Developing Corrective Actions to Improve Academic Advising Process

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Abstract **Background**: Academic advising plays a crucial role in academic success; it was considered an integral part in achieving faculty educational goals. **The aim** of the current study was to develop corrective actions to improve academic advising process through investigating the obstacles and solutions from the perspective of both academic advisors and students. **Method***:* An analytical cross-sectional research design has been used. The sample included 51 academic advisors and 424 students enrolled in the faculty of nursing at Mansoura University. A Socio-demographic questionnaire, academic advisor's performance sheet, and academic advising obstacles sheet were used to collect data. **Results**: Obstacles related to advisors scored higher rather than other obstacles from the students' point of view. Students' levels varied significantly with advisors' performance and obstacles. There is no significant correlation between advisors' performance and academic advising obstacles as preserved by students **Conclusion***:* Providing academic advising training sessions and incentives can improve academic advising. Therefore, the findings pointed to enhance academic staff' abilities related to academic advising through training programs. In addition, further researches are suggested in this area.

***Keywords:** academic advising, academic advisors performance, academic advising obstacles*

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1. Introduction

Today's higher education programs offer a variety of courses, particularly at the undergraduate level which makes students have difficulty matching these courses with their needs. Actually, this makes students need guidance. One of the most effective manner to acquire guidance is academic advising [1]. Indeed, academic advising is an essential element of a university system that can help students solve their academic problems and succeed in their academic and professional careers (National Academic Advising Association [2]). Not only that but also, Baker & Griffin, [3]; O'Banion, [4] considered that good academic advising and sharing knowledge ensure that students can make good major choices to meet their life goals, which affect the rest of their adult life.

Academic advising has been defined by Hollis [5] as a process aims to help students discover their capabilities and potentials to help them make decisions related to their study program, selection of major study courses, and to assist them in overcoming difficulties which might obstruct the students' academic or study progress. NACADA [6] added that academic advising defined as a connection between academic advisors, counselors, directors, and students running together to elevate the academic improvement of students. Relatively, Al-Khafaji [7] defined academic advising as a dynamic process based on a close student-advisor relationship aimed to guide students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals as advisor serve as a facilitator in an interactive partnership to enhance the student's self-awareness and fulfillment through continuous academic progress review.

Academic advising has a unique necessity for faculty students as it helps them to have a university experience and acquire guidance on academic challenges and choices. As well, it assists students in understanding and acceptance of themselves, guides in considering their life goals, and help them to develop their educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives. Moreover, academic advising can help students to develop decision-making skills, provide accurate information regarding institutional policies and procedures [1].

Academic advising process has five steps as follows; exploration of life goals, exploration of vocational goals, program choice, course choice, and scheduling options. Hodges, Shelton, Brooks, & Lyn [8] added that student exploration of life goals and exploration of vocational goals must be accomplished before the selection of course work. Moreover, there is a need to identify the skills,

knowledge, and attitudes required of academic advisors for effective implementation to these five steps of academic advising [9].

In light of Zhang [10], there are three models of academic advising. Firstly, a centralized academic advising model (all academic advising is done centrally by the academic advising office). Secondly, decentralized academic advising model (academic advising is provided at the departmental level and may or may not be any centralized coordination). Finally, shared structure academic advising model (where many advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit meanwhile, others provide advice to students in the academic department of their major discipline).

Academic advisors have an important role in assisting students as they help students to know their academic rules, plan their schedule in a suitable way, ask students what majors they are interested in, and encourage them to talk to their parents about their plan to achieve their life goals [11]. However, academic advisors face different challenges related to their professional preparation and to their support from the university. Therefore, training is crucial to advisor development [12,13].

