

**COUNSELLORS PERCEPTION OF PEER MENTORING ON STUDENTS’
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine counsellors’ perception of online peer mentoring on students’ academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. One research question and one null hypothesis were tested at .05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. The population for the study comprised all the 55 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 298 public secondary schools in Enugu State under the control of Post Primary School Management Board. The entire population of 55 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 298 public secondary schools in Enugu State was used for the study. No sampling was done because the population is manageable. A self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. The reliability coefficient stood at .82, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for the study. The researcher administered the instrument directly to the 55 respondents using six research assistants. Out of the 55 copies of the instrument administered only 48 were correctly filled and returned. Mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research question that guided the study, while t-test statistic at .05 level of significance was used to test the null hypothesis formulated for the study. Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that male and female guidance counsellors perceived that online peer mentoring influenced students’ academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State to a great extent. This was supported by the fact that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors’ perception of online peer mentoring on students’ academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. The researcher recommended among

others that online peer mentoring should be encouraged and adopted in secondary schools so as to improve students' academic performance in Enugu State.

Keywords: *Counsellors, Peer Mentoring, Students, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools*

Introduction

Peer refers to a person of equal standing, rank, or ability within a social group. It can also refer to a member of the same age, social status, or professional group, such as "academic peers" or "workplace peers. According to Reeves (2023) peer refers to a person of the same age, grade, or social status, forming a "peer group" with shared interests and activities. Children and adolescents, for example, develop a significant part of their social and emotional skills through interactions with their peers. This developmental process may be referred to as mentoring.

Mentoring is a relationship that takes place between different individuals to share knowledge, skills, or even experiences. It is defined as a relationship in which a mentor facilitates the personal and professional growth and development of another practitioner (the mentee)' (Ersin & Atay, 2021). Similarly, Egbo (2025) defined mentorship as a relationship between two people where the person with more experience, knowledge, and connections is able to pass along what he has learned to a more junior person within a given field. Egbo added that the more senior person is the mentor and the more junior person is the mentee. Chronus (2024) posited that mentoring offers a wealth of benefits for both mentors and mentees, fostering personal and professional growth, enhancing skills, and building stronger connections. Thus, Mentees gain valuable guidance, support, and new perspectives, while mentors develop leadership skills, increase job satisfaction, and expand their professional networks. Related to this form of mentoring is peer mentoring.

The term 'peer mentoring' is usually defined as a reciprocal relationship that fosters the development of skills, knowledge, potentials, and competencies, benefiting all parties involved. It is a form of mentorship that usually takes place between a person who has lived through a specific experience (mentor) and a person of similar age who is new to that experience (mentee) (Chapman & Collins, 2019). According to DeMarinis, (2017) peer mentoring is defined as having a more experienced student engaging with a less experienced student to focus on performance, academic growth, knowledge, support, and advice. It is a form of educational process that allows personal and professional development between individuals and promotes the benefits of the educational institution (Woolhouse & Nicholson, 2020). Peer mentoring usually involves individualized guidance provided by senior students to assist other students in developing effective study habits, setting goals, managing their time, and accessing campus resources and academic developments (Ball & Hennessy, 2020).

Peer mentoring enhances positive self-reported school experiences as students learn both social and academic skills from peer-to-peer interactions. Students often look to other students for guidance on how to navigate the world around them (Colvin & Ashman, 2020), including navigating an intimidating transition like the first year in school. Study by Lane (2020) indicated that peer mentoring could enhance academic performance and satisfaction for both mentors and mentees, which ultimately led to positive retention. Seery (2021) found that ongoing peer mentoring relationships could serve as a strong foundation for successful and sustainable partnerships in later stages of life.

