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Strengthening Teaching Excellence and Student Success Through Virtual Mentoring: A Qualitative Exploration with Additional Community Service Perspective

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A B S T R A C T

This qualitative study explores the effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching as a community service initiative aimed at empowering lecturers to enhance their teaching skills and promote student success at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. Using semi-structured interviews, data were collected from 15 lecturers who participated in virtual mentoring programs. Thematic analysis revealed that digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Zoom were most frequently used. Participants reported improvements in teaching confidence, engagement techniques, classroom delivery, and access to real-time feedback. Furthermore, the study found that virtual mentoring contributed to increased student engagement, flexible learning experiences, and improved academic outcomes. Because the program was designed to foster collaboration and peer support, it functioned as a vital form of academic community service. The findings underscore the potential of virtual mentoring in supporting professional development and institutional growth. Recommendations include structured mentoring programs and the wider adoption of digital teaching platforms.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of students in higher education is a direct reflection of the quality and dedication of the educators guiding them. Student achievement is not solely dependent on personal effort or curriculum design but also on the teaching skills, mentorship, and overall professional conduct of lecturers. Academic success encompasses not only good grades and cognitive development but also the acquisition of soft skills, critical thinking abilities, and emotional resilience—all of which are significantly shaped by the learning environment and the educators' influence (Smithikrai *et al.,* 2018). Because lecturers serve as the critical link between the curriculum and students, their professional development should be seen as a form of community service that ultimately enhances institutional and societal progress.

Lecturers are the engine of knowledge dissemination and character formation in universities. They influence not only what students learn but how they apply knowledge in the real world. Therefore, when lecturers improve their pedagogical methods, it results in better classroom interactions, increased student engagement, and higher academic outcomes (Gelishi, 2007). Because of this significant impact, lecturers' teaching competencies must be continuously developed. However, in resource-constrained contexts such as many Nigerian universities, limited access to physical workshops and face-to-face mentoring often hampers professional growth. Virtual mentoring and coaching have thus emerged as effective, flexible solutions for ongoing lecturer development.

Teaching is not just a delivery of content; it is a dynamic process of engaging learners, facilitating understanding, and inspiring intellectual growth. Effective teaching involves using varied strategies that respond to the diverse learning needs, backgrounds, and experiences of students (Messiou *et al.,* 2016). Because students do not all learn the same way, lecturers need to develop a wide repertoire of teaching strategies, reflective practices, and the ability to adapt to different situations. Therefore, mentoring and coaching are essential in equipping educators with the skills necessary to navigate this complexity.

Virtual mentoring and coaching offer a unique opportunity for continuous professional growth without the limitations of physical presence or scheduling conflicts. These platforms create avenues for experienced lecturers to guide their peers, provide feedback, and exchange ideas on best practices. Pedagogical skills involve more than content delivery, they encompass planning, communication, collaboration, and the ability to maintain a conducive learning environment (Dew, 2023). Because these skills evolve with experience and exposure, virtual mentoring plays a vital role in sharing expertise across generations of educators.

Community service in the academic context is not restricted to direct engagement with external communities; it also includes contributing to institutional improvement and peer development. When experienced lecturers provide mentoring to less experienced colleagues, they are performing a service that strengthens the institution and uplifts educational standards. Coaching and mentoring are forms of capacity building that enhance institutional efficiency and individual confidence (Feyissa *et al.,* 2019). Because education is a social good, such internal mentorship has a ripple effect that benefits students, departments, and the broader community.

Virtual mentoring as a form of community service is particularly relevant in the post-COVID era, where digital tools have become central to educational delivery. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of online platforms for teaching, learning, and professional collaboration. Institutions had to innovate rapidly to maintain instructional continuity, and virtual mentoring became a lifeline for many educators navigating unfamiliar digital

environments (Junn *et al.,* 2023). Because mentoring can now occur asynchronously and across platforms, the barriers of time and space have been significantly reduced.

At Al-Hikmah University, virtual mentoring and coaching have become increasingly significant, especially as the institution seeks to uphold excellence in teaching amidst evolving academic demands. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Facebook are not only tools for instructional delivery but also serve as spaces for professional support, feedback exchange, and coaching sessions. Because these tools are accessible and widely used, they have the potential to democratize professional development and make mentoring available to a wider circle of lecturers.