The decision-making process through communication and information exchanges between the students and advisor to enable the students to realize their maximum educational potential. The measurement of advising outcomes was focused on student's satisfaction with the advisor or advising system rather than on student's success [14]. The research by Etway, [15] concluded that the students had a high perception of academic advising obstacles related to the administrative system, rather than academic advisors. On the other hand, the advisors had a high perception of related to suggestion for manage the academic advising obstacles than student's perceptions. Therefore, offering enough time for interaction and contact between the students and their advisor, and give advisors more authorities and flexibility in dealing with rules and regulations are beneficial to overcome the challenges of the academic advising process.

1.1. Need and Significance of the Study

Academic advising is an essential element of acquiring academic students experience and it is a pathway to career success. In this notion, Smith, Carpenter, & Fitzpatrick [16] reviewed that effective academic advising is central to the success of nursing students. According to Folsom, Yoder, & Joslin [17], there is increased attention on the importance of academic advising as it enhances students' educational experiences, aids in fulfilling educational missions and goals, and meets the changing emphases in higher education. In a study conducted by Harrell & Reglin [18], it was recommended to conduct research about the academic advising success and lack of success.

The importance of current study comes from the application of the accredited hours' program in teaching which requires the availability of the of academic advising system in an integrated way, for the contribution to the success and development of the educational process so it is important to shed light on the obstacles and solutions of the academic advising process

1.2. Aim

The present study was aimed to develop corrective actions to improve academic advising process.

1.3. Specific Objectives

1. Investigate the obstacles of the academic advising process from the perspective of the academic advisors and students.
2. Assess the solutions of the academic advising process from the perspective of the academic advisors and students.

1.4. Research Questions

What are the corrective actions to improve academic advising process from perspective of both academic advisors and students?

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

An explartory cross-sectional design was used in the current study.

2.2. Setting

The present study was conducted in the Faculty of Nursing at Mansoura University

2.3. Sample

The subjects of this study included two groups;
I. Academic advisors group:
Included all academic advisors staff who was working in the study settings during the academic year 2017-2018. They were 62 academic advisors, 6 of them were excluded in the pilot study to become 56 academic advisors; the response rate was "91.07%" (51 academic advisors).
II. Students group:
Included students who were studying in credit hour program in above-mentioned setting from the first level to the fourth level. Students were enrolled in the nursing faculty at the academic year 2017–2018 were "1993" students. A random sample size calculated using OpenEpi, Version 3, open source calculator [19]. Estimated minimum sample size n= 323 with confidence level 95%, this increased to 500 students to avoid dropped, incomplete responses or withdrawal. A list of all students obtained from students' affairs, then 500 random numbers from 1 to 1993 generated by the OpEnepi random program to select sample randomly [20], 424 students respond and complete the assessment.

2.4. Tools of Data Collection

Data was collected through one questionnaire and two tools as following:
Socio-demographic questionnaire to assess the personal characteristics of both group samples.

a. Students' gender, academic level as well as number of times interviewed with the academic advisor per month.

b. Academic Advisors' gender and academic degree.

Tool (I): Academic Advisor's Performance sheet:

This tool was adapted from Radhi, [21] containing 12 items to assess the academic advisor's performance from the students' point of view.

Tool (II): The Academic Advising Obstacles sheet;

This tool was adapted from Radhi, [21] consisting of two parts;

Part I; used to assess obstacles related to academic advising from student's and academic advisor's point of view. It comprised 37 items which addressed three types of obstacles; obstacles related to academic advising unit (8 items), obstacles related to the academic advisors (11 items), and obstacles related to the faculty students (8 items).

Part II; it consisted of 13 items suggests solutions for academic advising obstacles from the perspective of students and academic advisors.

Tools were collected along three rating scale for the response "agree, uncertain, disagree". The scores of the items were summed-up and the total divided by the number of the items, giving a mean score for each part.

Tools validity and reliability; Face and content validity of tools were examined for clarity, appropriateness, and relevance by a board of seven experts in nursing education. Content validity indicates a complete range of the attributes that are under study depicted by the content. To estimate the content validity, opinions of the experts were taken to establish the conceptual framework of tools. Content Validity Index (CVI) for the tool is the Sum of all experts individual / Number of experts [22] CVI = 89%. Reliability assessed through Cronbach's Alpha reliability test α= 84%. Pilot study included six academic advisors and forty students to check the feasibility, applicability, how clear the tools are and to allocate the time needed to fill it. The participants in the pilot study were excluded from the study to assure the stability of the answers.

