Tutor Support System and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study examined the relationship between tutor support systems and student retention in distance learning programs at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. The research adopted a correlational survey design with a population of approximately 4,500 undergraduate students enrolled in various distance learning programs during the 2024/2025 academic session. Using the stratified random sampling technique, 350 students were selected as the study sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Tutor Support Systems and Student Retention Questionnaire." The instrument's validity was established through expert review by three specialists in adult education and measurement and evaluation, while reliability was determined through pilot testing yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between all three dimensions of tutor support and student retention: academic support ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0.05$), administrative support ($r = 0.80$, $p < 0.05$), and communication/interaction support ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that tutor support systems are crucial determinants of student retention in distance learning programs, with communication and interaction support showing the strongest relationship with student persistence. The study recommended, among others, that administrators of the National Open University of Nigeria should establish one-on-one mentoring relationships between tutors and students, with regular meetings to discuss academic progress, address learning challenges, and provide individualized guidance based on student needs and career aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education in Nigeria has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades, with distance learning emerging as a critical component of the educational ecosystem. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), established in 2002, represents the country's flagship institution for open and distance learning, serving as the largest university in Nigeria by student enrollment and national spread and the only institution licensed by the National Universities Commission to offer single-mode open and distance education to learners in Nigeria. This institutional prominence positions NOUN as a vital player in expanding access to higher education, particularly for learners who cannot access conventional university education due to various constraints.

Distance learning in Nigeria has evolved from a peripheral educational option to a mainstream delivery mode, particularly accelerated by technological advancements and changing societal needs. The pervasive influence of computer technology has catalyzed a surge in online learning within the country, yielding positive educational outcomes. This technological integration has created new possibilities for educational delivery while simultaneously presenting unique challenges related to student engagement, support, and retention.

The growth of distance learning has been further influenced by Nigeria's educational challenges, including limited infrastructure, geographical barriers, and the need to accommodate diverse learner populations. Nigeria's federal government has been dominated by instability since declaring independence from Britain, and as a result, a unified set of education policies is yet to be successfully implemented. Regional differences in quality, curriculum, and funding characterize the education system. These systemic challenges have made distance learning an increasingly attractive alternative for expanding educational access while addressing resource constraints.

Student retention in distance learning programs represents a persistent challenge across educational institutions worldwide. Unlike traditional face-to-face programs, distance learning environments present unique barriers to student persistence, including social isolation, reduced interaction with faculty and peers, technological challenges, and limited access to support services. Student retention measures how many students re-enroll in your college or university, making it a critical indicator of institutional effectiveness and student success.

Recent research has identified multiple factors that contribute to student retention challenges in distance learning environments. Nearly 60% of surveyed students considered dropping out due to financial stress, and 19% actually dropped out, primarily citing financial uncertainty. However, beyond financial considerations, academic support systems, particularly tutor support, have emerged as crucial determinants of student persistence and success in distance learning programs.

Tutor support systems serve as the primary bridge between students and educational institutions in distance learning contexts. These systems encompass various forms of academic, administrative, and personal support designed to

enhance student learning experiences and outcomes. Research has consistently demonstrated that effective tutor support can significantly impact student retention, satisfaction, and academic performance in distance learning programs.

The importance of tutor support in distance learning environments cannot be overstated. Tutoring support as a predictor of student retention in distance learning has been established through various research studies, indicating that quality tutoring services can serve as a protective factor against student dropout. Effective tutor support systems typically include academic guidance, technical assistance, motivational support, and personalized feedback on student progress.

Nigeria's distance learning landscape presents unique contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of tutor support systems and their impact on student retention. The country's diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic landscape creates both opportunities and challenges for distance learning delivery. At the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), our programs are tailored to make learning accessible, flexible, and available for you, reflecting the institution's commitment to addressing diverse learner needs.

The technological infrastructure in Nigeria presents both opportunities and constraints for distance learning delivery. While the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has ushered in a paradigm shift towards a more technologically driven landscape, demonstrating its efficacy as an emergent strategy, significant gaps remain in technological access and digital literacy among learners. These disparities can impact the effectiveness of tutor support systems and influence student retention patterns.

The Port Harcourt Centre of NOUN represents a significant hub for distance learning in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Located in Rivers State, the center serves a diverse student population with varying educational backgrounds, career aspirations, and life circumstances. The center's strategic location in the oil-rich Niger Delta region provides unique opportunities to serve learners from various industries and professional backgrounds.The demographic profile of students at NOUN Port Harcourt Centre reflects the broader characteristics of distance learning populations, including working adults, parents, and individuals seeking career advancement or change. This diversity presents both opportunities for innovative tutor support approaches and challenges in meeting varied learner needs and expectations.

