of strengthening mentorship programmes in academic libraries to further enhance research competence and professional growth.

Research question four: What is the contribution of mentorship to innovation in library services and professional practices among early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 5 shows the contribution of mentorship to innovation in library services and professional practices among early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Contribution of Mentorship to Innovation in Library Services and Professional Practices among Early-Career Librarians

S/N	Mentorship Contribution Indicator	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std Dev.
1	Mentorship encourages development of innovative library services	43	45	32	27	2.71	1.10
2	Mentorship promotes adoption of new technologies in library practices	45	48	31	23	2.78	1.06
3	Mentorship fosters creative problem-solving in library service delivery	51	45	32	19	2.87	1.03
4	Mentorship inspires improvement in professional practices and standards	49	39	31	28	2.74	1.13
5	Mentorship supports development of new programs or services for library users	50	31	37	29	2.69	1.16
6	Mentorship enhances ability to adapt and innovate in changing library environments	53	41	32	21	2.86	1.07
7	Mentorship encourages collaboration and sharing of innovative ideas among colleagues	51	40	31	25	2.80	1.10
Total Weighted Mean = 2.78							

Table 5 presents the respondents' views on the contribution of mentorship to innovation in library services and professional practices among early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on a 4-point Likert scale with a criterion mean of 2.50. The results show a total weighted

mean of 2.78, indicating that respondents agree that mentorship contributes significantly to innovation in library services and professional practices. Specifically, mentorship fosters creative problem-solving in library service delivery recorded the highest mean score (2.87), suggesting that mentorship plays a critical role in enhancing innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities among early-career librarians. This is closely followed by mentorship enhances the ability to adapt and innovate in changing library environments (2.86), highlighting its importance in preparing librarians to respond to evolving technological and service demands. Furthermore, mentorship encourages collaboration and sharing of innovative ideas among *colleagues* (2.80) and promotes the adoption of new technologies in library practices (2.78) also recorded high mean scores, indicating that mentorship supports teamwork and the integration of modern technologies in library operations. In addition, mentorship inspires improvement in professional practices and standards (2.74) and encourages the development of innovative library services (2.71) were positively rated, showing that mentorship contributes to both service enhancement and professional growth. Although comparatively lower, mentorship supports the development of new programmes or services for library users (2.69) still falls above the benchmark, indicating that it is also a recognized benefit of mentorship. The standard deviation values, ranging from approximately 1.03 to 1.16, indicate a moderate level of variation in responses, suggesting some differences in respondents' experiences across the selected institutions. Hence, the findings reveal that mentorship plays a significant role in promoting innovation in academic libraries by enhancing creativity, adaptability, collaboration, and the adoption of new technologies among early-career library professionals.

Research question five: What are the challenges affecting effective mentorship relationships between senior and early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 6 shows the challenges affecting effective mentorship relationships between senior and early-career librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria

Table 6: Challenges Affecting Effective Mentorship Relationships

S/N	Challenge Indicator	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Lack of time due to heavy workload	56	51	21	19	2.98	1.04
2	Inadequate mentorship training for senior librarians	53	51	23	20	2.93	1.05
3	Limited institutional support or recognition for mentorship efforts	51	53	27	16	2.95	0.99
4	Poor communication between mentor and mentee	49	52	25	21	2.88	1.07
5	Differences in professional goals or expectations	50	47	29	21	2.86	1.09
6	Lack of resources or access to tools to support mentorship activities	57	41	23	26	2.88	1.15
7	Resistance to change or reluctance to adopt new mentorship practices	53	50	19	25	2.89	1.14
8	Insufficient feedback or evaluation of mentorship outcomes	51	49	23	24	2.86	1.13
Total Weighted Mean						2.9	

