

Perceptions Of Academic Advisor Attributes And Assessing The Students' Satisfaction With Academic Advising Experience In A Health Science College Of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Academic advising is to ensure optimum student retention, optimum academic performance and personal growth of the students in the college and university life. The purpose of this study was exploring the Perceptions of academic advisor attributes and to assess the students' satisfaction with academic advising experience in Healthcare College of Saudi Arabia". A cross sectional study was conducted among all years of students who studied in different majors. According to the investigation based on major, 74.7% of nursing students and 88.0% of foundation year students respectively believed that the advising process had an impact on their Grade point average (GPA). A further descriptive analysis showed that the students meet their advisor for many purposes, the commonest being for course registration and scheduling. The association between academic advising and positive student development was statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. The grade point average of a student and academic advising were both reported to be related by more than half of the students. The results reveal that academic advising Unit at Mohammed Al-Mana College for Medical Sciences (MACHS) played an important role in various aspects such as academic development and personal development of the students.

Keywords: Academic advising, student satisfaction, students' Academic Performance, Students' perceptions

Introduction

Today, one of the major issues facing amongst university college students is student retention. A study found that early indicators of college dropouts include a history of academic struggles and poor grades. Additionally, the presence or absence of certain elements within an individual's life can affect whether they stay in school. This information was gathered using data from a medium-sized Midwestern state institution, as well as interviews with students. Factors which were most closely associated with student retention included having access to academic support systems, maintaining high GPAs, and possessing scholarships [1].

Poor grades are a major challenge for students, parents and teachers. This cross-sectional study used a simple random sampling method to assess the poor academic performance of 661 undergraduate students who achieved CGPA ≤ 2.5 from a selected private university in Dhaka city, Bangladesh. Study concluded that to improve the academic performance of the university students, the university administration should provide more scope of learning to the poor performing students and also improve the environment of the university as this will enhance students' concentration. Proper guidance is very important to improve performance thereby; students should be properly guided by the university [2].

Academic advising as an educational process, plays a vital function in connecting college students with getting to know possibilities to foster and support their engagement, success, and retention [3]. The goal of an academic advising program, according to Sindabi [2001] is, to help students create concrete educational and professional objectives. Academic advisors help students create educational plans that are in line with their personal objectives. University academic advisers thoroughly assess students' academic and educational needs, performance, and obstacles while also providing information about academic progress and degree requirements [4].

The retention literature provides convincing evidence of how crucial academic advising is to a positive student experience. Although there is a growing body of research on academic advising, only a few works of scholarship have had a significant impact on the growth of the field and profession of academic advising. The studies of Bean and Eaton (2002), Kuh et al. (2005), and Tinto (1993) in particular all highlight the significance of academic advising in successful retention programs and, more crucially, in the individual experiences of students. [5].

“Academic advising is a dynamic process for obtaining the critical information students need to make the most important decisions about college; decisions affecting academic majors, career goals, elective courses, secondary fields of study, and co-curricular activities and life planning. [6]. Advising is an integral part of teaching; it is the opportunity to encourage students to engage in a systematic, strategic planning process and to take responsibility for their personal and professional development. The strength of academic advising lies in the commitment of faculty and professional advisors to serve as mentors, to be accessible, and to be a source of information and encouragement in the advising process. Advising considers the academic intellectual and developmental needs of the students” [7].

Research findings also suggested that academic advising improves retention through improved academic performance among other benefits 8). Students who do not receive advising services may take more time to graduate, or have lower GPAs because they lack knowledge of campus resources [9].

It requires little effort to identify student achievement as a significant concern for community colleges in the current academic environment. Academic advising programs are developing as a promising way to raise graduation rates, according to research on retention and degree completion [10]. More recent research has shown the crucial role that good academic counseling plays in increasing student retention [11].

Another research recommended that some changes be implemented to enhance students' attitudes and to meet their expectations of academic advising: Those are 1. Advising policy 2. Academic advisors have intensive training on advising, and 3.a. Students should not be able to register their courses before meeting with their advisors. b. Students should take academic advising seriously and seek advising regularly [12].

A descriptive analytic study assessed the student's satisfaction regarding academic advising at Princess Noura University [PNU]. The study revealed a high mean of general students' satisfaction regarding the academic advising in Nursing college, PNU. The study demonstrated that more than half of the study subjects were satisfied by their academic advising [56.6%]. There is a statistically positive significant correlation at the 0.01 level [2-tailed] between the mean of general Student satisfaction regarding the academic advising and the academic advisor sufficient information [13].