Considering the importance of peer mentoring, a lot of scholarly attention has been paid to its impact and benefits in educational settings. It is worthy to note that while peer mentoring generally aims to benefit students, they can have negative impacts in some cases, particularly if not organized properly. Young and Perrewe (2020) stated that if the mentor or mentee has negative attitudes or behaviours, these can be transmitted to the other, potentially exacerbating existing problems or introducing new ones. Wentzel (2019) posited that students may feel pressured to adopt the behaviours or opinions of their mentor, even if they are not beneficial. In some cases, according to Blum (2022) peer mentoring can increase anxiety, particularly if the mentee feels pressured to perform or is intimidated by the mentor. Consequently, Udede (2023) revealed that a poorly designed peer mentoring programs can actually contribute to higher dropout rates, particularly if they exacerbate existing negative influences or fail to address underlying issues.

Despite these negative impacts of peer mentoring, a review by Wilton (2021) suggested that the impact of peer mentoring went beyond the scope of grades and wellbeing, as there was evidence of improvement in students' retention rates and their social assimilation after participating in school peer mentoring programme. Study by Yu (2023) indicated that peer mentoring effectively served as a stress-reducing intervention among secondary school students. The mentees received consistent support on academic assistance, intercultural knowledge, and self-improvement skills, which were helpful for their academic performance. Langhout (2024) identified peer mentoring styles to improve students' academic performance in secondary school among which include: online peer mentoring.

Online peer mentoring, also known as e-mentoring or virtual mentoring, is a structured or informal relationship where individuals (mentees) receive guidance, support, and advice from their peers (mentors) through online platforms. It differs from traditional face-to-face mentoring by utilizing technology for communication and interaction. Online peer mentoring can help combat feelings of isolation, particularly in online learning environments, by providing a sense

of belonging and support. Online peer mentoring involves using technology to connect less experienced individuals with their more experienced peers for support, guidance, and learning. According to Rex (2021) this form of mentoring can take place through various online platforms, like video calls, messaging apps, or dedicated online learning platforms. Dike (2023) posited that online peer mentoring can foster a sense of community, promote social connectedness, and provide academic or psychosocial support, particularly beneficial for those who may face barriers to traditional face-to-face interactions. Beilu (2022) online peer mentoring can be more accessible for individuals who may have geographical, time, or physical limitations that prevent them from participating in face-to-face mentoring.

Online peer mentoring provide academic support, psychosocial support, and help mentees navigate challenges in their learning or professional development. Faga (2023) noted that online peer mentoring can lead to improved grades, increased motivation, and a greater sense of confidence in academic abilities. Adeje (2023) argued that online peer mentoring, while offering flexibility and accessibility mentoring, presents several disadvantages. These according to Adeje (2023) include; potential difficulties in establishing rapport and trust, challenges with non-verbal communication, and the possibility of technology-related issues impacting the mentoring experience. Dike (2023) revealed that there is a risk of negative mentoring experiences, such as mentors lacking competence or mentees feeling pressured to perform at the same level as their mentor. Terdoo (2023) asserted that technical glitches, slow internet, or unfamiliarity with mentoring software can disrupt the flow of communication and create frustration. Compared to face-to-face peer mentoring, there's less research evidence supporting the effectiveness of online peer mentoring (Ugwu, 2019).

Online /E-mentoring has recently been linked to academic, professional, and psychosocial development and lessens the drawbacks of the conventional mentoring technique. In the information age, mentoring techniques including e-mentoring, tele-mentoring, and computer-mediated communication (CMC) are common (Haran & Jeyaraj, 2019). It is simple for the mentor and mentee to speak with one another from and to any location. E-mentoring, according to Bierema and Merriam (2022), has more potential for effective mentoring. In comparison to the conventional mentoring strategy, this offers more benefits. This incorporates the exchange's egalitarian characteristics and lacks any boundaries in its construction. According to Noe (2019), the psychosocial aspects of e-mentoring provide precise guidance for interpersonal skills connected to the workplace. The effectiveness of e-mentoring depends on the mentor's performance, internet and bandwidth capabilities, time and geographic restrictions, and technological prowess. Geographic and scheduling restrictions are not obstacles for efficient mentoring, according to Peg and Muller (2025), because they connect the mentors and mentees on their own. Although Kevin-Hunt and Glen-Atherfold (2024) contended that ineffective communication techniques, a lack of trust, and the misalignment of time zones between two different geographical locations may hinder e-mentoring practice, the special qualities of electronic communications can improve the mentoring relationship. E-mentoring practice may also

be hampered by incorrect setup and poor administration of internet technologies (Schechter, 2024).

