A Qualitative Study on Academic Advising and Student Development in a Higher Education Institution in Liberia

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Abstract

Academic advising is a necessary process that plays a crucial role in overall student development both in and beyond the academic arena. Although there is a great need to measure the impact of academic advising in Higher Education Institutions, an evaluation of this program has not been performed, and no evidence of a difference exists. This study aimed to establish the impact of faculty advising on student development in a higher education institution in Liberia. This was a qualitative narrative inquiry. Five students at junior and senior levels representing four colleges at the institution were recruited for the study. Individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used for data collection. The interview produced raw data from which coding was performed and then labeled under the five identified themes. Codes from these themes were further linked to form categories that reflected the indicators of academic advising. The findings reveal mixed views for both positive and negative impacts on advising, with a strong concentration on the positive effect of perseverance, decision-making, self-study, enhanced self-esteem, and growth and stability as indicators for impactful student development. Implications for examining advisors' competencies and perspectives to minimize issues of low student involvement in the advising process and students' misconceptions of academic advising concepts are considered.

Keywords: Academic advising, faculty advising, higher education institution, student development, Liberia, qualitative study, narrative inquiry

Introduction

Academic advising is important for enhancing the success of students, administrators, and academic advisors in higher education institutions. It does not occur in a vacuum (McGill et al., 2020), but involves a purposeful relationship between academic advisors and students (Chan, 2016). It involves a multifaceted approach in which advisors aid students in identifying institutional programs for goal attainment, choosing a curriculum to meet personal and institutional requirements, and seeking educational opportunities for the future (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019). This is relevant to students' personal and professional development and overall institutional effectiveness.

Academic advising takes on a purposeful plan of interaction within the institution between advisors and students to benefit students, especially those just beginning the college experience. Many students who begin college and are undecided about what course to take or change to make sometimes later could become demotivated without proper advice, and they may leave the institution or spend more time before graduating (Elliott, 2020). A study assessing the relationship between students' perceived quality of academic advising and student loyalty cited predictors of student loyalty as service quality and long-term interpersonal relationships with advisors (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). On a professional scale, academic advising is positively associated with the selection of majors, completion of a degree, and the efficiency of the institution (Hu, 2020). According to Chan (2016), academic advising ensures a student's

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sense of affiliation or integration, supports the development of their interests and abilities, and connects them with relevant resources, support, and opportunities. Nandedkar et al. (2020) state that "advisors play a key role in helping students through many transitions through their college journeys and prepare them for the real-world through sound academic and social advisement while modeling professional ethics" (p. 157). Effective advice is essential because of its positive impact on educational outcomes (Woods et al., 2017). Even though academic advising remains an essential scheme in higher education, studies on the influence of academic advising on student success are less clear (Museus & Ravello, 2021), and the literature on advising effects is not very robust (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019).

While academic advising in higher education institutions cannot be overemphasized, there is no literature on academic advising in Liberia. Interest in Academic Advising is increasing due to the many benefits of student development and overall institutional effectiveness. Past studies have explored the impact of advising on student development in the Western world and Asia. Ample evidence exists on how beneficial academic advising is for students' academic and social integration. These include student self-efficacy, increased student loyalty, study skills, positive impact on student grades, self-perceived learning gains, higher post-completion job satisfaction, and participation in extracurricular activities, among others (Dollinger et al., 2021). However, many sub-Saharan African countries cannot be referenced in these studies. Thus, understanding this impact is paramount for Higher Education Institutions, especially those under investigation.

Academic advising began at the Adventist University of West Africa in 2017 and has been carried out with much enthusiasm and expectations of better outcomes. However, evaluation of the program has not yet been carried out, and no evidence of a difference can be traced. Therefore, this study explored the impact of academic advising on student development in an institution of higher learning in Liberia to generate evidence that could be used to develop appropriate policies and programs for student development while on campus and beyond for national prosperity. This study also utilized the Inputs-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) framework by Astin (1991) as a theoretical framework and used qualitative narrative inquiry. Thus, it sought to explore students' experiences through their narratives of the impact of advising on their development, with a focus on their understanding of the importance of academic advising, the impact of advising on their social and academic integration, their level of participation in the advising process, and their impact on their future endeavors.

Literature Review

This session explored the importance of advising for student development, the academic advisors' role in the developmental process, and students' perspectives in understanding the impact of advising on their development.