Another study was conducted to assess the use of and satisfaction with the counseling and student support system available to undergraduate students at Dammam University School of Dentistry. The study also aimed to identify

factors that explain help-seeking behaviors that the students used to solve academic problems. The results showed that 66.2% of students had discussed academic topics with their academic advisor at least once [14].

Academic advisors, at MACHS, directly contribute to the educational mission of the College by assisting students to achieve their educational and lifelong learning goals through an interactive and educational partnership.

Academic advisors fulfill three roles for students:

1. As an advisor, provide information on program requirements to meet program requirements.
2. They act as a liaison between students and the university community and refer students to areas of support that meet student needs and goals.
3. Academic advisors help students understand the nature and purpose of education and the mission of the university, and help students establish their own direction in the decision-making process.

Each student at MACHS is assigned to a faculty academic advisor. He/she is a mentor who provides support and direction throughout the student's stay at the College.

Since the institution has the advising unit, the aim of the study is to know the Perceptions of academic advisor attributes and to assess the students' satisfaction with academic advising experience at MACHS.

Methods

A cross sectional study was conducted on a representative sample of Medical Sciences Students at Private college of Saudi Arabia after administrative approvals.

A stratified random sample method was used; taking into consideration the students' acceptance and convenience. The study sample included 350 from the basic year to advanced year [Foundation Year, Nursing, Pharmacy, Clinical laboratory Science, Respiratory therapy and Physical therapy] of Medical Sciences Students.

Inclusion criteria

- All female and male Students who are studying Medical Sciences at MACHS.

Exclusion criteria

- Students who are not willing to participate

The data was collected by using a Semi – structured self – administered questionnaire. Questionnaire was prepared in the English language. In the process of developing the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the research and non-research literature, had discussion with many experts in the field of Students' Satisfaction on Academic performance with Academic Advising process at MACHS.

This questionnaire was developed to assess Students' Satisfaction on Academic performance with Academic Advising process in the college. This questionnaire was prepared and reviewed by the Chair of the Central Academic Advising Committee to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire and its face validity.

The tool is organized into five parts: Part-1 is composed of 5 questions, Part II of 1 question, Part III of 8 questions, Part IV of 1, Part V of 2 questions and Part VI of 1 question. Following this the questionnaire was translated in Arabic and then both versions were sent to Scientific Research Unit (SRU) for approval.

The parts 1 of questionnaire includes demographic characteristics of Gender, major, residency and Academic Year, then followed by part 2 which includes Frequency of meetings with the advisor, Part 3 consists of Students' perceptions of academic advisor attributes, Part 4 involves Purpose of meeting with an advisor, part 5 included the Impact of the academic advising process on the overall student's academic development and at the end the student was asked about overall experience of the Academic Advising at MACHS.

This self-administered questionnaire was circulated with the help of Instructors, by posting on google classroom, through Email and WhatsApp group. After reaching the desired sample,

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board [IRB] of the Scientific Research Unit, SRU [Reference Number: SR/RP /15] and conformed to the ethical standards of the Helsinki Declaration.

Results

Demographic variables

The demographic data that was analyzed from the research participants displayed in Table: 1 indicated that more than three quarters of the participants who participated in the research study were females [n = 237: 77.8 %]. More than a third of the participants i.e. [n = 154: 43.9%] were students of the Nursing. Two third of the participants were in the first and second year of their study i.e. [n = 128: 36.5%] & [n = 124: 35.3%] respectively. Majority of the research participants i.e. [n = 303: 88.3%] were residing with their family.