Computer-mediated mentoring gives students new means to communicate with their mentors in an era when online and remote education is on the rise. The effectiveness of online mentoring has been the subject of studies in the field of education. Technology is a crucial component of e-mentoring relationships because it makes it possible to bridge the mentor-mentee relationship more effectively and foster a number of vital functions, including the development of the person's role-modeling, psychosocial, and professional abilities (Bierema & Merriam, 2022). Despite being a relatively new phenomenon, e-mentoring has already garnered some detractors. Participants in the survey by Bierema and Merriam (2022) identified an absence of facial emotions and an inability to understand the body language of another individual as the most significant problem of online mentoring. Study Noe (2019) have also uncovered similar problem with online coaching. When it is asynchronous, online mentoring is one of the most controversial forms of instruction because it precludes both the mentor and the mentee from viewing the other person's facial expressions and body language.

The mentorship program is able to make use of a variety of contact channels, beginning with a face-to-face encounter, then moving on to a chat by phone or Skype, phone call, email, virtual classroom or Facebook. In the strange world of the 21st century, a mixed communication model may be an excellent and practical solution for individuals to construct and sustain their professional and social connection growth (Murphy, 2021). It is worthy to note that mentoring has been part of the educational process over the years; however not strengthen as a measure of enhancing students' academic performance. Onyeike and Nwosu (2018) noted that peer mentoring appear to have the potential to enhance academic performance of students in secondary schools. This is because it is devoid of tension and fear. However, what is not certain is counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State. This is the thrust of this study.

The secondary school stage is a very important level of education in Nigeria where solid foundation for higher education and useful living is laid. Unachukwu (2024) defined secondary education as the bridge between the primary and tertiary level. According to Ogohi (2020), secondary school is an institution of learning that develops the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor attributes of the learners as a means of making them better citizens and in preparation for tertiary education. Secondary education serves as a critical bridge between primary education and higher learning, equipping students with foundational knowledge and skills for personal development and societal contribution. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013), secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before tertiary stage. The broad goal of Nigerian secondary education as specified by the FRN (2013) is summed up to be; preparing students for useful living within the society and higher education. These preparations seem to rely heavily on students' academic performance as a yardstick for entrance to higher education.

Students' academic performance could be defined as the learning outcomes of the child. This includes the knowledge, skills and ideas, acquired and obtained through their course of study within and outside the classroom situation (Epunam, 2019). Academic performance relates to academic subjects a child studies in school and the skills the child is expected to master in each (Kathryn, 2020). Academic performance encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school and into post-secondary years and working life (Steinberger, 2015). Pandney (2018), saw academic performance as the achievement of the pupils in the subjects they study in the school. Wende (2023) noted that secondary school students in Nigeria face a mix of challenges and successes in their academic performance. Zever (2023) averred that online peer mentoring can lead to better academic outcomes, including higher grades, increased course completion rates, and enhanced engagement with learning materials.

Research on peer mentoring on the academic performance of students has been conducted with conflicting results. Study by Graham (2022) showed that online peer mentoring had a statistically significant impact on students' learning achievement, as evidenced by an increase in the average GPA from 2.41 to 2.83. Study by Crisp and Cruz (2024) showed that online peer mentoring enhances academic excellence and there is a positive relationship between proper mentoring and high academic achievement at all levels of education. Musyoka (2023) found that online peer mentorship helps students to cope with stress and obstacles in their academic journey. Despite a range of evidence supporting the positive impacts of peer mentoring, there were studies indicating that peer mentoring did not significantly influence students' academic performance (Blankenship, 2020) and Koke (2022) for example, found that online peer mentoring had neither a significant effect on students' grade points nor their retention rates in a bi-weekly mentoring programme. The study suggested that the duration and frequency of online peer mentoring meetings might have had negative impacts on students' time management, which in turn negatively impacted their academic performance. Despite these results, other studies discussed above have found benefits of peer mentoring on students' academic performance. These conflicting results suggest the need for further research into this issue, specifically, with regards to Guidance counsellors in secondary school in Enugu State.