Importance of Academic Advising for Student Development

Academic advising is a significant scheme for institutions of higher learning because of its immense role in students' development. Academic advising is considered a successive and purposeful interaction with the curriculum, teaching method, and learning outcomes of students, in which students' experiences are synthesized and contextualized within the structures of their ambitions, skills, and spread beyond campus limits and timeframes (McGill et al., 2020). Fussy (2018) stated that "Academic advisory service is an essential element within Higher Education Institutions that can assist students to address academic challenges and succeed in their academic and professional endeavors" (p. 82). It is a programmatic intervention that is vital for student success in higher education institutions; thus, students who are beneficiaries of this intervention increase their cumulative grade point average and decrease the probability of attrition as opposed to students who have no advising experience (Kot, 2014). Thus, advising for successful developmental interventions and outcomes could be more meaningful when students understand the importance of advising.

College students' understanding of the importance of academic advising affects their opinions and expectations of advising as well as their preferential academic advising needs. Several studies have shown the importance of advising students from the perspectives of students with notable challenges in the advising process, as experienced by students. Studies validating international students' experiences with academic advising have shown that they are better prepared for their academic journey after meeting their advisors because more information about the college system is acquired, academic requirements are better understood, and more profound knowledge is gained for higher experience preparation (Zang, 2016).

A study exploring non-traditional female students' experiences of identity recognition and marginalization during advising found positive experiences. These include guidance, where students are aided in choosing classes, learning school policies, and obtaining referrals to resources; identity recognition, where there is service to students through connecting with and understanding students' identities; and advocacy, which signals proactive interventions (Auguste et al., 2018). Another study that assessed the current practice of academic advising from students' opinions revealed that they agreed that academic advising helps them understand their study options and make their study plans (Cheng et al., 2017). However, even with the appreciation of advisors' guidance, some students reported situations in which delayed or inaccurate information was provided by advisors, thus creating additional challenges to their transition (Zang, 2016). Another study also found students' negative experiences to include indifference, failure to actively help or advocate for students, marginalization, and gatekeeping, where students are blocked or discouraged and not advocated for (Auguste et al., 2018). These challenges can impact students' personal and professional development and their future endeavors. Students' perceptions are validated by their experiences in the advising process and their interactions with the curriculum through their advisors' guidance, thus giving a sense of how important academic advising is to their development.

Students' participation in advising interactions is essential to the advising process. Student retention is highly likely when advising interactions are frequent (White, 2020). One of the tenets of effective advising is high-quality advising interaction. The United States, on effective academic advising considering retention rates, cites quality academic advising as a major variable for the increase in graduation rates (White, 2020). Battin (2014) argues that "effective advising is directly linked to retention and satisfaction among students" (p. 355). Battin goes on to say that student satisfaction correlates positively with learning outcomes and all-inclusive satisfaction with their education. Thus, student satisfaction is a positive indicator of good advising interactions, considering their preferences.

Consideration of student preferences for advising approaches is an essential first step in ensuring good advising interactions for their development. Students prefer developmental advising over prescriptive advice as they desire more focus on career development, enhancing academic performance, and setting personal, career, and academic goals (Cheung et al., 2017, p.26). Braun and Zolfghanian (2016) conceptualized developmental advising as a form of teaching principally concerned with student participation and growth. Academic advisors also ensure student participation as an integral part of and a developmental approach to the advising process. Developmental advising is viewed as a participatory process for growth, where students are offered a participatory role in the choice evaluation and decision-making, thus leading to student satisfaction with improved outcomes, such as increased retention rates and on-time graduation (Braun & Zolfghanian, 2016). Another aspect of the developmental approach consists of consistency with the same adviser, advisor support outside the advising appointment, and satisfaction while advising (Hessenauer & Guthrie, 2018). These authors note that the relationship improves when there is increased contact between the faculty adviser and student, and the student is more satisfied with the advising process. Therefore, considering all approaches, the role of advisors, their knowledge, availability, and approachability are of utmost importance but

not sufficient, as students' participative roles may lead to both productivity in service and higher student satisfaction levels (Braun & Zolfghanian, 2016). Consideration of student preferences enhances participation in the advising process, thus enabling a genuine academic advising experience.

The Role of the Academic Advisor for Student Development

Academic advisors play a significant role in the college environment, and these roles significantly impact overall student development and institutional effectiveness. The role of academic advisors cannot be overemphasized for an effective transition to college life. Students' expectations are often high when they begin college, leading them to depend heavily on people who will help them successfully integrate into the college environment (Mbindyo et al, 2021) These authors note that academic advisors play a significant role in helping students become effective instruments for continual learning and personal development. It is also important to note that academic advising does not occur unanticipatedly. It is an intentional process involving the advisor's beliefs, experiences, skills, and background (McGill et al., 2020), and participation in the student part.