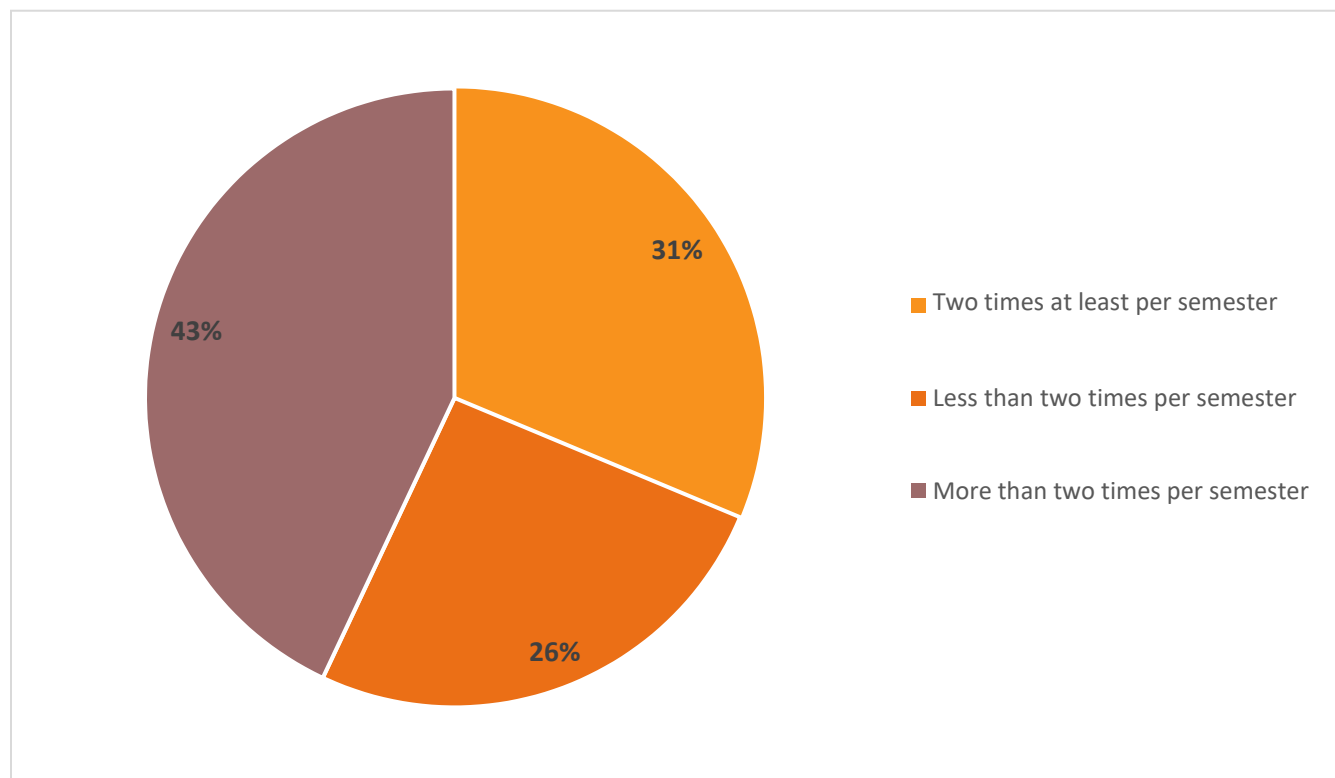
Table 1: Demographic characteristics of study participants.

Characteristics	Frequency n [%]
Gender	
Female	237 [77.8 %]
Male	78 [22.2 %]
Major	
Foundation year	25 [7.1%]
Nursing	154 [43.9%]
Pharmacy	32 [9.1%]
Clinical Laboratory Sciences	41 [11.7%]
Respiratory therapy	23 [20.8%]
Physical therapy	26 [7.4%]
Academic year	
First [First+ second year level]	128 [36.5%]
Second [Third + Fourth level]	124 [35.3%]
Third [Fifth + Six level]	43 [12.3%]
Fourth [Seventh + Eight level]	44 [12.5%]
Fifth [Nineth + Tenth level]	43 [12.2%]
Residence	
With family	303 [88.3%]
Staying alone	33 [9.4%]
Staying with friends / Relatives	15 [4.3%]

Displayed in figure 1 are the statistics related to the frequency of meetings between the advisor and the advisee. Around [43%] of the participants indicated that they met their advisor more than two times in a semester.

Figure 1: Frequency of the meeting between advisor and the advisee.

Description of the perception of the participants about the effect of advising on the students' GPA in terms of sociodemographic variables



The table 2 describes the perception of the students about the effect of advising on the students GPA. A high percentage of males [75.6%] have an opinion that the advising has an effect on their GPA. The analysis based on major indicated that [88.0%] of foundation year students and [74.7%] of the nursing students believed that the advising process had an effect on their GPA. Other details related to the perception of students in comparison to the residency and academic year are displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Description of the perception of the participants about the effect of advising on the students' GPA in terms of sociodemographic variables.