Effective mentoring impacts more than just the mentor and mentee—it affects the entire student body. When lecturers improve their instructional strategies through mentoring, students benefit through clearer explanations, more engaging lessons, and improved assessment techniques. Student success is tied to four key pillars: academic skills, student engagement, faculty interaction, and emotional well-being (Bowden *et al*., 2019). Virtual mentoring helps strengthen these pillars by supporting lecturers in delivering better classroom experiences, which leads to increased student motivation and performance.

Lecturers often face challenges related to workload, time constraints, and limited access to developmental programs. Because of these barriers, virtual mentoring provides a viable alternative that is cost-effective, time-efficient, and easily integrated into the lecturer's routine. It offers flexibility in scheduling and allows mentors to share resources, give feedback, and discuss challenges in real time or asynchronously. As Attard-Tonna's study showed, virtual mentoring helped newly qualified teachers in Malta integrate more effectively into their work environments by offering year-long online support from experienced mentors (Bezuidenhout, 2005).

While mentoring is often viewed as a hierarchical relationship between an experienced individual and a novice, virtual coaching allows for a more collaborative and reciprocal model. In this model, both the mentor and the mentee benefit from mutual learning and reflection. This peer-based approach aligns with community service values, promoting shared responsibility, inclusivity, and collective growth.

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, where funding and training resources are often limited, the integration of virtual mentoring can fill a critical gap. The adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is essential for improving lecturer effectiveness (Yusuf & Alao, 2022). Because virtual mentoring utilizes the same ICT tools, it serves as both a professional development mechanism and a model for digital competence. Institutions that promote such mentoring programs not only enhance lecturer capacity but also demonstrate a commitment to service, innovation, and academic excellence.

Therefore, this study explores the implementation of virtual mentoring and coaching in Al-Hikmah University as a form of community service that empowers lecturers and contributes to student success. The research focuses on identifying the platforms used, understanding their effectiveness in developing teaching skills, and assessing their impact on student learning outcomes. Because educational quality depends heavily on the capabilities of its teaching staff, fostering such mentoring systems is not only desirable but also necessary for institutional advancement.

Mentoring and coaching are not new concepts in education, but their virtual adaptation offers increased scalability and reach. Traditionally, mentoring required face-to-face meetings, scheduled sessions, and institutional resources to coordinate. Now, with the help of technology, mentoring can occur informally or formally across time zones and

departments. This democratizes access to professional development, allowing even lecturers in remote or under-resourced areas to benefit. Because many universities in Nigeria still lack consistent access to professional training, virtual mentoring becomes not just an alternative but a necessity.

Virtual mentoring aligns with the broader goals of community service because it fosters capacity building, knowledge sharing, and institutional development without significant infrastructure costs. Rather than depending on external consultants or expensive training programs, universities can tap into the expertise of their staff. This internal development approach is cost-effective and sustainable, especially in regions where education budgets are limited. By leveraging virtual tools, lecturers can give back to their academic community, strengthening the fabric of the institution from within (Reese, 2016).

One of the major strengths of virtual mentoring is its ability to provide timely feedback and real-time solutions to academic challenges. Because university teaching often involves dynamic interactions, student concerns, and administrative tasks, lecturers benefit from having access to a support system that can offer immediate advice. For example, a lecturer struggling with student engagement in an online class can consult a mentor through WhatsApp or Zoom and receive feedback the same day. This responsiveness accelerates professional growth and ensures that student issues are addressed efficiently.

Virtual coaching also encourages self-reflection and continuous learning. When lecturers engage in mentoring sessions, they are often asked to articulate their teaching strategies, evaluate outcomes, and consider alternative approaches. This reflective practice promotes intentional teaching and helps lecturers refine their pedagogy over time. Intentional instructional delivery is a key driver of student performance (Asregid *et al.*, 2023). Because virtual mentoring enables lecturers to assess and improve their methods regularly, it directly contributes to higher educational standards and, by extension, student success.

Another benefit of virtual mentoring is the creation of professional learning communities. Through consistent online interaction, lecturers begin to form networks of support, trust, and collaboration. These communities can exchange ideas, share lesson plans, discuss research findings, or collaborate on scholarly publications. This collaborative culture strengthens the academic environment and aligns with community service values, as it emphasizes collective growth and mutual responsibility.