Academic advisors play an ethical role in the advisory process. They are expected to "conduct their professional duties and responsibilities in an ethical manner" (Kohfield et al., 2020 p. 334). They assert that moral ideals, such as care and respect for students, encompass what is embedded in ethical advice. The attributes of academic advising and their perceived importance and performance ratings consider moral virtue, availability, and approachability as having a high-performance rating (Walters & Seyedian, 2014). The consideration and provision of quality academic advice is significant for student success and development (Mohamed, 2016). Academic Advisors ensure quality and meaningful interactions and build rapport with students for effectiveness in the advisement process.

Effective leadership is also required to provide sound academic advice. Advisor transformational leadership has been shown to aid in providing

vital and harmonious enhancement to advising practices. This enables advisors to add to behaviors that have the propensity to increase the motivation and success of students (Mbindyo et al., 2021. However, because advisors use different approaches and play different roles in the advising process, they can impact the direction of advising and, as a result, affect students' graduation time, among other outcomes (Zarges et al., 2018). Moreover, many faculty advisors do not receive formal training and are ill-prepared, leading them to do whatever they want. Because of the lack of time, training, and support, they become limited to simply providing bits and pieces of educational advice and getting students registered for classes (Troxel, 2018). In these instances, developing and implementing appropriate academic advising policies and approaches are essential, as institutions could have trouble meeting the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) standards for effective advising if there is anything on the contrary.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized the Input-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) model of change proposed by Astin (1991) to establish the impact of faculty advising on student development. It is a college impact model that states that students' outcomes (learning) are functions of two factors: inputs (demographic characteristics) and environment (experiences in college). Overall, this speaks of students' involvement in college. Mu et al, (2019), state that "the students' outcomes are a product of student inputs, the college environment and the interaction between student inputs and the college environment" (p. 1288). In this instance, achieving desirable outcomes and impacts for academic advising will depend on the students' characteristics coupled with their interaction and experiences with their faculty advisor and the academic environment, shaping the individual for their integration into the collegiate environment and their existence after college life.

Methodology

Research Questions

1. How is the importance of academic advising understood by students?
2. How has advising impacted students' social and academic integration?
3. How has advising impacted students' participation in the advising process?
4. How has advising impacted students' future endeavors?

Design

This paper utilized narrative inquiry, in which students narrated their experiences of the impact of advising on their development. A qualitative research approach was applied to explore students' understanding of the impact of academic advising on their development. The approach allowed students to openly explain their understanding of faculty advising with rich narratives. No studies have measured the impact of faculty advising on student development in Liberia at the time of this study. Consequently, this study aimed to provide qualitative data on the subject being studied and fill the identified gap to enhance students' understanding of the impact of the faculty advising scheme on their development.

Sampling

This study used a purposive sampling method. Five students representing all colleges of the Adventist University of West Africa were recruited for the study, including two from the College of Health Sciences, one from the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, one from the College of Humanities, and one from the Business College. These included three females and two males. These figures were proportional to the nature of the population. Recruitment was conducted through the corridors of student life, and participants were briefed about the study. Only Junior and Senior students who began the advising process from enrollment as freshmen in college were included in the study. Dropout students who had resumed their junior and senior years were excluded from the study. This was done to obtain a good measure of the impact of advising based on student experiences.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in the office of the Dean of the College of Health Sciences on the eastern wing of the science building. This process lasted for two weeks. Individual in-depth interviews preceded the focus group discussions. Thus, data were collected through structured interviews and focus-group discussions.

In-depth Interview for Students

The individual interviews utilized five questions ranging from the importance of academic advising to exploring the impact of academic advising on futuristic purposes and identifying how academic advising has impacted students' personal and professional development. Leading questions were posed during the process to clarify the collected data.

Focused Group Discussion

The focus group discussion allowed the researcher to obtain differing views on the impact of academic advice through discussion with the participants. Participants were encouraged to be open, honest and narrate their perspectives on the impact of academic advising on their development. The Focused Group Discussion lasted for one hour after saturation was achieved. It followed the same questions and patterns as the individual in-depth interviews.

Data Analysis

The analysis began by coding the data, where excerpts of the data were grouped by codes, from which the codes were combined and sorted into themes. The themes identified were further structured to reflect linkages from the data: student outcome indicators, academic advising process outcome indicators, and the impact of academic advice. These linkages were then used to describe the key constructs from the data: positive and negative student outcome indicators and positive and negative academic advising process outcomes. Another key construct originating from the data arrangement described

the impact of academic advising. The terms linked were perseverance, decision-making, self-study, initiative, enhanced self-esteem, and growth.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Office of Research and Collaboration of the institution. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. All processes and procedures were explained clearly to the participants, and their right to withdraw from the interview at their will and pleasure was emphasized.