Category		Advising and GPA		
			N	%
Gender	Female	No	109	39.9%
		yes	164	60.1%
	Male	No	19	24.4%
		yes	59	75.6%
Major	Foundation year	No	3	12.0%
		yes	22	88.0%
	Nursing	No	39	25.3%
		yes		

		yes	115	74.7%
		No	17	53.1%
	Pharmacy	yes	15	46.9%
		No	18	43.9%
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	yes	23	56.1%
		No	38	52.1%
	Respiratory Therapy	yes	35	47.9%
		No	13	50.0%
	physical therapy	yes	13	50.0%
		No	12	36.4%
Residency	Staying alone	yes	21	63.6%
		No	114	37.6%
	With family	yes	189	62.4%
		No	2	13.3%
	Staying with relative and friends	yes	13	86.7%
		No	43	33.6%
Academic year	First & second	yes	85	66.4%
		No	45	36.3%
	Third & fourth	yes	79	63.7%
		No	24	55.8%
	Fifth & sixth	yes	19	44.2%
		No	13	29.5%
	Seventh & eighth	yes	31	70.5%
		No	3	25.0%
	Ninth & tenth	yes	9	75.0%
		No		

Students' perceptions of academic advisor attributes

Further, the Students' perceptions of academic advisor attributes are described in Table 3. On reviewing the results, more than 50% of the participants indicated that they were aware of their advisor [n=233: 66.38%] and were aware about the availability of the advisor [n=194: 55.27%]. Additionally, it's noteworthy that more than half of the study population who participated in the research expressed that the advisor had the knowledge of the policies and procedures related to advising [n=219: 62.39%] and the advisor had a significant role in referring the students to the resources and encouraging the student in planning their progress in the academic program [n=178: 50.71%]. All of these findings are significant at $P < 0.05$.

Table 3: Students' perceptions of academic advisor attributes.

Characteristics	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Neither agreed nor disagreed	p-Value*
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Aware of the advisor	233 [66.38%]	88 [25.07%]	13 [3.7%]	11 [3.13%]	6 [1.71%]	<0.05
Availability of the advisor	194 [55.27%]	106 [30.2%]	24 [6.84%]	17 [4.84%]	10 [2.85%]	<0.05
Advisor's Knowledge on the college policy and procedure	219 [62.39%]	93 [26.5%]	14 [3.99%]	13 [3.7%]	12 [3.42%]	<0.05
Advisors involvement in planning and referral services	178 [50.71%]	102 [29.06%]	33 [9.4%]	21 [5.98%]	17 [4.84%]	<0.05
Monitor and guidance of the advisor only at the end of the semester	169 [48.15%]	101 [28.77%]	38 [10.83%]	24 [6.84%]	19 [5.41%]	<0.05
Monitor and guidance of the advisor only at the end of the semester	165[47.01]	100 [28.5%]	35 [9.97%]	26 [7.41%]	25 [7.12%]	<0.05

* p-value calculated by using Chi-square test. P-value less than equal to 0.05 considered as statistically significant

Purpose of meeting with an advisor

Analysis on the purpose of meeting with the advisor are elaborated in figure 2. The data indicated that the main reason to meet the advisor was for course registration followed by discussion of the issues and concerns related to the class schedules.

