

The Relationship Between the Quality of Academic Advising and the Perception of Academic Outcomes of Saudi College Students

Maryam Awadh¹

¹ Edgewood College, USA

Correspondence: Dr. Maryam Awadh, Edgewood College, USA.

Received: August 30, 2018

Accepted: September 14, 2018

Online Published: November 7, 2018

doi:10.5430/irhe.v3n4p22

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/irhe.v3n4p22>

Abstract

One aim of all educational institutions is to advance the relationship between academic advising and students' outcomes. The purpose of this literature review was to examine whether the level of quality of academic advising as measured by the advisor's meeting frequently, informativeness and availability, educational support, and career support predict students' persistence outcomes as measured by college loyalty, intent to drop out, social integration, and academic integration. This study helps provide evidence and empirical data to the field of academic advising by investigating its relationship with students' college commitment. The study was guided by Tinto integration theory (1987) and Astin involvement theory (1984). The literature derives from Saudi and United States studies. The analysis of this literature resulted in the identification of the academic advising relationship with students' outcomes. The findings are suggesting that quality academic advising matters for students' college commitment and positively predicted students' perceived academic integration. Future research should continue exploring the relationship between the quality of academic advising and students' college commitment but not necessarily limited to one institution or community.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, quality of academic advising, persistence, intent to dropout, college loyalty, social and academic integration

1. Introduction

Student outcomes-including the intent to dropout, college loyalty, social and academic integration are all associated with the quality of academic advising student outcomes and are global phenomena. These outcomes are all also associated with students' higher education success both in Saudi Arabia and throughout the world. To fully understand the relationship between the quality of academic advising and undergraduate student persistence, and academic/social integration, a review of previous research on this issue was conducted, including the relationship linked with students' persistence during their first and subsequent years of study. Keeping in mind that many research examples focused on various group of samples because "one-third of each year's full-time freshmen are not at the same institution one year later" (Levitz & Noel, 1990, p. 65) Because this study was conducted among Saudi undergraduate students, the literature review focused on studies of Saudi students.

This study also reviews previous research on the relationship between academic advising and how it is linked to students' academic success and outcomes. There are three sections in this literature review. The first reviews Tinto's theory of student integration and attrition and Astin's theory of student involvement, exploring studies that have tested these theories. The second reviews the importance of academic advising and the quality of academic advising in higher education. This section also reviews the importance of academic advising in Saudi higher education, as well as the quality of this academic advising, with special emphasis on how the quality of academic advising is associated with students' outcomes. Finally, the third section of the paper identifies gaps in the existing literature.

1.1 Addressing the Theories

Many researchers have investigated the phenomena of student persistence, and academic and social integration by looking at student attrition and retention. The two most common theoretical frameworks used to study college students' persistence focus on very different areas. Tinto's theory of attrition focus on student persistence as it related to their integration into social and academic systems of an institution, while Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement described the actual process of academic and social integration. An addition to an overview of each of

the theories, the ways in which these two theories can explain the importance of quality academic advising in higher education institutions are described.

Tinto's theory of student integration of attrition. Tinto's (1975) student attrition theory was developed from Spady's (1971) adoption of Durkheim's (1897) theory of suicide. Tinto believed that there was symmetry between Durkheim's (1897) theory of suicide and student dropout rates. Tinto (1975) argued that encouraging students to achieve academic and social integration in college was critically important to increase student persistence and decrease dropping out.

In the 1970s, Tinto tested his theory and confirmed the results using empirical studies (Reason, 2009) Tinto (1993) found that to enhance social and academic integration, students needed to be independent from their surrounding families and acclimated to higher education before being placed into the institutional environment.

Tinto's theory of departure has been tested in numerous studies. For instance, Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) tested Tinto's theory of departure. The results supported the idea that social integration, more than academic integration, is a predictor for persistence. They concluded that expanding social integration leads to institutional commitment growth (Braxton et al., 1997) Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, and Hengstler (1992) tested the validity of both the student attrition theory and the theory of student integration. They found an overlap between the theories when persistence issue was examined, while the theories were promoting the correlation with a possibility of students' departure.