From a gender equity perspective, virtual mentoring may also help address disparities in access to professional development. Female lecturers, especially those balancing academic work with family responsibilities, often face challenges attending physical workshops or training sessions. Because virtual mentoring can be conducted from home and scheduled flexibly, it creates more inclusive opportunities for development. Institutions that embrace this model can improve equity in staff training and advancement, making the academic community more representative and just.

Despite these advantages, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and challenges of virtual mentoring. Issues such as poor internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, and limited institutional support can hinder its effectiveness. In many Nigerian universities, consistent access to electricity and the internet remains a barrier. Therefore, for virtual mentoring to thrive, institutions must invest in infrastructure and digital training. However, even with these limitations, the benefits of virtual mentoring—as a form of community service—far outweigh the constraints.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a turning point in the adoption of digital education tools. As campuses closed and physical meetings became impossible, institutions were forced to pivot to online platforms. This disruption highlighted the need for digital resilience and

innovation in education. For many lecturers, the pandemic marked their first exposure to virtual teaching, mentoring, and professional collaboration. Because of this sudden shift, there was a steep learning curve but also a growing recognition of the potential of digital tools to transform higher education (Rof *et al.,* 2022).

Al-Hikmah University, like many institutions globally, had to adapt quickly. Lecturers who were previously unfamiliar with digital platforms found themselves teaching, attending meetings, and collaborating online. In this context, virtual mentoring became essential. Experienced lecturers guided their colleagues through the use of Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, and other platforms. This mentoring helped ensure academic continuity and supported the transition to digital learning environments. Because these mentoring efforts were internally driven and aimed at strengthening the institution during a crisis, they can rightly be seen as a form of community service.

As the pandemic wanes, the legacy of these adaptations continues. Virtual mentoring is no longer viewed as a temporary solution but as a core component of faculty development. Universities are now exploring how to integrate these practices into long-term strategies for professional growth. Because continuous learning is vital in education, virtual mentoring offers a flexible, scalable, and community-oriented way to promote lecturer excellence and student achievement.

The shift to virtual mentoring also reflects broader trends in higher education. Across the globe, institutions are moving towards more hybrid, flexible, and learner-centered models of instruction. This transformation requires lecturers to continuously update their skills, engage with new technologies, and adapt to evolving student needs. Because these demands are ongoing, virtual mentoring provides a sustainable mechanism for equipping educators with the skills and confidence they need.

Moreover, virtual mentoring can bridge the gap between theory and practice. In many professional development workshops, lecturers are introduced to new pedagogical theories but receive little guidance on implementation. Virtual mentoring allows for follow-up discussions, lesson plan revisions, and implementation feedback. Because mentors can observe, advise, and support their peers through digital means, the learning becomes contextualized and actionable.

Finally, virtual mentoring supports the professional identity of lecturers. Teaching in higher education can sometimes feel isolating, especially when educators are dealing with large class sizes, administrative burdens, or personal stress. Being part of a mentoring relationship—whether as a mentor or mentee—creates a sense of belonging and purpose. It reinforces the idea that education is a collaborative endeavor and that each lecturer plays a role in shaping the academic community. Because of this sense of shared responsibility, virtual mentoring fosters a stronger institutional culture and contributes to a more supportive academic environment.

The integration of virtual mentoring and coaching in Al-Hikmah University serves as a powerful tool for professional development, institutional improvement, and community service. By leveraging digital platforms to support teaching excellence and student success, the university is investing in its most valuable asset—its people. Because the strength of any educational institution lies in the quality of its educators, initiatives that promote mentorship, collaboration, and continuous learning should be prioritized and celebrated.

The main purpose of this study is to investigates the effectiveness of effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to in empowering lecturers to enhance their

teaching skills and promote student success in Al-Hikmah University. Specifically, the study would seek to find out:
(i)   Examine the virtual mentoring and coaching platforms used by the lecturers of Al-Hikmah University.
(ii)   Examine effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to enhance their teaching skills
(iii)   Determine the effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to promote student success
The following questions were raised and would be answered:
(i)   What virtual mentoring and coaching platforms are used by the lecturers of Al-Hikmah University?
(ii)   What is the level of effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to enhance their teaching skills?
(iii)   What is the level of effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to promote students' success?