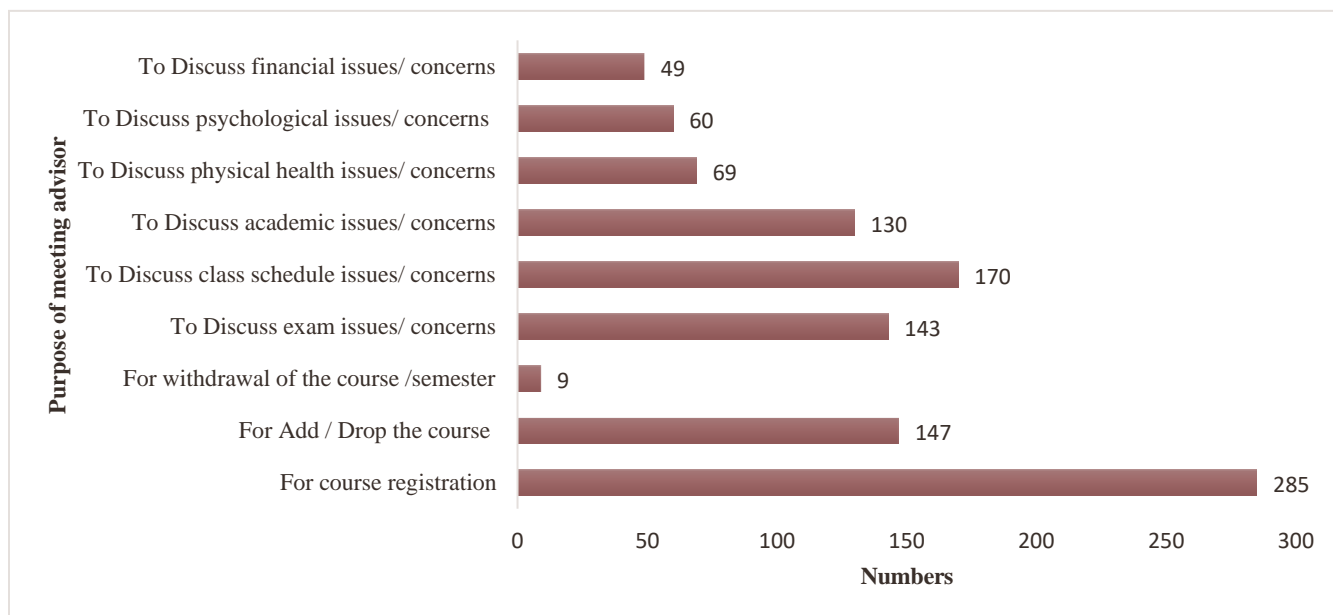


Figure 2: Purpose of meeting with an advisor

Impact of the academic advising process on the overall student's academic development

Statistically significance relationship was noticed between academic advising and positive student development, wherein most of the students i.e [81.25%] indicated the positive relationship between these two aspects. Similarly, more than half of the students i.e [n=223, 63.55%] reported that there is a relationship between academic advising and a student's grade point average. This finding is also statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. The above findings are described in detail in Table 4.

Table 4: Impact of the academic advising process on the overall student's academic development.

Characteristics	Frequency n [%]	p-value
Is there a relationship between academic advising and positive student development?		
Yes	285 [81.25%]	<0.05
No	66 [18.8 %]	
Is there a relationship between academic advising and a student's grade point average?		
Yes	223 [63.55%]	<0.05
No	128 [36.5%]	

Overall Satisfaction level with the academic Advising Experience

The figure 3 displays the satisfaction of students towards academic advising. As shown in the figure below [42.20%] of the participants strongly agree that they are satisfied with the academic advising experience in the Medical Sciences College, whereas only [6.80%] disagree with this.

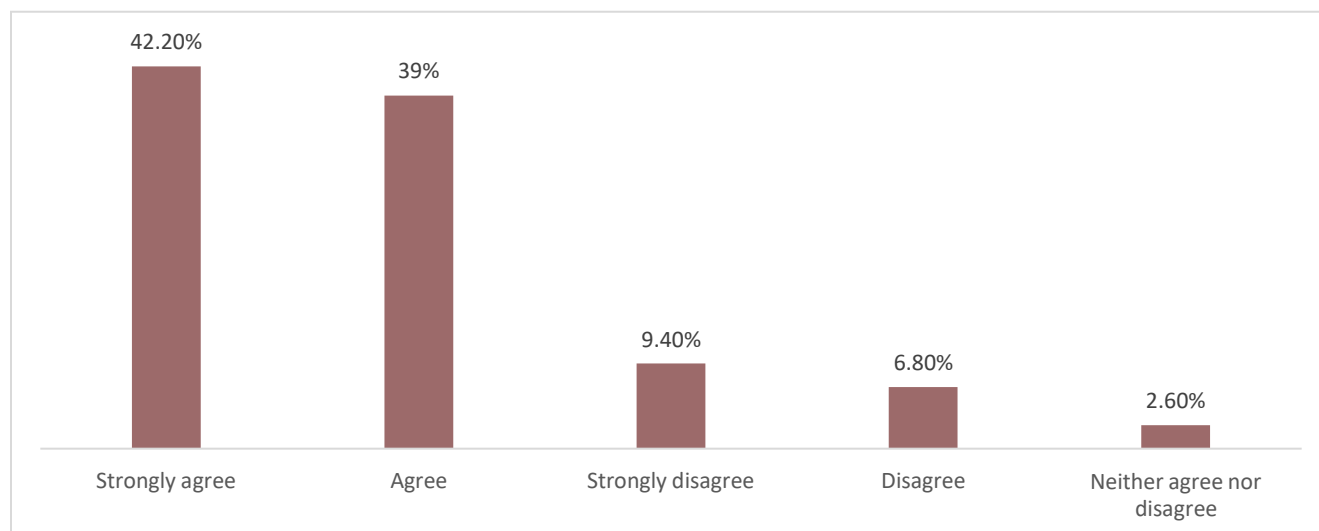


Figure 3: Overall Satisfaction of Academic Advising Experience

Participants levels of academic advising satisfaction based on gender, academic specialty & academic year