In 1975, Tinto published his landmark student integration model (SIM) of attrition theory. In it Tinto theorized that a student who has not integrated into college society and academic life will be more likely to drop out of college. Tinto modeled his theory after Durken's suicide model, arguing that committing suicide is an intentional choice that is comparable to dropping out of college because the act of dropping out is an intentional withdrawal from higher education and the institutional community.

SIM was invented to offer a longitudinal mode which could demonstrate all approaches that effect the student's decision to leave university and their attrition. Tinto divided his SIM theory into two important dimensions: social and academic integration. Social integration is a sense of belonging to society through engagement in the group and ongoing interaction with university members. Academic integration is a sense of belonging to the learning environment and is related to student goals and successful outcomes. Tinto defined academic integration as learning and being involved in class and described social integration as being accepted within the university (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto (1987, pp. 127, 177) identified several reasons for student attrition, such as social or academic failure and voluntary departures. An additional reason was a lack of advising. For example, Metzner (1989) conducted an empirical study, which was longitudinal examination of first-year students. He found students were less likely to withdraw if they received good quality advising, though additional data showed that the quality of academic advising was associated with student persistence. In 1987, Tinto developed his theory and introduced a longitudinal theory of persistence in which he theorized about a variety of correlations between student persistence and retention.

Tinto (1993) argued that students dropping out emerged from a series of longitudinal interactions among students' skills, learning experiences, intention to complete, social and academic commitment, and access to quality support and advising. Jean (2010) noted that "Tinto's revised theory of student departure covers five areas: pre-entry attributes, goals commitment, institutional experiences, adjustment goals, commitment and outcomes" (p. 12). The pre-entry attributes include family levels of education, while student departure linked with student institutional experiences and outcomes. Therefore, the student's withdrawal associated with social, academic, and goal commitment. Adjustment goals refer to students' level of fit with institutional and other goals according to their needs, interests, and circumstances.

Furthermore, Tinto affirmed that academic and social integration are the fundamental factors that determine whether a student persists (Figure 2). Tinto hypothesized that students' persistence is correlated with academic experiences and social integration. This hypothesis was supported by a review of more than 2,500 studies conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), who mentioned the effectiveness of the relationship between faculty and students on students' educational outcomes (p. 479).

Tinto (1993) stated that the independent predictor for student growth or outcomes is faculty interaction in and out of the classroom. Additionally, he mentioned that a lack of academic and social interaction with faculty and the academic system might be associated with students' ongoing efforts to persist, graduate, or even commit. Institutional and outcome-oriented (goal) commitments can be easily measured by a student's persistence and academic and social integration. For example, if students frequently engage with the academic system and study

environment, they will be more involved in the college society and the social relationship of the institution and vice versa.

The interaction between a student's commitment to academic completion and his or her commitment to a university is a key factor in the student's decision to leave or intention to persist. Tinto (1999) added one concept to his theory about college administrators and faculty to address the needs of subgroup students: advising is integral to student success within the first-year of higher education. Social integration strongly empowers students' relationships with their academic advisors and peers and can lead to effective academic and social commitment. For example, Johnson and Wang (2011) conducted surveys among 450 students majoring in business. In the data gathered, 60% of the students strongly agreed that academic advising helped with any issues in the institution, such as the courses they were taking.

Consequently, Tinto suggested that the extent to which a student integrates into the academic and social life of a university and engages with his or her studies and the goals of the university can predict student persistence (McCubbin, 2003; Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1987) asserted that advising plays a role in enhancing student retention and in ensuring a connection between students and the institution. He mentioned academic integration is related to faculty and staff interaction with students. Berger and Braxton (1998) conducted an empirical study by adopting Tinto's theory of departure; the authors found that students were more likely to persist if they had positive communication, including academic policy and course and degree requirements. This study indicated there was strong support for further studies using the same theory.