Researcher's Reflexivity

As a faculty advisor in the system for which the study took place, I already have an impression of the impact of advising due to my relationship and interaction with students. Knowing the system limitations and challenges to the provision of advising and already existing effects on students may have impacted the conclusions on the impact of advising. Being knowledgeable about advisors' activities in the process, their relationship with students, and the existing challenges and complaints from students may have impacted the conclusions of the results and contributed to personal bias.

Results

The data analysis created categories reflecting generated themes, linked codes, and students' perspectives of advising impact on their development (see Table 1). It also presents an impact table for student development advising in Higher Education Institutions (Table 2) and answers each research question, reflecting students' narratives on their understanding of the impact of advising on their development.

Table 1

Thematic Analysis

Themes	Terms Linked	Students Perspective summary
Theme 1: Faculty Advising Outcome	Better Grades, increased GPA, stress relief, Motivation	Students feel that advising has helped them make better grades and increased their GPAs; positive interactions with advisors reduce stress; students are challenged by advisors to do better which is seen as a sign of motivation thus propelling them to greater heights.
Theme 2: Faculty Advising Impact	Perseverance, Self-study, decision-making, initiative, enhanced self-esteem	Students take the initiative for self-study to ensure better grades following initial guiding steps by advisors; students can persevere, enhance their self-esteem, and grow personally and professionally if they are approached nicely or counseled by advisors who are deemed as the only significant figures in the absence of parents or other meaningful family representatives; advising prepares students for future endeavors thereby reducing fear and anxiety
Theme 3: Advising Challenges	Perceived irrelevance, lack of understanding, low student involvement,	Students deem courses irrelevant but feel subjected to doing them because courses are a part of the curriculum; students perceive that courses are planned outside their knowledge and without consideration of their financial burdens and made mandatory.
Theme 4: Individual traits	Good advisor attribute, bad advisor attribute, student attribute	Advisors are seen as organized, patient, and hardworking; Advising interactions are not deemed holistic by students as some advisors are squarely focused on academics without consideration of other social influences thus hindering the intake of advice; students are aware that they sometimes exhibit bad behaviors in their advising process and are reckless in their schooling which can impede desirable advising outcomes
Theme 5: Appreciation	Academic Guidance, Advising Perspective, perceived importance	Students deem advisors important because without them courses might not be completed for timely graduation; students are aware of expectations of subsequent semesters because of advisors' guidance; students perceive that advisors have a good perspective of advising which enables them to teach and counsel thus ensuring a strong study base for students.

Theme 1: Academic Advising Outcome

A wide range of outcome measures are linked to academic advising. Studies have shown that commonly measured outputs include student perception of or satisfaction with the process of advising, increased GPA, student retention, decision-making autonomy, student self-efficacy, and motivation (Alvarado & Olson, 2020). Academic advising outcomes reflect student learning outcomes, such as grade point average, academic planning, learner educational plans, better knowledge of resources, attitude, and motivation (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019). Faculty advising outcome originated from the data as the arrangement described the outcome of academic advising on student development. The terms linked included better grades, stress relief, and motivation.

Better Grades

Students described their advising experiences in relation to scoring and maintaining better grades.

> I had dropped from school due to financial reasons and when I came back my CGPA was 2.0. My faculty advisor counseled me saying the grade did not represent me. I was encouraged and by the end of the following semester, my CGPA was above 3.0. (Humanities).

> …. Well when it comes to grade issues, my faculty advisor is a good one because he always tells us that we have to stick to a certain CGPA…… he's always keeping us on track… he knows his students' strengths and keeps us focus to maintain good grades and this is really helpful (Business)

The students' experiences revealed that they integrated academically in line with their academic performance (increased GPA) through positive interactions with their faculty. Academic integration considers academic performance, level of intellectual development, and perception of positive experience in the academic setting (Lakhal et al., 2020). It also signals constructive interactions with the faculty, leading to positive experiences in the collegiate environment.

Stress Relief

> Yes for this advising aspect I think it's really a great help because there's time for everything. Sometimes we the students can be stressed. we come to school so if there's a time put aside for sporting and other activities, it is necessary for we the students because it takes away our stress, it makes us to be relaxed and makes us to be free. So before coming to interact you can know that you're sharing fun with your teacher and of the staff around (Health Science Nursing)

This experience also leans toward students' academic integration, considering faculty interactions as resulting in stress relief. Academic integration considers peer and faculty interactions along with the elements of institutional culture and program structures (Lakhal et al., 2020). Students experience stress relief with sporting and out-of-class activities, and interaction with the faculty ensures relaxation, freedom, and fun. This experience ensured the students' academic and social integration during the advising process.