On comparing the mean differences of the level of academic advising satisfaction based on gender a significant difference was noted, wherein the males [$\bar{x} = 3.27$] are more satisfied in comparison to females [$\bar{x} = 2.89$] and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$.

Another observation of significance was noted by the Scheffe test when comparing the level of academic advising satisfaction between specialties. A significant difference was noted between Nursing and Respiratory Therapy, wherein the students belonging to the Nursing specialty are satisfied with the advising process indicated by the mean difference of 0.723. These findings are significant at $P < 0.05$. It is noteworthy that the Nursing specialty students have the highest level of satisfaction when compared to all other specialties.

Table 5a: The participants level of satisfaction based on their gender

Correlations			
		Satisfaction	Gender
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.125*
	Sig. [2-tailed]		.019
	N	351	351
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.125*	1
	Sig. [2-tailed]	.019	
	N	351	351

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level [2-tailed].

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Satisfaction	female	273	2.89	1.306	.079
	male	78	3.27	1.002	.113

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. [2-tailed]	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	5.893	.016	2.348	349	.019	-.375	.160	-.690	-.061
	Equal variances not assumed			2.715	159.224	.007	-.375	.138	-.649	-.102

Table 5b: The participants level of satisfaction based on their Major

Correlations				
			Satisfaction	Major
Spearman's rho	Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.169**
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.	.002
		N	351	351
	Major	Correlation Coefficient	-.169**	1.000
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.002	.
		N	351	351

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level [2-tailed].

ANOVA					
Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.714	5	5.543	3.663	.003
Within Groups	522.104	345	1.513		
Total	549.818	350			

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Satisfaction						
Scheffe						
[I] Major	[J] Major	Mean Difference [I-J]	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Foundation year	Nursing	-.028	.265	1.000	-.92	.86
	Pharmacy	.316	.328	.968	-.78	1.42
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	.136	.312	.999	-.91	1.18
	Respiratory Therapy	.694	.285	.315	-.26	1.65
	physical therapy	.083	.345	1.000	-1.07	1.24
Nursing	Foundation year	.028	.265	1.000	-.86	.92
	Pharmacy	.345	.239	.838	-.46	1.14
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	.164	.216	.989	-.56	.89
	Respiratory Therapy	.723*	.175	.005	.14	1.31
	physical therapy	.111	.261	.999	-.76	.98
Pharmacy	Foundation year	-.316	.328	.968	-1.42	.78
	Nursing	-.345	.239	.838	-1.14	.46
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	-.181	.290	.996	-1.15	.79
	Respiratory Therapy	.378	.261	.835	-.49	1.25
	physical therapy	-.233	.325	.991	-1.32	.85
Clinical Laboratory sciences	Foundation year	-.136	.312	.999	-1.18	.91
	Nursing	-.164	.216	.989	-.89	.56
	Pharmacy	.181	.290	.996	-.79	1.15
	Respiratory Therapy	.559	.240	.370	-.24	1.36
	physical therapy	-.053	.308	1.000	-1.08	.98
Respiratory Therapy	Foundation year	-.694	.285	.315	-1.65	.26
	Nursing	-.723*	.175	.005	-1.31	-.14
	Pharmacy	-.378	.261	.835	-1.25	.49
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	-.559	.240	.370	-1.36	.24
	physical therapy	-.611	.281	.451	-1.55	.33
physical therapy	Foundation year	-.083	.345	1.000	-1.24	1.07
	Nursing	-.111	.261	.999	-.98	.76
	Pharmacy	.233	.325	.991	-.85	1.32
	Clinical Laboratory sciences	.053	.308	1.000	-.98	1.08

	Respiratory Therapy	.611	.281	.451	-.33	1.55
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