Many researchers have addressed the relationship between the quality of academic advising and student outcomes by testing Tinto's theory. For example, Terenzini and Pascarella (1977) conducted the first study to test Tinto's theory of integration. Terenzini and Pascarella examined the effectiveness of social and academic integration on students' persistence and GPAs. They assessed students' intentions to persist into their sophomore year as the study's outcome. Terenzini and Pascarella used a quantitative methodology based on the adjective rating scale. The questionnaires gathered data from 379 freshman students. The questions asked about the students' GPAs, perceptions of academic and nonacademic life, amount of communication with faculty, and involvement in extracurricular activities. The authors found that informal and frequent meetings with faculty outside of class were positively related to student persistence. They also found that persisters were more engaged in the academic and social processes of the institution than nonpersisters (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1976, 1977).

In addition, Rob and Hope Longwell-Grice (2007) conducted a study among college freshmen to test Tinto's theory. The study was conducted in an urban research university. The study used an in-depth interview methodology with four students every two to three weeks. The interview asked about the type and level of support that students received from faculty, about their courses, meeting with faculty outside classroom, and faculty-student interactions. Based on the students' responses, the researchers found the students might be afraid to ask for advising or feel that visiting the faculty advisor's office is risky; some students felt the faculty was working against them or felt the faculty advisors were too busy. The results indicated students' attitudes may put them at risk of straying from the path to success and becoming part of dropout or nonpersistence rates. His work has been a pillar in this field; as Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (2011) argued, "While Tinto's model has been supported, attacked and revised over the last 30 years, it has significantly associated with how the researchers and practitioners view undergraduate retention and graduation" (p. 1).

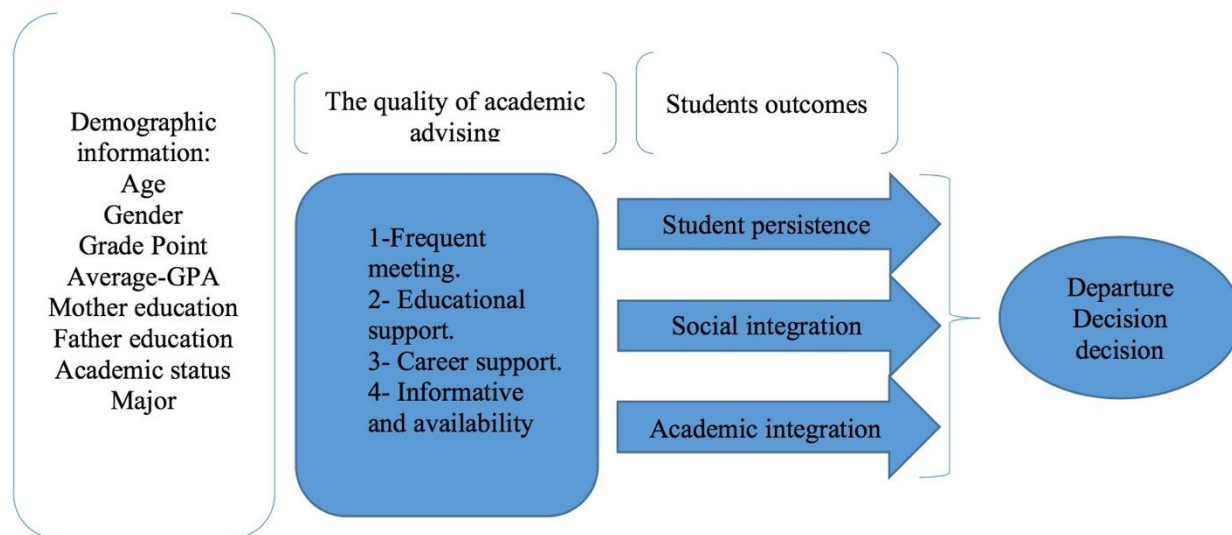


Figure 1. Student integration theory; adapted from Tinto (1975, p. 114)

Figure 2 shows students' demographic information, including grade point average (GPA), gender, and family background, and how these factors are associated with the quality of academic advising. The quality of academic advising is closely tied to student outcomes because students who are satisfied with their advising are more likely to experience positive outcomes and integrate academically and socially.