Motivation

> Meaning strong, I would say because there's a lot of, despite my teacher being my faculty advisor, in class too we can also get knowledge from our teacher saying that we should go and make an impact in the world. So by making me strong she was telling me that if you can't do this you cannot go to the next level. So that course guide alone will tell you this is for this semester. You have to fight; you have to keep on pushing… it's just like you're climbing a ladder and want to reach at the top. So if you want to reach, you'll have to make it your duty to study all of this for this semester. So if you as a student study this and then going into the world, you can make an impact. Like there's a lot of things going on. People have organizations, clubs, people have little groupings to help educate and so on. So it has made me strong to go outside there and make impact in the world (Health Sciences Nursing)

This experience reveals a faculty-student interaction leading to persistence in a college environment with a strong sense of impact on future endeavors. This shows that students have a positive experience in the academic setting, especially with the encouragement from faculty to keep pressing on. This experience ensured students' academic integration, impacting their future endeavors.

Theme 2: Impact of Academic Advising

The impact of advising has a significant focus on student success: the development of students' capacities to succeed in the academic setting and beyond in their future endeavors. Students' learning outcomes are evidenced by their impact measures and focus on what they know, what they can do, and what they value or appreciate because of their involvement in advising (Zarges et al., 2018, p. 47). The above theme originated from the data, as the arrangement described the impact of academic advising. The terms linked were perseverance, decision making, self-study, enhanced self-esteem, initiative, and growth.

Perseverance

> ……. So getting an advisor meant a lot to me because my parents and friends will not be there, and at least one person is talking to me as I'm coming to school. So that alone is a motivation to keep on pressing forward

A key outcome of advising is motivation. Students' motivation through purposeful communication enabled them to persevere in a college setting and move on to graduating in a timely fashion.

Decision Making

> Yes sometimes like I said, if you have your course guide, you go to your faculty advisor, she/he can ask, are you able to carry all of these courses? Your duty is to say No or Yes.. It's left with you.. so if my faculty advisor asks me, if I say no, she knows that maybe I'm not able to afford for that semester or maybe I'm thinking it's too heavy to carry for study.

Students' involvement in academic advising interactions is essential for achieving success in the college environment. Students' experiences reveal their involvement in course load decision-making with a consideration of their preference in the process.

Self-study

> Yes, for my academic performance, the faculty advisor is really helping a lot because I know what I'm going to do per semester. I have time to study at home and this helps me to put other things aside so that I can focus on my studies, score better grades, and make an impact for myself. Studying more serves as a guide through the process for me.

Initiative

> The great impact is on myself. If she put me on the guideline of studying, I should take the time and initiative of myself to study what I'm supposed to study and go through by that process. Like if you take your course guide to your faculty advisor, she will say oh Betty you're supposed to do this this semester or john brown you're supposed to do this this semester.. for you to not be overloaded, she will arrange it in a sense that it will be best to your knowledge and understanding that you will be able to carry not to be overloaded.. she will arrange it like that then you will take it as a student and carry home and go through that guideline.. so it's a great impact for you because you are following the step of which your faculty advisor taught you to do (Health Science Nursing)

Student experience reveals a step from being guided by the academic advisor to taking initiative by the student which is seen as very impactful.

Enhanced Self Esteem

> I came from a background where I had nothing and I suffered discrimination and low self-esteem.. When I came to college

it was the same especially being among students who were schooled from big institutions and came from homes… I did not see myself as someone to be compared with them, but my faculty advisor helped me in every way.. he counseled me on the way I spoke and helped me refine my subject-verb agreement.. this helped increased my academic performance and social interaction and helped me greatly in becoming the president of the student association. Getting involved with student leadership was because of the counseling from my faculty advisor. Many times I had the dream but felt I could not achieve them.. but the counseling has helped me balance my social and academic skills and the ability to handle issues with my colleagues. (Health Science Public Health)

Student experience reveals that advising interactions give rise to both social and academic integration, thus enhancing self-esteem.

Growth

My faculty advisor always prays and counsels with me. there came a time when one of my colleagues was about to miss his exams due to financial reasons and some home problems. I prayed and counseled with him and told him to go to the finance office in faith… he followed my advice and got his clearance… he returned very happy and thankful, and I was so happy knowing that I had helped somebody. The counseling from the faculty advisement process helped me to be able to help another person. This gave me the feeling of growth and personal development. (Humanities)

Students experience growth through exemplary advising practices and interactions. Students express their ability to replicate what has been exemplified in the advising process to benefit their peers.

Theme 3: Academic Advising Challenges/ Barriers

Academic advising challenges are related to academic setbacks due to personal or academic circumstances, or challenges adapting to the self-direction, prioritization, and time management skills needed to thrive amid many opportunities for engagement. Advising challenges and barriers originated from the data as the arrangement described the challenges/barriers to student development and the terms linked were perceived irrelevance, student involvement, and student attribute.