A guidance counsellor is a professionally trained individual in the field of guidance and counselling, who through his training is equipped with the ability to help people out of their maladjustment problems. According to Egbo (2023) school guidance counsellors is an expert in his area of specialization who has also cultivated skills in helping people understand their situation, clarify their values and make informed decision for which they assume responsibility, while teacher counsellor refers to a teacher who takes on counselling duties to help students with personal difficulties and overall well-being beyond academic instruction. Asogwa (2021) posited that teachers are not trained therapists, and offering emotional support can sometimes feel

overwhelming, especially when faced with a student's complex issues. Thus, teacher counsellors are only given counsellors' role to play out of need or their level of experience, while the school guidance counsellors are the professionally trained personal in the field of guidance and counselling. This difference therefore gave rise to the need to focus this study on guidance counsellors perception of peer mentoring on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Enugu State with regards to gender. Thus, counsellors' gender is a factor of serious concern in this study.

Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of individuals, encompassing both the social and personal aspects of being male, female, or non-binary. It is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond biological sex and is shaped by societal norms, cultural expectations, and personal self-identification (Duake, 2021). Societies often have established norms, expectations, and behaviours associated with being a man, woman, or other gender identities. Swend (2021) stated that gender is not solely determined by biology but is heavily influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which individuals live. Faga (2023) averred that gender is presented alongside other factors such as race, as an antecedent in peer mentoring. Supuru (2020) suggested that same-gender mentoring relationships, such as female-female or male-male, may foster greater comfort and shared experiences, leading to more effective mentoring. This can be particularly relevant in fields where one gender is underrepresented, as it provides positive role models and combats stereotypes. Abega (2021), noted that male and female do not differ significantly in their ability to response to peer mentoring. Cruz (2024) posited that male perceive issues differently from female. Ali (2022), argued that gender has no impact on online peer mentoring in secondary schools. This issue of gender has gained much attention with little or no conclusion, especially as regards to counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

As traditional mentoring style between teacher and students in the secondary school continue to deteriorate in Enugu State, it has become imperative that another mentorship style for addressing students' academic performance be explored. This style is online peer mentoring. It is regrettable that no study available to this researcher was focused on the counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on academic performance of secondary school student in Enugu State. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is motivated to carry out this research on counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Enugu State. This constitutes the gap that this study filled.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that peer mentoring is not given adequate attention in secondary schools in Enugu State, despite the declining status of secondary school students' academic performance. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that little or no time is allotted for mentoring in secondary schools. These being the case, secondary school students are demoralized and do not model after reputable peers within the school environment, resulting to a complete and total behavioural disorder and poor academic performance in secondary schools in the state.

It is unfortunate that while the potential of online peer mentoring is acknowledged, it seems not to be universally adopted practice in Nigerian secondary schools, hence the need to explore counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Enugu State. Although, studies on mentoring have been explored and adopted for addressing students' adjustment issues in secondary schools by education stakeholders, no study to the knowledge of the researcher is targeted towards addressing the online peer mentoring on academic performance of secondary schools in Enugu State. This calls for a serious concern as the gap created by this is long overdue. It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to investigate the counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to ascertain counsellors' perception of peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain:

1. counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

2. What are counsellors' perceptions of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

3. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. Descriptive survey research design, according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. A descriptive survey research is concerned with specified population of persons, item or situation, in a defined geographical location. It involves the collection of relevant data about the population that enables the description of the person, items or situations the way they are (Ndubuisi, 2021). The descriptive survey research design is considered suitable for the study as it solicited for information from the respondents directly and afforded all the respondents equal chance of being chosen for the study. The population for the study comprised all the 55 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 298 public secondary schools in Enugu State under the control of Post Primary School Management Board. It is made of 49 female and 6 male Guidance counsellors in the public secondary school Guidance counsellors in Enugu State. The entire population of 55 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 298 public secondary schools in Enugu State was used for the study. The population is made up of 6 male and 49 Female Guidance counsellors in the public secondary school Guidance counsellors in Enugu State. No sampling was done because the population is manageable.