Table 6 presents the respondents' perceptions of the challenges affecting effective mentorship relationships among academic librarians and early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on a 4-point Likert scale with a criterion mean of 2.50. The results show a total weighted mean of 2.90, indicating that respondents agree that several significant challenges hinder effective mentorship in the selected university libraries. Specifically, lack of time due to heavy workload recorded the highest mean score (2.98), suggesting that workload pressure is the most critical barrier to effective mentorship. This implies that both mentors and mentees may have limited time to engage in meaningful mentoring activities. This is closely followed by limited institutional support or recognition for mentorship efforts (2.95) and inadequate mentorship training for senior librarians (2.93), indicating that organizational and structural factors significantly affect the success of mentorship programmes. Furthermore, resistance to change or reluctance to adopt new mentorship practices (2.89) and lack of resources or access to tools to support mentorship activities (2.88) were also identified as major challenges, highlighting issues related to adaptability and availability of necessary support systems. Similarly, poor communication between mentor and mentee (2.88) and differences in professional goals or expectations (2.86) were acknowledged as factors that may hinder effective mentorship relationships, suggesting the importance of alignment and clear interaction in mentoring processes. Finally, insufficient feedback or evaluation of mentorship outcomes (2.86) also emerged as a challenge, indicating that the absence of proper assessment mechanisms may limit the effectiveness and improvement of mentorship programmes. The standard deviation values, ranging from approximately 0.99 to 1.15, indicate a moderate



level of variation in responses, suggesting some differences in respondents' experiences across the selected institutions. Hence, the findings reveal that although mentorship plays a vital role in professional development, its effectiveness is constrained by workload, institutional limitations, inadequate training, and communication gaps. Addressing these challenges is essential for strengthening mentorship practices and improving research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the major findings of the study in relation to the research questions and existing literature on mentorship, research competence, and innovation among academic librarians. The findings revealed that academic librarians in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State perform a wide range of mentorship roles, with a grand mean of 2.63, indicating general agreement among respondents. Key roles identified include encouraging innovation, supporting technical competency development, facilitating networking opportunities, and providing emotional and professional support. This finding supports the assertion of Monnier and Dalal (2025), who emphasized that mentorship plays a crucial role in professional development by enabling knowledge transfer, skill acquisition, and career guidance. Similarly, Adekoya and Fasae (2021) noted that mentoring relationships in academic libraries promote both technical and professional competencies among early-career librarians.

However, the relatively lower mean scores for research-related roles such as assisting with research skills and providing feedback suggest that mentorship may not be fully optimized in enhancing research-specific competencies. This aligns with the findings of Ubogu (2011), who observed that mentorship in Nigerian academic libraries often lacks structured focus on research development. The study found that the level of research competence among early-career library professionals is moderate, with a grand mean of 2.50. While respondents demonstrated relative strength in data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research findings, they showed weaker competence in literature review, use of digital research tools, and methodological skills. This finding corroborates the study of Oso and Olaniyi (2024), which reported that early-career librarians often possess basic research skills but face challenges in advanced research processes such as literature synthesis and methodological design. The moderate competence level suggests that while librarians are engaged in research activities, there is still a need for structured capacity-building initiatives. The implication is that mentorship programmes must be strengthened to address these gaps, particularly in critical areas of research competence.

The findings indicated that mentorship influences research skills development to a high extent, with a grand mean of 2.72. Mentorship was found to significantly enhance the ability to identify research problems, improve academic writing, strengthen data analysis skills, and build confidence in research dissemination. This result is consistent with the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that individuals acquire skills through observation and interaction with more experienced professionals. It also aligns with findings by Sulyman et al. (2025), who reported that mentorship significantly improves research competence and professional confidence among librarians. Despite the moderate overall competence observed earlier, this finding suggests that mentorship has strong potential to improve research skills when effectively implemented.

The study revealed that mentorship contributes significantly to innovation, with a grand mean of 2.78. Mentorship was found to foster creative problem-solving, enhance adaptability, promote the adoption of new technologies, and encourage collaboration among librarians. This supports the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how new ideas and practices spread within organizations through interpersonal interactions. Mentorship serves as a channel for transferring innovative practices from experienced librarians to early-career professionals.

The finding also aligns with Umoh and Umoren (2025), who noted that mentorship promotes innovation by equipping librarians with the skills needed to adapt to emerging trends in digital librarianship and user-centered services. The study identified several challenges affecting effective mentorship, with a grand mean of 2.90, indicating strong agreement among respondents. Major challenges include heavy workload, limited institutional support, inadequate mentorship training, lack of resources, and communication gaps.