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how virtual mentoring and coaching serve as a form of academic community service that empowers lecturers and improves teaching outcomes. The approach was guided by the intent to understand the lived experiences of lecturers at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, who participated in virtual mentoring and coaching programs, not only for personal professional development but also as a service to the academic community—enhancing teaching quality and student success.

Purposive sampling was used to select 15 lecturers across various departments who had actively engaged in virtual mentoring and coaching initiatives within the university. Their participation in these platforms, as both mentors and mentees, was considered a form of academic service aimed at uplifting the broader university teaching community.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect in-depth narratives regarding the platforms used, the mentoring strategies adopted, and the perceived effects on teaching and learning. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to extract key patterns and insights.

To ensure ethical integrity, the researchers obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Science Education, Al-Hikmah University. Informed consent was secured from all participants. Respondents were informed of the confidentiality of their responses and that their participation was voluntary. The interviews were conducted at times convenient for the lecturers, further respecting their availability as a community service consideration.

To validate the instrument, two experts from the Department of Social Science Education at the University of Ilorin reviewed the interview schedule to confirm face and content validity. The researchers ensured that the questions aligned with the goals of exploring virtual mentoring and coaching as a means of serving the academic community and improving student learning.

Data analysis involved thematic coding, with particular attention paid to themes of empowerment, peer learning, institutional improvement, and contributions to student development. These themes were interpreted within the framework of virtual mentoring and coaching as academic community service, positioning the lecturers not just as beneficiaries but also as contributors to collective growth and educational advancement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1 shows that the sample included 15 respondents; 9 respondents (60.00%) were males, while 6 (40.00%) respondents were females. All respondents were qualified (100%), 11 respondents (73.33%) were experienced, while 4 (26.66%) were less-experienced.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of lecturers.

Variables	Options	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	9	60.00
	Female	6	40.00
Academic	Qualified	15	100
Qualification	Unqualified	0	0.00
Experience	Experienced	11	73.33
	Less experienced	4	26.66

3.2. Research Questions 1: What Virtual Mentoring and Coaching Platforms are used by the Lecturers of Al-Hikmah University?

The study sought to identify the virtual mentoring and coaching platforms employed by lecturers at Al-Hikmah University (**Table 2**). Through an analysis of mean scores and rank order, the most commonly used platforms were identified. WhatsApp, with a mean score of 3.98, emerged as the most frequently used platform, underscoring its significance in virtual mentoring and coaching. Following closely, Facebook achieved a mean score of 3.26, placing it second. Zoom, with a mean score of 2.35, was the third most utilized platform, emphasizing its importance for video conferencing and interactive sessions. Telegram, which scored a mean of 2.10, ranked fourth, indicating moderate usage among the lecturers. YouTube, with a mean score of 2.05, was fifth, highlighting its role in providing video content and tutorials. Google Classroom, with a mean score of 1.87, ranked sixth, reflecting its relatively lower yet notable use for educational purposes. Finally, Snapchat, with the lowest mean score of 1.24, ranked seventh, showing its minimal use in the context of virtual mentoring and coaching. The findings illustrate a varied use of virtual platforms among lecturers, with a clear preference for instant messaging and social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, while educational-specific tools like Google Classroom and Snapchat are less frequently utilized.

Table 2. Mean and rank order analysis on common virtual coaching and mentoring platforms.

S/N	Virtual Platforms	Mean	Rank Order
1.	Whatsapp	3.98	First
2.	Facebook	3.26	Second
3.	Zoom	2.35	Third
4.	Telegram	2.10	Forth
5.	YouTube	2.05	Fifth
6.	Google Classroom	1.87	Sixth
7.	Snapchat	1.24	Seventh

3.3. Research Question 2: What is The Level of Effectiveness of Virtual Mentoring and Coaching in Empowering Lecturers to Enhance their Teaching Skills?

The analysis of responses regarding the effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in enhancing lecturers' teaching skills reveals several key insights. One respondent highlighted that:

Flexibility and accessibility of virtual platforms, noting that the ability to join sessions from any location, whether office or home, has been transformative. This convenience allows for more consistent participation, which is crucial, given her busy schedule.