Ethical consideration; Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Ethical Research Committee at the Faculty of Nursing Mansoura University to conduct the study. Verbal consent was been taken from participants after explaining the purpose and process of the study. Confidentiality of the data gathered has been assured and it was only used for the purpose of the study. Finally, they were all informed about their right to refuse participation or even withdrawal at any time.

Fieldwork; Verbal consent was taken from participants after the aim of the study was explained and they were informed that their participation is voluntarily and ensuring confidentiality of information. Researchers introduced the purpose of the study and obtained approval for participation. Data were been collected from the students using self-instructions questionnaires that were distributed during classes and collected after they finished. Each questionnaire took a period ranges from 15-20 minutes. The total time spent on data collection was 3 months starting from April 2018 to June 2018.

Data analysis; Data were analyzed with SPSS version 24. The normality of data was first tested with a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Qualitative data was described using numbers and percentages. Continuous variables were presented as mean ± SD (standard deviation) for parametric data and Median for non-parametric data. The two groups were compared with Student *t* test. Pearson correlation used for correlation between continuous parametric data.

For all above-mentioned statistical tests done, the threshold of significance was fixed at 5% level (p-value). The results were considered significant when the probability of error is less than 5%, Non-significant when the probability of error is more than 5%, and highly significant when the probability of error is less than 0.1%. The smaller the p-value obtained, the more significant were the results.

3. Results

Table 1. Distribution of Students' gender, academic level and number of times interviewed with the academic advisor per month

Items	Frequency (N= 424)	%
Gender		
- Male	127	30
- Female	297	70
Academic level		
- 1st level	107	25.2
- 2nd level	108	25.5
- 3rd level	103	24.3
- 4th level	106	25.0
Number of times interviewed with the academic advisor per month		
- Once a month	108	25.5
- More than once a month	120	28.3
- When there is a problem with the advising process	196	46.2

According to Table 1, about two thirds (70%) of the studied sample are female. Regarding academic levels of the studied levels, the studied sample was distributed to the fourth levels without significant difference. Less than half (46.2%) of studied students reported that interviewing with the academic advisor when there is a problem.

Table 2. Distribution of Academic Advisors' gender and academic degree

Items	Frequency (N= 51)	%
Gender		
- Male	2	3.9
- Female	49	96.1
Academic degree		
- Lecturer	48	94.1
- Assistant professor	3	5.9

According to Table 2, the vast majority of academic advisor are females and lecturers (96.1% and 94.1%). Regarding frequencies of students meeting with advisors, less than half of studied advisors (46.2%) meet the students when there was a problem with the advising process.

Table 3. Academic advisors' performance and academic advising' obstacles as preserved by students.

Items	Mean	SD
Academic advisors' performance	14.30	6.74
Obstacles related to the advising unit	9.85	3.76
Obstacles related to academic advisor	13.01	6.01
Obstacles related to student	9.69	4.07
Total obstacles	32.55	11.38

According to Table 3, mean of academic advisors' performance (Mean ± SD = 14.3 ± 6.74). Obstacles related to academic advisor (Mean ± SD = 13.01 ± 6.01) higher than obstacles related to the advising unit (Mean ± SD = 9.85 ± 3.76) and obstacles related to student (Mean ± SD = 9.69 ± 4.07).

Table 4. Correlation between academic advisors' performance and academic advising' obstacles as preserved by students

Items	r	P
Obstacles related to the advising unit	.139	.004*
Obstacles related to academic advisor	.019	.698
Obstacles related to student	.016	.737
Total obstacles	.053	.227

According to Table 4, there is no significant correlation between academic advisors' performance and academic advising' obstacles as preserved by students, although there is a significant correlation between academic advisors' performance and obstacles related to the advising unit (r=.139 and P= .004).