The educational landscape in Nigeria is increasingly embracing technological innovations to enhance learning experiences and support systems. Despite these advancements, a considerable number of educational institutions in Nigeria have yet to leverage AI technologies. This gap presents opportunities for institutions like NOUN to pioneer innovative approaches to tutor support that integrate emerging technologies with traditional support mechanisms.

The integration of artificial intelligence and digital platforms in education has created new possibilities for personalized tutor support. "AI helps us to learn; it can serve as a tutor; it can be anything you want it to be, depending on the prompt you write" represents the emerging perspective on technology-enhanced learning support.

However, the implementation of such technologies requires careful consideration of local contexts, infrastructure limitations, and user readiness. Understanding student retention in distance learning requires the application of multiple theoretical frameworks that address the complexity of learner persistence. Tinto's Theory of Student Departure provides a foundational framework for understanding how academic and social integration influences student retention. In distance learning contexts, this theory emphasizes the importance of creating meaningful connections between students and their educational institutions through effective support systems.

The Community of Inquiry framework, developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, offers another relevant theoretical perspective for understanding how tutor support contributes to student retention. This framework emphasizes the importance of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in creating effective learning communities. Tutor support systems play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining these presences in distance learning environments.

Despite the growing body of research on distance learning and student retention, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific dynamics of tutor support systems in Nigerian contexts. Much of the existing research has been conducted in developed countries with different technological, cultural, and economic contexts. The limited research on Nigerian distance learning institutions, particularly regarding tutor support effectiveness, creates a compelling need for context-specific investigations.

Furthermore, while NOUN has been operational for over two decades, there remains limited empirical research examining the relationship between tutor support systems and student retention at specific centers. The Port Harcourt Centre, serving a unique demographic and geographical context, presents an opportunity to contribute valuable insights to the broader understanding of distance learning effectiveness in Nigeria.

The broader context of student support services in Nigerian higher education provides important background for understanding the significance of tutor support in distance learning. President Bola Tinubu, on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, signed into law the Student Loans (Access to Higher Education) (Repeal and Re-enactment) Bill, 2024. The Act is of historic proportions, as it seeks to guarantee sustainable higher education and functional skill development for all Nigerian students. This legislative development underscores the government's commitment to improving access to higher education, making the effectiveness of distance learning programs increasingly important.

The evolution of student support services in Nigerian universities reflects broader changes in educational philosophy and practice. Traditional support models designed for campus-based students may not adequately address the unique needs of distance learners, necessitating innovative approaches to tutor support that recognize the distinct characteristics of this population.

Quality assurance in distance learning has become increasingly important as institutions seek to maintain standards while expanding access. Customer satisfaction is critical for the survival of any business. The higher education space

in Ghana, Africa, and the global stage has become very competitive, and therefore student satisfaction has become a key consideration for institutional success. While this research focuses on Ghana, the competitive dynamics in African higher education are similar across the continent, including Nigeria.

The relationship between tutor support quality and student retention represents a critical component of institutional effectiveness in distance learning. Effective tutor support systems can serve as quality indicators while simultaneously contributing to improved retention outcomes. This dual function makes tutor support systems particularly important for institutions like NOUN that serve large, diverse student populations.

The ongoing digital transformation of education presents both opportunities and challenges for tutor support systems in distance learning. We need to not be afraid of implementing technology in the classroom, reflecting the growing recognition of technology's role in enhancing educational experiences. However, successful technology integration requires careful consideration of user needs, infrastructure capabilities, and institutional readiness.
The emergence of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies offers new possibilities for personalized tutor support. However, the implementation of such technologies in Nigerian contexts requires careful attention to local constraints and opportunities. The digital divide and varying levels of technological literacy among students present important considerations for tutor support system design and implementation.

The findings from research on tutor support systems and student retention have important implications for educational policy and practice in Nigeria. As distance learning continues to expand, understanding the factors that contribute to student success becomes increasingly important for institutional planning and resource allocation. Effective tutor support systems require adequate funding, appropriate training, and institutional commitment to student success.

The broader context of Nigerian higher education, including efforts to expand access and improve quality, provides additional motivation for understanding how tutor support systems can contribute to institutional effectiveness. The lessons learned from examining tutor support at NOUN Port Harcourt Centre may have broader applications for other distance learning institutions and programmes across Nigeria and West Africa.

Statement of the Problem

Distance learning programs are designed to provide flexible access to education for learners who cannot participate in conventional face-to-face classes due to work, family, or geographical constraints. However, despite its potential to widen access to higher education in Nigeria, distance learning institutions, including the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), continue to face significant challenges related to low student retention and high dropout rates.

Evidence from preliminary observations and literature suggests that many students enrolled in the Port Harcourt center of NOUN often fail to complete their programs or maintain consistent participation in their courses.