This finding is consistent with Adewuyi et al. (2010), who reported that the absence of structured mentorship frameworks and institutional support limits the effectiveness of mentoring in Nigerian academic libraries. Similarly, Oluwabiyi (2020) highlighted workload and resource constraints as key barriers to professional development. The implication is that while mentorship is recognized as valuable, its effectiveness is constrained by systemic and



organizational factors that must be addressed. Hence, the findings collectively suggest that mentorship plays a critical role in enhancing research competence and promoting innovation among early-career library professionals. However, its full potential is hindered by institutional and structural challenges.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the mentorship roles of academic librarians and their influence on research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings reveal that academic librarians perform diverse mentorship roles, including career guidance, professional support, networking facilitation, and the development of technical competencies. These roles contribute meaningfully to the professional growth of early-career librarians. However, mentorship activities appear to place less emphasis on research-specific support such as methodological guidance and structured feedback. The study further established that the level of research competence among early-career library professionals is moderate, with noticeable strengths in data handling and dissemination of research findings, but weaknesses in literature review, use of digital research tools, and methodological design. This indicates that while early-career librarians are engaged in research activities, there is still significant room for improvement in critical research skills.

Importantly however, the study found that mentorship influences research skills development to a high extent, demonstrating its effectiveness as a mechanism for enhancing research competence. Mentorship was also shown to contribute significantly to innovation in library services and professional practices by fostering creativity, adaptability, collaboration, and the adoption of new technologies. Despite these positive contributions, the study identified several challenges hindering effective mentorship, including heavy workload, inadequate institutional support, lack of formal mentorship training, insufficient resources, and communication gaps between mentors and mentees. These challenges limit the full realization of mentorship benefits in academic libraries.

In conclusion, mentorship is a vital tool for capacity building in academic librarianship, with significant potential to enhance research competence and drive innovation among early-career library professionals. However, for mentorship to achieve optimal impact, there is a need for more structured mentorship frameworks, stronger institutional support, and targeted training initiatives across federal, state, and private universities in Osun State.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study on mentorship roles, research competence, and innovation among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, the following recommendations are made:

1. University library management should formalize mentorship structures within academic libraries to clearly define the roles of mentors. Emphasis should be placed not only on general professional guidance but also on research-focused mentorship, including guidance on research design, methodology, academic writing, and publication processes. This will ensure a more structured and consistent mentorship experience across institutions.
2. Since the study found that research competence among early-career library professionals is moderate, universities should organize regular capacity-building programmes, workshops, and hands-on training in areas such as literature review, data analysis, and use of digital research tools. In addition, librarians should be encouraged and supported to attend academic conferences and engage in continuous professional development to strengthen their research capabilities.
3. Institutions should strengthen mentorship programmes by ensuring active mentor-mentee engagement structures, such as scheduled mentoring sessions, research collaborations, and peer review activities. Senior librarians should also be encouraged to involve mentees in ongoing research projects to enhance experiential learning and practical skill acquisition.
4. University libraries should promote a culture of innovation through mentorship by encouraging collaborative problem-solving, digital literacy development, and the adoption of emerging technologies in library services. Management should also support innovation-driven initiatives by recognizing and rewarding librarians who demonstrate creativity and introduce new service models.



5. To address the identified challenges, university administrations should reduce excessive workload on senior librarians to allow time for mentoring activities, provide institutional support and recognition for mentorship roles as part of performance evaluation, organize formal mentorship training programmes for senior librarians and improve access to technological tools and research resources that support mentorship activities.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study on the mentorship roles of academic librarians in enhancing research competence and innovation among early-career library professionals in selected federal, state, and private universities in Osun State, Nigeria, is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the study is limited to six selected universities in Osun State (two federal, two state, and two private universities). Although these institutions provide a balanced representation of different ownership structures, the findings may not fully reflect the situation in other universities across Nigeria. Therefore, generalization of the results beyond the study area should be done with caution. Secondly, the study relies on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Respondents may overestimate or underestimate their experiences and perceptions of mentorship, research competence, and innovation, thereby affecting the accuracy of some responses. Thirdly, the study focuses mainly on academic librarians and early-career library professionals, excluding other categories of library users and stakeholders who may also benefit from mentorship practices. This narrow focus may limit broader perspectives on mentorship effectiveness in academic libraries. In addition, differences in institutional policies, staffing capacity, and resource availability across federal, state, and private universities may have influenced respondents' experiences, which may not be fully captured in the study analysis. Finally, constraints such as time and financial limitations also affected the extent of data collection and coverage, as the study was conducted within a defined academic period. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into mentorship practices and their influence on research competence and innovation in academic libraries within Osun State, Nigeria.

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