Additionally, the respondent appreciated the variety of resources available through these platforms, such as recorded sessions and supplementary materials. These resources provide a comprehensive learning experience, enabling them to review content at their own pace and apply new techniques effectively. Personalized feedback from mentors was also highlighted as a vital component. This tailored feedback helps identify specific areas for improvement, making the mentoring process more targeted and impactful. Another respondent:

Focused on the increased engagement and interaction facilitated by virtual platforms. He noted that the interactive nature of virtual sessions, which includes live discussions and collaborative activities, has significantly boosted their engagement with both mentors and peers.

This interaction is seen as highly beneficial, fostering a more dynamic and participatory learning environment. The respondent also emphasized the role of virtual mentoring in skill development and confidence building. They reported gaining new teaching techniques and methodologies, which they might not have discovered independently. This has led to a notable increase in their confidence in the classroom. Furthermore, the ability to address and solve teaching-related problems in real time was highlighted as a key advantage. The immediacy of seeking advice and implementing solutions has been particularly valuable, making the mentoring process more effective and responsive to their needs. Overall, the responses indicate that virtual mentoring and coaching are highly effective in enhancing teaching skills. The themes of flexibility, accessibility, diverse resources, personalized feedback, increased engagement, skill development, and real-time problem-solving collectively demonstrate the comprehensive benefits of virtual mentoring. These elements empower lecturers to improve their teaching methodologies, engage more effectively with their mentors and peers, and build confidence in their professional abilities. The positive impact of virtual mentoring and coaching is evident in the increased competence and confidence of lecturers, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes

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while educational-specific tools like Google Classroom and Snapchat are less frequently utilized.

3.4. Research Question 3: What is The Level of Effectiveness of Virtual Mentoring and Coaching in Empowering Lecturers to Promote Students' Success?

To evaluate the effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching in empowering lecturers to enhance student success, we examined responses from lecturers who used platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom, Telegram, YouTube, Google Classroom, and Snapchat. Their experiences shed light on various ways these virtual tools have impacted their teaching and student outcomes. Based on the response of a respondent:

The respondent highlighted the effectiveness of WhatsApp and Zoom for real-time communication and collaboration. WhatsApp groups enabled continuous interaction with students, allowing for quick questions and clarifications to be addressed promptly. This immediate feedback was crucial in maintaining student engagement and motivation. Zoom sessions facilitated interactive and dynamic teaching methods, using live video discussions and breakout rooms to create a more engaging and participatory learning environment. This approach helped deliver complex concepts effectively and provided real-time problem-solving and personalized support for students struggling with specific topics.

Another respondent emphasized:

The role of YouTube and Google Classroom in providing structured and accessible learning materials. YouTube was cited as an excellent platform for sharing pre-recorded lectures and supplementary videos that students could access at their convenience. This flexibility allowed students to learn at their own pace, reinforcing their understanding of the material. Google Classroom was praised for its ability to organize and manage coursework efficiently. Assignments, quizzes, and reading materials were easily distributed and collected, streamlining the learning process and helping students stay on track.

The lecturers agreed that virtual mentoring and coaching significantly enhanced their ability to support student success. Key themes from their experiences included increased accessibility, personalized support, interactive learning environments, and efficient resource management. They noted that these platforms provided a more flexible and responsive approach to teaching, which was particularly beneficial in addressing the diverse needs of students. Overall, the thematic analysis reveals that virtual mentoring and coaching are highly effective in empowering lecturers to promote student success. The combination of real-time communication, interactive sessions, accessible learning materials, and efficient course management tools provided by platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, YouTube, and Google Classroom has created a more engaging and supportive learning environment. This has positively impacted student performance and engagement, underscoring the transformative potential of virtual mentoring and coaching in education (Gamage *et al.,* 2021).

The results of this study emphasize that virtual mentoring and coaching play a significant role not only in developing individual lecturer capacity but also in strengthening academic communities through shared expertise and collaborative learning. From a community service perspective, these virtual engagements allow experienced educators to uplift their peers by sharing best practices, offering real-time support, and mentoring in inclusive, accessible digital spaces. This promotes a culture of mutual development that ultimately benefits the student population (Fong *et al.,* 2012).

The popularity of platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook reflects a practical and low-barrier approach to academic community building. These tools are easy to use and widely

available, enabling peer-to-peer interaction, mentorship, and collaborative discussions that would otherwise be limited by geographical constraints. Their accessibility supports inclusive participation and mirrors the community service model by focusing on grassroots knowledge exchange and collective impact (Rof *et al.*, 2022).