Table 5c: The participants level of satisfaction based on their academic year

Correlations			
		Satisfaction	Academic year
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.022
	Sig. [2-tailed]		.683
	N	351	351
Academic year	Pearson Correlation	.022	1
	Sig. [2-tailed]	.683	
	N	351	351

Correlations				
			Satisfaction	Academic year
Kendall's tau_b	Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.029
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.	.523
		N	351	351
	Academic year	Correlation Coefficient	.029	1.000
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.523	.
		N	351	351
Spearman's rho	Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.034
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.	.530
		N	351	351
	Academic year	Correlation Coefficient	.034	1.000
		Sig. [2-tailed]	.530	.
		N	351	351

Discussion

The current study aimed at measuring the students' perceptions of academic advisor attributes and to assess the students' satisfaction with academic advising experience at MACHS. Further it also intended to compare the impact of the academic advising process with the variables of gender, major, academic levels and overall student's academic development. Academic advising is an essential predictor of retention, academic performance, academic and social integration among university students.

Hossler and Bean stated that no student service is mentioned in research on student persistence than academic advising [as cited in Brown, 2008, p. 309 [15].

This study illustrated that most of the participants met their advisor two times or more in a semester. This is in contrast with the studies conducted around the Kingdom. Rasha & Mastura stated that only around one third of the students attended meeting with the academic advisors two times a semester. These visits were mostly for the registration

process as that is considered as one of the core responsibilities of academic advising [13]. As stated by Aydin et al, the majority of advisors and students met one or two times in a semester and the duration of the meeting was less than 15 minutes and interestingly, the advising activities were limited to course selection and registration [16]. It is important to have frequent visits to the academic advisor as lack of frequent interaction and good working relationships with the academic advisors can be detrimental to a students' educational experience [17].

The first step in academic advising is to get to know the advisor. Having a Good working relationship with advisors is the key to improve the satisfaction level of students [18]. The findings of this study indicates that the advisor plays a key role in referring the students to the resources available in the campus and fostering their progress in the academic program. However, Aydin and others argued that there is minimal role for the advisors in guiding the students to academic resources in Malaysian public universities [16].

In the present study, there is a positive relationship found between the academic advising and student development. This finding is in congruent with a study conducted in Eastern Illinois University by Owens where it was found that academic advisor effectiveness had an impact on student success as measured by student GPA [19].

The findings of this study illustrate high level of satisfaction with the academic advising experience among the students in Mohammed Al-Mana college of Medical Sciences. Satisfaction among the nursing students were comparatively higher than other specialties. Mahfouz and Farag conducted a study in Princess Nourah Bent Abdurrahman University in Riyadh [PNU] by collecting the data by a survey from 106 students. The findings stated that the information gained from the academic advisors had a correlation with the student's satisfaction [13].

Conclusion and recommendation

Academic advising is not an easy task, but being knowledgeable about the process you(advisor) can make a positive influence on the lives of students. Dig in; own it. Get to know resources around campus, have real conversations with students about their aspirations, invest in their success, learn from other successful advisors around you, and keep developing your advising skills. It only stands to benefit you, school, and students.

In conclusion, academic advising Unit at MACHS played an important role in various aspects such as academic development and personal development of the students. These aspects are crucial for students in order to gain understanding in making decisions regarding their studies, which is also important for their performance in university later.

To meet each student's unique needs, college has to build a model of advising unit since it is a foundation of understanding the student population the advisors will serve, what academic supports those students might require, and how to deliver those supports to the students who need them. It is important for colleges to remember that individual students' needs will differ depending on their background, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, or relevant lived experiences, as well as educational goals. If an institution anticipates that students will face a wide range of academic and nonacademic barriers, a preferred model is one robust enough that the advisor can tailor support to each student. Tailored advising begins with assessing and understanding the individual barriers the student faces throughout their time in college.

From the research findings, a few recommendations can be made. To get a wider perspective, advisors' perception of the advising process can be studied to ensure the congruence with the students' perception. The other majors also should strive to improve the level of satisfaction of advising process comparing with Nursing major.

The factors affecting the lower level of satisfaction among the female student in comparison with the male should be subjected to further investigation.

Limitations of the study

Firstly, self-administered data collection tool was applied that might add social desirability bias. Secondly, the nature of self-perceived reporting might have resulted in recall bias and over/under-reporting of some variables. This cross-sectional study may serve as an insight for further studies to be conducted in this area that should adopt more rigorous designs to address the academic process in students' performance.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declared that there was no conflict of interest.

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