Table 5. Academic advising' obstacles as perceived by academic advisors

academic advising' obstacles	Mean	SD
Obstacles related to the advising unit	13.09	2.93
Obstacles related to academic advisor	15.22	5.38
Obstacles related to student	12.55	3.64
Total obstacles	41.06	9.68

According to Table 5, obstacles related to academic advisors scored the highest score followed by, obstacles related to the advising unit and obstacles related to the student (mean = 15.22, 13.09 and 12.55 respectively).

According to Table 6, there was a significant mean difference between academic advisors' performance and students' levels (F= 4.500 and P= .004). According to the table, fourth level students reported lowest academic

advisors' performance (Mean ±SD = 12.44 ±7.12) While first level students reported higher Academic advisors' performance (Mean ±SD= 15.61 ±7.04).

Table 6. Difference of academic advisors' performance and academic level of students

Academic advisors' performance	N (424)	Mean	S.D.	F	P
1st level	107	15.61	7.04		
2nd level	108	14.17	5.46	4.500	0.004*
3rd level	103	14.99	6.91		
4th level	106	12.44	7.12		

Table 7. Difference of academic advising' obstacles and academic levels as perceived by students

Academic advising' obstacles	N (424)	Mean	SD	F	P
- 1st level	107	29.62	12.93		
- 2nd level	108	36.08	7.38	6.667	0.001*
- 3rd level	103	31.11	11.71		
- 4th level	106	33.49	11.67		

According to Table 7, there was a significant mean difference between academic advisors' obstacles and students' levels (F= 6.667 and P= .001). According to the table, first level students reported lowest academic advisors' obstacles (Mean ± SD = 29.62 ± 12.93) While second level students reported higher academic advisors' obstacles (Mean ± SD= 36.08 ± 7.38).

Table 8. Students' gender in relation to academic advisors' performance and obstacles

	Mean	SD	t	P
Academic advisors' performance				
- Male	15.33	7.14	2.067	0.039*
- Female	13.86	6.53		
Academic advising' obstacles				
- Male	32.54	12.34	.011	0.991
- Female	32.55	10.96		

According to Table 8, there was a significant mean difference between academic advisors' performance and sex (t= 2.067 and P= .039). According to the table, female students showed lowest academic advisors' performance (Mean ± SD = 13.86 ± 6.53) While male students reported higher academic advisors' performance (Mean ± SD = 15.33 ± 7.14). Moreover, there was no significant mean difference between academic advisors' obstacles and sex (t= .001 and p= .991).

Table 9. Distribution of students' responses regarding suggested solutions for improving academic advising process

Solutions	Not agree N	Not agree %	Sometimes N	Sometimes %	Agree N	Agree %
1. Providing academic advising training courses by the faculty to strengthen the academic advisors.	42	9.9	133	31.4	249	58.7
2. Provide academic advisors with incentives and rewards.	39	9.2	140	33	245	57.8
3. Determine the academic advisor's tasks in a manner consistent with quality standards.	36	8.5	125	9.5	263	62.1
4. Providing a sufficient number of qualified academic advisors.	33	7.8	139	32.8	252	59.4
5. Academic advisors shall be fully engaged to the advising process.	45	10.6	140	33	239	56.4
6. Holding periodic meetings to discuss the difficulties facing the advising process.	48	11.3	118	27.8	258	60.8
7. Communication between the advising unit, academic advisors and students to search for solutions.	29	6.8	147	34.7	248	58.5
8. Accurate selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately.	37	8.7	110	25.9	277	65.3
9. Providing the faculty with advising program that goes with quality assurance standards.	33	7.8	119	28.1	272	64.2
10. Periodic evaluation for academic advising process.	29	6.8	145	34.2	250	59
11. Holding university-level meetings for faculties advising units to exchange experiences related to academic advising.	30	7.1	113	7.1	280	66

Table 10. Distribution of advisors responses regarding suggested solutions for improving academic advising process