Astin's student involvement theory. Astin's student involvement theory illustrates the significance of students' involvement in their institution: The more students are involved, the more they learn. Astin (1984) defined his theory of student involvement as follows:

The amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. (p. 297)

Astin asserted that students become active learners by maintaining a certain level of involvement, whether they do this by learning, by building relationships with faculty and peers, or by participating in academic and nonacademic activities (Yamada, 2014). Astin's (1984) student involvement theory includes five postulates: (a) involvement requires students to be physically and psychologically invested in their academic experiences (e.g., faculty and peer relationships); (b) involvement requires students to invest their energy into studying (e.g., by committing to their learning); (c) there is an inversely proportional relationship between student involvement (in quality and quantity) and the learning or personal growth of students within any learning plan; (d) a student's amount of studying and learning corresponds with his or her level of academic and social involvement; (e) effective organizational policies and approaches should seek to increase student involvement with advisors (Astin, 1999, p. 519).

Astin (1977, 1993a) stated that students' persistence and retention rates are greatly associated with the standard and quality of their relations with classmates, faculty, and staff members. Specifically, Astin emphasized the power of faculty communication and relationship in student involvement, noting that frequent interactions with faculty members can be a major component of a student's involvement and persistence. According to data from a longitudinal study of 200,000 students enrolled in 300 postsecondary institutions, Astin (1977) found that "student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other variable" (p. 233).

Astin (1984) developed his theory based on three interrelated concepts: inputs, the environment, and outcomes (IEO). *Inputs* are based on previous circumstances (e.g., students' demographic status). The *environment* includes a student's experiences toward the learning environment (e.g., social and academic aspects) and "refers to the student's actual experiences during the educational program" (Astin, 1993a, p. 18). *Outcomes* measure students' satisfaction with their institutions. Astin (1999) stated that different involvement forms will produce different outcomes (Figure

3); this concept includes the five fundamental postulates about student involvement. He confirmed the importance of academic advising and how it is linked to student outcomes and involvement (p. 523, p.1).