A self-structured questionnaire named “Counsellors’ Perception of Online Peer Mentoring on Students’ Academic Performance Scale (CPOPMSAPS), developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument has two sections; A and B. Section A contains the respondents’ bio- data while section B was divided into four clusters with 162 items which was structured to assist the researcher in providing answers to the research questions that

guided the study. The instrument was on a 4-point scale with response options of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Little Extent (LE) and Very Little Extent (VLE). Each response option has a numerical value assigned to it as follows;

Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points

Great Extent (GE) = 3 points

Little Extent (LE) = 2 points

Very Little Extent (VLE) = 1 point

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, three draft copies of the instrument together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses, and the developed instrument were given to three experts. Two experts were from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, while the other expert was from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit; Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The experts were requested to assess the relevance, adequacy, suitability and comprehensiveness of the items in addressing the research questions as well as the clarity of the instruction to the respondents. The initial 14 generated items were increased to 16 items as suggested by the validators, while double barrel questions and grammatical errors were corrected as well. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering 20 copies of the questionnaire to a sample of 8 male and 12 female secondary school students from public secondary schools in Ebonyi Enugu State in a trial test to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of all the information they supplied. Data collected from the respondents' responses were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. Cronbach Alpha was used because the instrument was administered once to the respondents and it was poly-dichotomously scored. The reliability coefficient stood at .82, indicating that the instrument is reliable and suitable for the study. The researcher administered the instrument directly to the 55 respondents using six research assistants. The research assistants were briefed by the researcher on the conduct of the exercise, during which they were acquainted with the purpose of the study and how the questionnaire should be administered and collected. Appointments were booked with the respondents for collection at a later day for those who were not able to fill their own copies of the instrument because of the nature of their job. Out of the 55 copies of the instrument administered only 48 were correctly filled and returned. Mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research question that guided the study, while t-test statistic at .05 level of significance was used to test the null hypothesis formulated for the study. On the decision rule, real limits of the numbers were applied. Thus, the upper and lower limits of the mean was used to interpret the respondents mean scores as follows:

Very Great Extent (VGE) — 3.50 — 4.00

Great Extent (GE) — 2.50 — 3.49

Low Extent (LE) — 1.50 — 2.49

Very Low Extent (VLE) — 1.00 — 1.49

The null hypothesis was not rejected when the significant level is less than .05 and was rejected when the significant level is more than .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are counsellors' perceptions of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Counsellors' Perception of Online Peer Mentoring on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary School in Enugu State

S/N	Counsellors' perceptions of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance include;	Male Counsellors (6)			Female Counsellors (42)			Overall (48)		
		Mean	SD	Dec	Mean	SD	Dec	Mean	SD	Dec
1	helping mentees achieve a targeted skill development online	3.00	1.10	GE	2.88	1.02	GE	2.90	1.02	GE
2	enhancing practical capabilities in mentees online	3.50	.55	GE	3.40	.63	GE	3.42	.61	GE
3	providing collaborative feedback from mentees online	2.67	1.03	GE	2.64	1.01	GE	2.65	1.00	GE
4	online faster skill acquisition	3.33	.52	GE	3.29	.60	GE	3.29	.58	GE
5	arrangement of inspirational experience for mentees online	3.00	1.10	GE	3.05	.96	GE	3.04	.97	GE
6	offering of useful suggestions to mentees online	3.50	.55	GE	3.38	.62	GE	3.40	.61	GE
7	easy access to mentees	2.33	1.03	LE	2.29	.97	LE	2.29	.97	LE
8	make certain mentees abilities known by others online	2.83	1.17	GE	2.88	1.04	GE	2.88	1.04	GE