Solutions	Not agree		Sometimes		Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Providing academic advising training course by the faculty to strengthen the academic advisor.	1	2	5	9.8	45	88.2
2. Provide academic advisors with incentives and rewards.	1	2	5	9.8	45	88.2
3. Determine the academic advisor's tasks in a manner consistent with quality standards.	-	-	8	15.7	43	84.3
4. Providing a sufficient number of qualified academic advisors	1	2	9	17.6	41	80.4
5. Academic advisors shall be fully engaged to the advising process.	4	7.8	6	11.8	41	80.4
6. Holding periodic meetings to discuss the difficulties facing the advising process.	1	2	6	11.8	44	86.3
7. Communication between the advising unit, academic advisors and students to search for solutions.	-	-	10	19.6	41	80.4
8. Accurate selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately.	-	-	4	7.8	47	92.2
9. Providing the faculty with advising program that goes with quality assurance standards.	-	-	9	17.6	42	82.4
10. Periodic evaluation for academic advising process.	-	-	9	17.6	42	82.4
11. Holding university-level meetings for faculties advising units to exchange experiences related to academic advising.	1	2	8	15.7	42	82.4

Table 9 revealed that students who agreed to all solutions more than whose responses were sometimes or not agree. Students agreed to hold university-level meetings for faculties advising units to exchange experiences related to academic advising and accurate selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately more than other solutions.

According to Table 10, advisors who agreed to all solutions more than whose responses were sometimes or not agree. Advisors agreed to solutions; accurate selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately more than other solutions.

4. Discussion

Providing academic advising for nursing students has a great potential to influence their growth and development [23]. As it can help them to prevent problems, develop their strengths, eliminate their weaknesses, and integrated them within the nursing profession [24]. In this context, this study aimed to provide suggestions for improving academic advising through assessing the academic advisors' performance from the students' point of view, investigate the obstacles of academic advising from the perspective of both academic advisors and faculty students, and provide solutions to overcome obstacles of academic advising.

The study findings indicated that the studied faculty students agreed that academic advisors perform their role in highly manner. Agreeing with Harrell & Reglin, [18] who conduct a study for evaluation of a community college's nursing faculty advising program relative to students' satisfaction and retention who found students reported satisfaction with advisors. This result contradicting with Saadeh, J.A., Khalifeh, & Alyah, [25] who studied academic advising problems in Jordon and documented that the university students not satisfied with the academic advisors' performance as they failed to perform their role in the academic advising process.

Concerning to obstacles of academic advising process, obstacles related to academic advisors scored higher rather than others academic advising obstacles from the studied academic advisor and faculty students' point of view. This indicated that there is a great need to strengthen academic advisor by providing academic advising training sessions in their campus and faculty, determining their role accurately, and reducing their workload. This

interpretation is supported by Hamlet [26] who asserted that academic advising requires knowledgeable counselors who had time and have the ability to give close attention to detail.

As well, this result may interpret the cause of selecting the studied academic advisors and students to provide academic advising training courses and holding meetings to exchange academic advising experience within the campus as priority suggestion to improve academic advising process (Table 8 & Table 9). This finding is parallel to those of Allogmani [14] who investigate the main obstacles restraining academic advising facing the undergraduate students at Islamic University from students' overview and concluded that obstacles related to academic advisors came on top among others obstacles. In against with this result, Banat [27] who mentioned that college students ranked obstacles related to academic advisors as the lowest the academic advising obstacles and academic advisors perceive obstacles related to college students as the highest.

Furthermore, the data analysis showed a significant mean difference between academic advisors' performance and academic students' lives as the fourth-level students report lowest academic advisors' performance while the first-level students report higher academic advisor's performance. This might be explained by the fact that the first level academic students in Egypt are not exposed to advising in previous studying stages and not expected more and any level of academic advising could satisfy them. As well possibly, at the fourth level, academic students realize that they need more guidance compared to another academic year as they prepared to practice the profession. A similar finding was reported by Al-Shubil [28] in Jordon, who found that the first year academic students more satisfied with academic advisors performance rather than second, third, and fourth level academic students.