Perceived Irrelevance

.… but on the bad hand I will say sometimes some courses may not be necessary but we can see it there and it can be sometimes heavy for us but we just have to go through it because that is what we see on our course guide (Health Science Nursing)

Poor Student Involvement

Faculty advisors do not listen to the voices of the students… they just impose everything. when you try to explain that you are not able to carry a certain course load, they tell you that it is mandatory... they do not pay attention to detail, and our decisions don't count... (Business)

I would say for the courses that they are giving us each and every semester, I think it's okay for the course guide, but if you relating to the outside world most of the time some people will complain on their school fees and funding for them to come to school... so it will be best in arranging it.. if they're saying this per semester maybe it will be beneficiary to the other people who can complain at times saying that the whole weight of the course guide is too heavy per semester. So, I think it will be best they do it in accordance with the student's own knowledge that they want to understand……… (Health Sciences Nursing)

Students perceive courses as unnecessary but mandatory. They feel that they are required to do them because they are a part of the curriculum. They seem not to understand the curriculum. They express their low involvement in course planning with an inconsiderate act of ignoring their financial burden by advisors, thus making the courses mandatory. They perceive that much of the course weight can be reduced if planning is performed in accordance with them. These are apparent setbacks resulting from personal and academic situations regarding misunderstanding the curricular aspect of academic advising. Students perceive that their level of participation in the advising process is poor, as they are only mandated to carry the weight of courses without considering their financial burdens.

Student Attribute

> We may be very aggressive, or harsh, or careless in our schooling……..

This experience presents a challenge adapting to self-direction. When students are careless, aggressive, or harsh, they lose their chances of making choices for self-directed activities and limit their interactions with advisors, thus hampering their development in the advising process.

Theme 4: Individual Traits

Individual traits consider the characteristic traits of advisors and students displayed during the advising process. The terms linked were bad advisor attribute and student attribute.

Bad Advisor Attribute

> If your faculty advisor is just someone who's just tying their face or everything is just basically just on school, school, school, there will be no knowledge taken in at all (bad facial expression, concentration on academics only)

Students express negative characteristic traits from advisors and their stern focus on academics only without any consideration of social activities. This speaks to faculty involvement with academics only and a complete disregard

for social or other extracurricular activities. This finding also indicates a negative impact on social integration.

Theme 5: Appreciation of Advising

The appreciation of advising considers the importance of advising through the lens of advisors' guidance and their perspectives in the advising process. Terms linked were Importance, Academic Guidance, Advising perspective, good advisor attribute

Importance

> Yes it is important to me... on the other side that I can be able to know lot of my courses that I suppose to do per semester on my course guide... if there is no faculty advisor to help me out I don't think that I will be able to complete all the courses that I have before graduating… so I think it is a great help to me to have a faculty advisor to help me through the process (Health Science Public Health)

> On a scale of 1 to 10, I will take 7… we are always confused and don't what to expect when we come to college... and like I said, leaving the bush and coming to the city for school was difficult, but my faculty advisor helped me to know about the process of planning my courses and working with my peers... faculty advisement is very important because it has shaped me into the person I am today (Health Science Public Health)

> I will take 5 on a scale of 1 to 10 because faculty advisors don't do what they are expected to do or what we were told their job descriptions are… they make everything mandatory. For heaven's sake, I am a working woman and don't get to decide what courses to take based on my schedule (Business)

Students' experiences regarding the importance of advising are mixed. Some experiences reveal no guidance or persistence without an advisor, whereas others reveal no involvement from advisors.

Academic Guidance

Yes it has impacted me in so many ways but I would say on the other side... like for some other schools you will not have a faculty advisor advising you per what you suppose to do a semester... so at AUWA I think it is a very great impact that I have the knowledge and understanding on how to prepare myself for the next coming lessons each semester .. so it has put on the guideline of studying what I'm supposed to do each and every semester that passes by…………. (Health Science Nursing)

My faculty advisor seeks my interest... I had an issue when my father died that I did not have enough money for my fees, and I spoke with my faculty advisor that I could only carry few courses and he accepted and guided me in the process... my faculty advisor is understanding (Basic & Applied Sciences)

Students perceive that advisors guide them through the process of advising, which is deemed very impactful for the planning and preparation of subsequent semesters. Students have positive reflections of the nature of advisors for their wellbeing. This shows how important advising is deemed to them.