While multiple factors contribute to student attrition, inadequate tutor support systems have been widely identified as a critical barrier to successful student retention in distance education contexts.

Tutor support, which includes timely feedback on assignments, academic counselling, interactive tutorials, motivation, and guidance, plays a significant role in enhancing students' learning experiences, sense of belonging, and commitment to program completion. In the absence of effective tutor support, distance learners often feel isolated, frustrated, and demotivated, leading to withdrawal from their studies.

Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence on how the existing tutor support systems in the NOUN Port Harcourt center influence students' retention. Questions remain as to whether the current tutor support practices sufficiently meet students' academic and psychosocial needs and to what extent they contribute to their continued enrollment and success in their programs.
Therefore, this study sought to investigate the nature and effectiveness of tutor support systems and their impact on student retention in the distance learning program of the National Open University of Nigeria, Port Harcourt center. The findings will provide insights for improving tutor-student interaction and designing support strategies that promote student persistence and program completion.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the tutor support system and student retention in a distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:
Find out the relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in the Distance Learning Programme at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.
Find out the relationship between tutors' administrative support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.
Find out the relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
What is the relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in the Distance Learning Programme at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria?
What is the relationship between tutors' administrative support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria?
What is the relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

There is no significant relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in the Distance Learning Programme at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.

There is no significant relationship between tutors' administrative support and student retention in the Distance Learning Program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.

There is no significant relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design is appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between tutor support systems and student retention without manipulating any of the variables. The population of the study comprised all undergraduate students enrolled in the distance learning programs at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). As of the 2024/2025 academic session, the population is estimated to be approximately 4,500 students across various programs.

A sample size of 350 students was drawn for the study using the stratified random sampling technique. The population was first stratified based on program of study (education, social sciences, management sciences, etc.), and proportionate random sampling was used to select participants from each stratum to ensure adequate representation across programs. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Tutor Support Systems and Student Retention Questionnaire" (TSSSRQ).

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section A: Demographic information of respondents (e.g., age, gender, program of study, year of study). Section B: Items measuring tutor support systems, covering academic support, administrative support, communication, psychosocial support, technical support, assessment support, and career/professional support. Responses will be rated on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Section C: Items measuring student retention, such as commitment to continue studies, intention to complete the program, satisfaction with learning experience, and actual re-enrollment behaviors.

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by presenting the draft questionnaire to three experts in adult education, measurement and evaluation, and adult education in the Faculty of Education. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was trial-tested on 30 students from the Yenagoa Study Centre of NOUN, who are not part of the main study sample. The data obtained were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above

was considered acceptable for the study. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between tutor support systems and student retention.

RESEARCH RESULT

   Research Question 1: What is the relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Tutors' Academic Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	r-cal	Remarks
Tutors' Academic Support (X)	3500	755.10	2108.10			
				2245.02	0.77	High positive
Student Retention (Y)	340	2015.14	3109.07			

The analysis from Table 1 revealed a correlation value of r = 0.77. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. This result indicated that tutors' academic support leads to student retention in distance learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Tutors' Administrative Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Rcal	Remarks
Tutors' Administration Support (X)	350	856.02	2056.02			
				2618.02	0.80	High Positive
Student Retention (Y)	350	1001.04	3040.02			

The analyses from Table 2 revealed a correlation value of r = 0.80. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. The relationship here being positive implied that this result indicated that tutors' administrative support for students leads to student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Tutors' Communication and Interaction Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Rcal	Remarks
Tutors' Communication and Interaction Support (X)	340	726.03	2562.01			
				2603.21	0.88	High positive
Student Retention (Y)	340	1206.20	3117.02			

The analyses from Table 3 revealed a correlation value of r = 0.88. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. This result implied that tutors' communication and interaction support for students lead to student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.
Test of Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Table 4: T-test Summary Analysis between Tutors' Academic Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Df	$\propto$	r_{cal}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	P-value	Rmk
Tutors' Academic Support (X)	35	755.10	2108.10								

Variable	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X²∑ Y²	∑X∑Y	Df	∝	r_cal	t_cal	t_crit	P-value	Rmk
				2245.0 2	348	0.0 5	0.7 7	18.2 0	1.9 6	0.02	Sig. Reject H₀
Student Retention (Y)	35 0	2015.1 4	3109.0 7								

The analysis on Table 4 showed Pearson correlation summary between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is 0.77 and the p-value is 0.02 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria is rejected. This implied that there is a positive relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Table 5: T-test Summary Analysis between Tutors' Administrative Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X²∑ Y²	∑X∑Y	Df	∝	r_cal	t_cal	t_crit	P-value	Rmk
Tutor's Administrativ e Support (X)	350	856.02	2056.0 2								
				2618.0 2	348	0.0 5	0.8 0	20.1 2	1.9 6	0.02	Sig. Reject H₀
Student Retention (Y)	350	1001.04	3040.0 2								