As revealed by this study, there was a significant mean difference between academic advising obstacles and students' academic levels as first level students report lowest academic advising obstacles meanwhile second level students report higher academic advising obstacles. This may be due to in the second academic year the students began to realize the importance of academic advising, as they would stay longer in the faculty, which make them realize obstacles that hinder academic advising. This interpretation is supported by Muola, Maithya, & Mwinzi [29] who proved that second-year academic

students seek to advise more than first, third and fourth-year students.

Concerning the relation between faculty students' sex and their perception to academic advisors' performance, there is a significant mean difference between faculty students' sex and their perception to academic advisors' performance as female students report lowest academic advisors' performance while male students report higher academic advisors' performance. This may be due to the nature of female that seeks perfection that leads them to seek more help in dealing with academic difficulties.

As for the relationship between students' sex and their perception of academic advising obstacles, there is no significant mean difference between the students' sex and their perception of academic advising obstacles. This means that the obstacles of academic advising at the faculty are not influenced by students' sex. This could be related to all students live in the same psychological, social and academic conditions and suffer from almost similar advising problems. Al-Shubil [28] mentioned that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' perception regarding academic guidance problems and sex support this result. In contrast with this finding, a study conducted at Al-Quds University by Banat [27] who declared that more male students are suffering from academic advising problems than females.

Regarding the suggestions for improving academic advising, most of studied students asserted that holding university-level meetings for faculties advising units to exchange experiences related to academic advising, accurate selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately, and providing the faculty with advising program that goes with quality assurance standards are most likely solutions to improve academic advising process.

Along with the present result, study at Ocean County College in New Jersey by Duffy [30] who plan, implement, and analyze an academic advising initiative and reviewed that by reaching out and getting involvement from faculty as well as other administrators academic advising will be able to move forward. In addition, Duffy added applied structural staffing who oriented and prepared for their role within academia advising could enhance academic advising capacity.

In the same context, the majority of studied academic advisors agreed that accurate selection of academic advisors determines their duties accurately. Conducting academic advising training courses by the faculty, and provide academic advisors with incentives and rewards can improve academic advising process. This finding is in congruence with Chan et al., [31] in China, who examines the academic advising from advisors and advisees perspectives and asserted on the importance of providing training in advising as some advisors could not guide students as they suffer from lacked administrative knowledge due to insufficient training.

In the same line Chan et al., [31] who examine the perspectives of advisors and advisees towards academic advising in undergraduate nursing education and suggested that sufficient training is been needed to increase the effectiveness of academic advising. Additionally, in a study in Texas by Shockey [32] reinforced that building recognition and reward system,

and qualified individuals who want and have the capacity to serve students in academic advising are major areas for strengthen academic advising program.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that obstacles related to advisors scored higher rather than other advising obstacles from advisors and students' point of view. In addition, this study elaborated that holding university-level meetings for faculties advising units to exchange experiences related to academic advising, selection of academic advisors and determine their duties accurately, providing the faculty with advising program that goes with quality assurance standards are most likely solutions to improve academic advising process from students' perspective. furthermore, holding academic advising training courses, and provide advisors with incentives and rewards can improve academic advising process from advisors' prespective

6. Indented Recommendations

In view of this study, the following points are recommended as corrective actions for academic advising process:

1. Offer academic advising training programs to enhance academic advisor in performing their roles.
2. Establish clear standards for academic advisors selection.
3. Establish a comprehensive academic advising regulation that goes with quality assurance standards.
4. Developing a comprehensive incentives system that encourages academic staff to participate in the academic advising process and perform their roles preciously.
5. Academic advising should be declared in the orientation programs for all new academic staff members and students.
6. Numerous field research is necessary for the area of evaluating academic advising process particularly during the advising session to provide evidence that is more conclusive.

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