Advising Perspective

The great impact I'm speaking of is the understanding the perspective of my faculty advisor talking to me, counseling me and helping me through the process of my study base (Health Science Nursing)

…. Yes, the advising process is very good for it does not just focus on academics but also on how we are to appear and be represented out there … there was a time in leadership when I had issues with my colleagues... they complained to my advisor after which he called me and got my side of the story... after that he advised that in leadership, if I proceed in a certain way, I might lose it all with the ones I'm leading.. he then urged me to follow a certain trend when became successful when I followed his counsel... and I would recommend that all faculty advisors follow the example of this faculty advisor (Health Science Public Health)

The advising process is very good, and I want to speak about one advisor... there was a time when I had a term paper to write. He came and saw me doing my work and asked about it. It told him the topic and after a while he called me a gave materials needed for the work... materials I never thought of... I used them and got a perfect score... my faculty advisor is very helpful (humanities)

Students perceive that some advisors have a good understanding of advising and they appreciate these advisors' perspectives of advising and have a good concept about the advising process. These signal that advising is perceived as important to the student.

Table 2

Academic Advising Impact Table for Student Development

Outcome Indicators of Academic Advising	Student Impact		Academic Advising Process Impact		Impact	
	Better Grades	Perceived Irrelevance	Importance	Bad Advisor Attribute	Perseverance	
	Stress Relief	Low Student Involvement	Academic Guidance	Student Attribute	Self-study	
	Motivation	Student Attribute	Advising Perspective Good Advisor Attribute		Decision Making Initiative	
					Enhanced Self Esteem Growth Stability	
Outcome Status	Positive Indicator	Negative Indicator	Positive Indicator	Negative Indicator	Positive	Negative

Discussion

Academic advising is a purposeful activity in higher education that focuses on the holistic development of students and plays a role in shaping the experiences of students in course selection practices and participation in high-impact activities (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019, p. 1284). This study sought to answer four research questions covering the impact of advising on student development by utilizing narrative accounts of their experiences in the advising process. These questions covered students' understanding of the importance of advising for their development, the impact of advising on their social and academic integration, their involvement in the advising process, and their future endeavors. The findings provide an avenue for understanding the impact of faculty advising on student development in the HEI studied.

Academic advising is a critical activity that plays an important role in linking students to learning opportunities through advisor-related interactions that help them realize key learning outcomes and improve their engagement (Mohammed, 2016). Students relate their understanding of the importance of advising to the outcomes of interactions with their advisors. Students value advisors and the advising process because of benefits such as timely graduation, proactive planning, and the development of a strong study base through advisors' guidance. Students deem advisors and advising important because, without them, courses might not be completed for timely graduation. They are aware of the expectations of subsequent semesters because of advisors' guidance, and they perceive that advisors have a good perspective of advising that enables them to teach and counsel, thus ensuring a strong student study base. These narratives suggest that students understand advising as being important to their development by considering positive outcomes through their interactions with their advisors. These findings are similar to those of other studies in which proactive active advising has been shown to enhance student satisfaction and

retention (Burks, 2022). Other studies highlight the positive experiences of students to include guidance, which considers helping students choose classes, learn institutional policies, and obtain referrals to resources on the one hand, and advocacy that considers proactive interactions on the other hand (Auguste et al., 2018). However, their views were mixed, as they narrated on one hand the shift from being uncertain in the college environment to interacting successfully and becoming astute individuals and, on the other hand, with a narration of academic advisors' inattention to student details. Students also claim to be adequately guided by faculty advisors, and that the perspective on advising was admirable because it is not just limited to academics, but it takes them way beyond to become seasoned individuals for professional life.

Regarding the impact of advising on students' academic and social integration, students had mixed experiences of both positive and negative impacts. The positive student outcome indicator showed that the academic advising process positively correlated with better grades for the students' narratives, suggesting that their faculty advisors were very impactful in ensuring that they got better academic grades. The advising process also ensured stress relief and reduction by incorporating other extracurricular activities, counseling, and suggestions from faculty advisors. Lakhal et al. (2020) state that "academic and social integration depend on the appropriateness of course and program contents, teaching and learning, and assessment strategies for students' needs, interests and preferences" (p.4). Students also said that these interactions with advisors led to fruitful interactions with their peers. Social integration considers students' perceptions of their interactions with peers and teachers (Reindi et al., 2022). These narratives imply that the students' needs and preferences were optimized.

Students were also challenged to keep taking strides for betterment in their academics and in preparation for impactful contributions to the outside world, which motivated them to keep pushing. This encapsulates one of the many definitions of academic advising, in which the academic advisor leads students through

their college careers in the right direction (Mbindyo et al., 2021. On the negative front, students narrate that advisors are drawn more to academics with little or no consideration for socials, which sometimes demotivates them and leads to awkward behaviors that inhibit needful advice from advisors. This implies an imbalance between academics and socials in terms of academic advice. Both academics and socials must be considered when advising for enhanced student development.