The analysis on Table 5 showed Pearson correlation summary between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is 0.80 and the p-value is 0.02 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria is rejected. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between tutors' administrative support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

Table 6: T-test Summary Analysis between Tutors' Communication and Interaction Support and Student Retention in Distance Learning Programme

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Df	$\propto$	r_{cal}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	P-value	Rmk
Tutors' communication and interaction support (X)	350	726.03	2562.01								
				2603.21	348	0.05	0.88	17.01	1.96	0.01	Sig. Reject H₀
Student retention (Y)	350	1001.04	3040.02								

The data analysed in Table 6 revealed the Pearson correlation summary between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is 0.88 and the p-value is 0.01 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria is rejected. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in distance learning programme in Port Harcourt Centre of National Open University of Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study for research question one revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. This result indicated that effective academic support through timely feedback on assignments and academic counseling significantly enhances students' learning experiences and sense of belonging. Also, the analysis demonstrated that students who experienced comprehensive academic support, including personalized feedback and interactive tutorials, showed higher levels of commitment to continue their studies.

The corresponding hypothesis one revealed that there is a positive relationship between tutors' academic support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. This finding aligns with the theoretical framework that academic integration is crucial for student persistence (Tinto, 1993), as students

who receive consistent academic guidance are more likely to develop the cognitive presence necessary for successful learning outcomes in distance education environments. Similarly, this finding supports the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2018), which emphasizes teaching presence as a critical component in creating effective learning communities that foster student engagement and retention in online learning environments.

The findings of the study for research question two revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between tutors' administrative support and student retention in the Distance Learning Programme at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. The relationship here being positive implied that efficient administrative support systems, including clear communication about program requirements and enrollment procedures, significantly reduced student frustration and withdrawal intentions. Also, students who received adequate administrative support demonstrated higher satisfaction with their learning experience and showed greater intention to complete their programs. The corresponding hypothesis two revealed that there is a positive relationship between tutors' administrative support and student retention in the Distance Learning Programme at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. This finding is consistent with literature indicating that nearly 60% of students consider dropping out due to stress, and effective administrative support serves as a protective factor against such decisions, particularly in the context of financial uncertainty and institutional barriers. This finding further supports the principle that administrative support systems serve as crucial bridges between students and educational institutions, particularly in distance learning contexts where face-to-face interaction is limited and students require clear guidance through institutional processes.

The findings of the study for research question three revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. This result implied that regular and meaningful communication between tutors and students significantly reduced feelings of isolation and increased student motivation. Students who experienced interactive communication and timely responses from tutors showed higher levels of social presence and connection to their educational institution. The corresponding hypothesis three revealed that there is a positive relationship between tutors' communication and interaction support and student retention in the distance learning program at the Port Harcourt Centre of the National Open University of Nigeria. This finding aligns with research showing that distance learning environments present unique barriers, including social isolation, reduced interaction with faculty and peers, and limited access to support services, making effective communication a critical intervention to maintain student engagement. This finding also supports Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (Tinto, 1993), which emphasizes that meaningful connections between students and their institutions through effective support systems are fundamental to student retention and success in higher education..

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that tutor support systems play a crucial role in enhancing student retention in distance learning environments. The study established strong positive correlations between all three dimensions of tutor support and student retention. Academic support demonstrated a high positive relationship with student retention, indicating that timely feedback, academic counseling, and interactive tutorials significantly contribute to students' persistence in their programmes. Administrative support showed an even stronger relationship with student retention, highlighting the importance of efficient administrative processes, clear communication about programme requirements, and streamlined enrollment procedures in maintaining student engagement.

Most notably, communication and interaction support exhibited the strongest relationship (with student retention, underscoring the critical importance of regular, meaningful communication between tutors and students in distance learning contexts. The statistical significance of all three relationships confirms that these are not chance occurrences but represent genuine associations between tutor support systems and student retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Administrators of the National Open University of Nigeria should establish one-on-one mentoring relationships between tutors and students, with regular meetings to discuss academic progress, address learning challenges, and provide individualized guidance based on student needs and career aspirations. NOUN should Simplify administrative procedures through the development of user-friendly online portals that provide clear, step-by-step guidance for enrollment, course registration, and programme requirements. They should also assign specialized administrative support personnel to distance learning centres who are trained to handle the unique needs of distance learners, including flexible scheduling and remote assistance capabilities.

The National Open University of Nigeria should prioritize the enhancement of communication channels between tutors and students. This should include Implementation of multiple communication platforms such as email, phone, video conferencing, and instant messaging platforms to accommodate different student preferences and technological capabilities.

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