Lecturers reported that virtual mentoring programs contributed significantly to their teaching strategies, classroom engagement, and confidence. These benefits extend beyond the individual and contribute to overall institutional success by fostering a more robust academic environment. When lecturers improve their instructional delivery, students benefit through enhanced comprehension, motivation, and performance, aligning with the objectives of community-based academic service (Dew, 2023).

The use of platforms such as YouTube and Google Classroom further highlights the role of virtual tools in supporting collaborative teaching development. These platforms allow lecturers to contribute educational content, mentor less-experienced colleagues, and participate in wider institutional efforts to reform and enhance instructional practices. Such contributions illustrate how teaching becomes a form of service to the community of learners and educators (Yusuf & Alao, 2022).

The respondents also emphasized that virtual mentoring enabled them to address immediate challenges in teaching, such as classroom management, student engagement, and content delivery. The ability to receive timely feedback and implement improvements illustrates the dynamic and responsive nature of virtual coaching. This real-time support enhances professional identity and contributes to the ethos of academic responsibility and service (Asregid *et al.,* 2023).

Moreover, these mentoring practices promote equity by making professional development opportunities more accessible. Lecturers from different departments and backgrounds can participate without limitations related to time, space, or rank. This inclusivity fosters a supportive academic culture and reflects community service values, particularly in the context of higher education institutions aiming to uplift internal stakeholders and promote academic excellence (Bowden *et al.*, 2019).

In summary, virtual mentoring and coaching have demonstrated powerful potential as tools for academic community service. They bridge experience gaps, provide structured support, and improve teaching outcomes. When institutions invest in these platforms and recognize their dual role in professional development and community engagement, they create a collaborative culture that empowers educators and enriches students' academic journeys (Fong *et al.*, 2012; Reese, 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the effectiveness of virtual mentoring and coaching platforms in enhancing lecturers' teaching skills and promoting student success at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. The findings revealed that these platforms (particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom, and Google Classroom) served as vital tools not only for professional development but also for fostering a supportive academic community. The virtual mentoring process empowered lecturers by improving their instructional techniques, confidence, and capacity for student engagement. Importantly, the study underscores that virtual mentoring and coaching are not isolated professional activities; rather, they are forms of community service within the academic environment. By sharing expertise, offering guidance, and supporting peers, lecturers fulfill a vital communal role that extends beyond individual improvement to institutional advancement. Moreover, the positive impact on student outcomes (through improved teaching quality, accessibility to learning materials, and increased interaction)

demonstrates how virtual mentorship contributes to educational equity and collective growth. As higher education continues to evolve, institutions should recognize and invest in virtual mentoring and coaching not only as a developmental tool but also as a strategic vehicle for strengthening academic communities through service and collaboration. Based on the findings and the recognition of virtual mentoring and coaching as a form of academic community service, the following recommendations are proposed:

(i) Institutionalize Virtual Mentoring as Community Service: Al-Hikmah University should formally recognize virtual mentoring and coaching activities as structured community service within the academic setting. This will encourage more lecturers to actively engage in supporting their peers and students, thereby fostering a collaborative and service-oriented academic culture.

(ii) Provide Training on Digital Mentoring Tools: Comprehensive training sessions should be conducted for lecturers to effectively use both popular and academic-specific platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, and Google Classroom. This ensures equitable access to mentoring opportunities and maximizes the platforms' benefits for instructional delivery and peer support.

(iii) Encourage Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Programs: The university should develop and support peer mentoring systems that allow experienced lecturers to guide newer colleagues. This not only improves pedagogical skills but strengthens institutional capacity through a shared sense of responsibility and service.

(iv) Integrate Mentoring into Professional Development Plans: Virtual mentoring and coaching should be embedded into the university's continuous professional development framework. This guarantees sustained engagement, promotes reflective teaching practices, and highlights mentorship as a critical component of community empowerment.

(v) Monitor and Evaluate Mentoring Impact: A feedback mechanism should be implemented to track the effectiveness of virtual mentoring programs. This helps in refining strategies, ensuring accountability, and documenting how mentoring contributes to teaching improvement and student achievement as part of the university's outreach and community service mission.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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