The impact of advising on student involvement in the advising process was also met with mixed narratives and concern regarding negative indicators. Students' narratives indicated that they had minimal involvement in the advising process. Students also said that they do not participate in course load selection and that academic advisors impose everything or make it mandatory. DeLaRosby (2017) states that "any academic curriculum must include opportunities for student involvement in the learning process… Simply giving a student a list of predetermined courses, a hallmark of prescriptive advising, does not allow the student to be engaged with the learning process" (p.6). This finding implies that prescriptive advice is the predominant form of advice in Higher Education Institutions.

Students' narratives also showed that the advising process is perceived as irrelevant because what advisors expect is not implemented accordingly. They also perceived courses as irrelevant because they could not afford to pay for them. This shows that the essence of the curriculum in terms of learning outcomes and development is not fully understood. Their inability to afford it should not imply curricular irrelevance. These lead to dissatisfaction on the part of the students. Although the effects of student participation on satisfaction in academic advising are still not fully developed in the academic literature (Braun, 2016), careful consideration is needed in this area of academic advising. These issues also speak to the absence or lack of relevant frameworks for professional development and competence on the part of advisors in the advising process (Elliott, 2020) and the lack of training and scrutiny of advisors

by Higher Education Institutions' administration (Walters & Seyedian, 2014).

Students further narrated that they have some bad attributes that hamper their interaction with faculty advisors. Their accounts also reveal the unwelcoming behaviors of academic advisors in the tone of frowns and other negative gestures. This is an area of institutional concern if the academic advising process is to make positive strides toward overall student development.

However, Iatrellis et al. (2017) asserted that when advising is good, it brings good outcomes in terms of understanding, planning, and applying strategies for academic success, while bad advising leads to frustration and damages students' progress. While it might not be logical to infer that students' bad attributes result from bad advice because of many other factors that have not yet been explored, such issues are noteworthy and should be carefully studied.

The impact of the academic advising process on students' future endeavors shows that students are being prepared in a college setting to make necessary strides for the future. Students assert that the advising process helps them persevere in their academics and prepare for tasks ahead. It also gives them the ability to make decisions in the advising process, and where those decisions count, they are placed where they can make better decisions for the future. The process also increases their ability to make time for self-study to ensure better grades and to take the initiative after careful guidance. It also minimizes discrimination and low self-esteem and helps them grow personally and professionally. Finally, it enables them to balance specialized skills and abilities and remain stable. This finding indicates that advisors assume transformational leadership attributes. These include being motivated to influence students while still respecting them as separate individuals, encouraging them to seek help when needed, helping them identify areas of improvement so that their goals for academic success are realized, and ensuring that they are empowered for leadership through mutual trust and responsibility (Mbindyo et al., 2021).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Academic advising is a relevant scheme in higher education because of its many benefits in mitigating past and present challenges in collegiate environments. Understanding the impact of advising in higher education is of utmost importance for student development and overall institutional effectiveness.

This study explored students' experiences and the corresponding impact of advising on their development. The study revealed mixed views on positive and negative effects, with a strong concentration toward positive effects. Given students' understanding of the importance of advising for student development, the importance of advising is clearly understood through interactions with their faculty advisors. This implies that advisors' competencies should be carefully considered in the academic setting for all advising interactions.

In line with the impact of advising on students' academic and social integration, academic performance through enhanced interactions with advisors and positive peer interactions impacted students' academic and social integration, respectively. An imbalance between the two exists, with the impact of academic integration at a higher level. Higher Education Institutions should ensure the incorporation of both academics and socials at meaningful levels for genuine advising outcomes on student development.

Prescriptive advising is the predominant approach to advising in this Higher Education Institution with regard to students' involvement in advising, as students have minimal or no involvement in the advising process, which negatively impacts their involvement in enhancing developmental outcomes in the college setting. Higher Education Institutions should consider more holistic approaches to advising and add other relevant models to their institutional advising strategies. Students misunderstand the concept of advising, as they perceive courses as irrelevant because of a lack of finances. Advising interactions should be carefully studied, and the competencies of advisors who provide first-hand information should be examined periodically. Students and advisors' bad attributes hamper

advising outcomes. As students' impact has been explored, more explorations in this area are required with a consideration of advisors' perspectives for better results regarding the impact of academic advising on student development.

Advisors possess transformational leadership attributes that help prepare students in college settings for future endeavors. Higher Education Institutions should consider more training of advisors so that the competencies required for advising can be utilized for impactful student developmental outcomes.

This study provides baseline information that will be useful in enhancing students' and faculty's understanding of the academic advising process in Higher Education Institutions. Thus, relevant frameworks for professional and personal academic development are required for academic advisors to ensure competent advice.

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