9	help mentees interact with important colleagues online	3.50	.55	GE	3.43	.63	GE	3.44	.62	GE
10	help mentees to learn quickly online	2.83	.98	GE	2.81	.97	GE	2.81	.96	GE
11	help mentees feel less isolated	3.50	.55	GE	3.48	.63	GE	3.48	.62	GE
12	help mentees navigate challenges in their learning	2.83	1.17	GE	2.79	1.09	GE	2.79	1.09	GE
13	provide academic support	2.00	1.10	LE	2.00	1.01	LE	2.00	1.01	LE
14	provide psychosocial support	3.33	.52	GE	3.48	1.27	GE	3.46	1.20	GE
15	improve mentees grade	2.83	1.17	GE	2.86	1.03	GE	2.85	1.03	GE
16	increase motivation	3.00	1.10	GE	2.93	1.07	GE	2.94	1.06	GE
WEIGHTED AVERAGE		3.00	.89	GE	2.97	.90	GE	2.98	.90	GE

Table 1 shows the results obtained from the guidance counsellors perception of the of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State based on gender. The table shows that male guidance counsellors had mean scores ranging from 2.00 to 3.50, while female guidance counsellors had mean scores that ranged from 2.00 to 3.48. The respondents had cluster means of 3.00 and 2.97, with corresponding standard deviations of .89 and .90 respectively. Overall, the mean scores of the respondents ranged from 2.00 to 3.48, with a cluster mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of .90. The close range of the standard deviations scores suggests that the respondents exhibited uniformity in their responses. The results show that male and female guidance counsellors perceived that online peer mentoring to a great extent influenced students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

Table 2: Mean, SD and t-test Analysis of the Scores of Male and Female Guidance Counsellor on their Perception of Online Peer Mentoring on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary School in Enugu State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2tailed)	Decision
Male	6	48.00	4.73	46	.178	.859	NS
Female	42	47.57	5.60				

Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors' perception on their perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. With male (M = 3.00, SD = .89 and female counterpart (M = 2.87, SD = .90), $t(46) = .178$, $P = .859$ ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

Counsellors' Perceptions of Online Peer Mentoring on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary School in Enugu State

Male and female guidance counsellors perceived that online peer mentoring to a great extent influenced students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. More so, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors' perception of online peer mentoring on students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu State. The finding is in consonance with the findings by Dike (2023) who posited that online peer mentoring can foster a sense of community, promote social connectedness, and provide academic or psychosocial support, particularly beneficial for those who may face barriers to traditional face-to-face interactions. The finding agrees with Beilu (2022) who stated that online peer mentoring can be more accessible for individuals who may have geographical, time, or physical limitations that prevent them from participating in face-to-face mentoring. The finding disagree with Dike (2023) revealed that there is a risk of negative mentoring experiences, such as mentors lacking competence or mentees feeling pressured to perform at the same level as their mentor. The finding contradicts Terdoo (2023) who asserted that technical glitches, slow internet, or unfamiliarity with mentoring software can disrupt the

flow of communication and create frustration. Being that online peer mentoring provide academic support, psychosocial support, and help mentees navigate challenges in their learning or professional development. Stakeholders in education should champion campaigns on adoption of online peer mentoring in secondary school students in Enugu State.

Educational Implication of the Findings

The implications of the findings are that;

If guidance counsellors are not efficient enough in their choice of peer mentoring, the school counselling programme and activities may not be effective and counsellors inactive in their profession. This is because, it is expected that the guidance counsellors should be proactive and efficient in mentoring the students. The guidance counsellors are expected to be very close to the students so as to be able to discover their area of deficiencies in academics.

There is an indication that most secondary schools in Enugu State are faced with constant cases of poor peer mentoring in the school environment with little or nothing to do about it. This condition leaves much to be desired of any school environment, hence the school authorities should work with the school guidance counsellors, so as to combat the menace of inappropriate peer mentoring among secondary school students in Enugu State.

The findings of this study hold implications to government which are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring quality education as a vital tool for human and economic development. Thus, policies on peer mentoring should be strictly enforced as it concerns secondary schools students in Enugu State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.

1. Stakeholders in education should champion campaigns on adoption of online peer mentoring in secondary school students Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State.

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