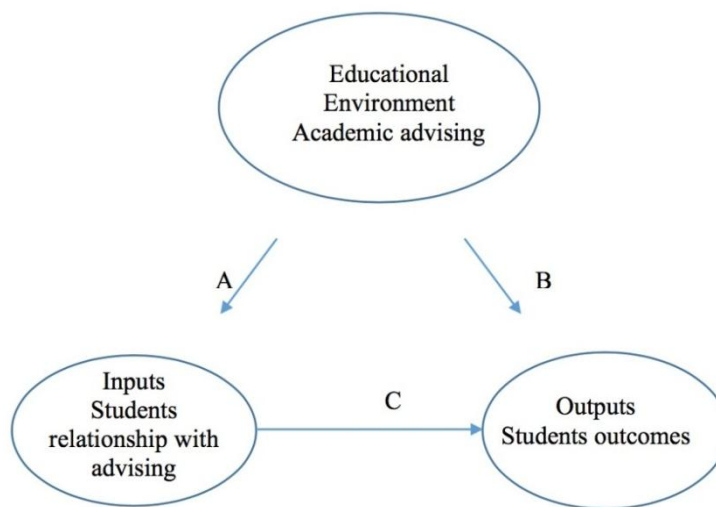


Figure 2. Astin's theory of student involvement

Astin's theory is the most utilized when it comes to student persistence, GPA, and academic and social integration, as shown in Figure 3. Many researchers have assessed Astin's theory to explain its three components: Input-Environment-Output (IEO) and how it affects students' growth and outcomes. For example, Norwani, Yusof, and Abdullah (2009) tested the way in which Astin's theory explains the relationship between students' development and student's input which correlated to learning environments in public higher learning environment institutions (PHLIs) in peninsular Malaysia. The participants were final-year students majoring in business. All students in the study sample completed the two sections of the survey that measured the students' inputs (e.g., GPA, race, etc.) and environmental factors (e.g., academic effort, interaction with faculty or peers, etc.). Using a quantitative method, the researchers found correlations between students' development and their inputs and learning environments. The authors argued that the involvement theory explained how students' academic development was linked to the quantity and quality of academic advising received.

Mu and Fosnacht (2016) also tested Astin's theory and found a positive link between academic advisory services and senior students' grades. The authors distributed a survey to 156 universities. The results showed a correlation between the academic advising relationship and students' learning and growth; the correlation was consistent across institutions.

In addition, Owens (2015) applied Astin's theory to test the associations between students' perceptions of the effectiveness of academic advising and students' GPAs and ongoing enrollment. The study utilized a quantitative, causal-comparative and correlational method that involved 762 participants at a four-year university in the United States' Midwest region. The study found that students' GPAs were associated with their perceptions of academic advisor effectiveness while their success was associated with the effectiveness of the academic advising. Owens (2015) argued that providing academic advising in one central location does not guarantee student growth and learning; however, the effectiveness of academic advisors has a positive correlation with students' interest and success.

2. The Importance of Academic Advising in Higher Education

Academic advising is an important aspect of higher education and student academic performance. Hossler and Bean pointed out that the most frequent student service regarding student persistence is academic advising (as cited in Brown, 2008, p. 309). The issues that leads students to decide whether to withdraw from higher education are complex (Daley, 2010, p. 2). Many disadvantages are associated with the decision to withdraw from college, including severe individual, socioeconomic, academic, and institutional factors (Elkin, Santiago, Karoll & Johanna,

2006). Dropping out of higher education systems is undesirable because dropping out limits students' career opportunities; minimizes their chances of completing degrees in the future; and wastes their time, money, and effort.

Academic advising is a core issue that is closely linked to student persistence, GPA, and academic and social integration. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated that "research consistently indicates that academic advising can play a role in student's decisions to persist and in their chances of graduating" (p. 404). The studies reviewed earlier showed that the absence of academic advising may contribute to a student's failure and subsequent decision to opt out of higher education. By reinforcing and strengthening the advising relationship, students can strengthen their academic plans and goal achievement (Astin, 1977, 1993; Tinto, 1987).

Kot (2014) confirmed that second-term advising is positively related to second-year enrollment behavior and academic performance (as measured by GPA). He indicated that "students who used centralized advising during the second term were more likely to return in the second year" (Kot, 2014, p. 1). This centralized advising was defined as the unit of faculty academic advisors and administrative members (Pardee, 2004). However, this link is particularly important because newer research indicates that rising enrollment rates do not guarantee that students will complete their higher education goals or be satisfied with their academic advising support. Pargett (2011) noted that "as a result of higher enrollment in higher education, there arose a high demand of academic advising in order to increase the retention of students and guide students to degree completion" (p. 13). Also, he mentioned that students would be more satisfied if they have effective relationship with their advisors to discuss their academic and career goals (p. 46). This statement occurs that students seek both of educational and career support during their academic level of higher education. Wyckoff, (1999) illustrated that the most factors associated with students' persistence are the educational and career support.

3. The Quality of Academic Advising in Higher Education

To understand the relationship between the quality of academic advising and students' persistence, and social and academic integration, examining the elements that determine the quality of academic advising is necessary. The quality of academic advising has been structured as a characteristic of teaching, one that focuses on student growth (Smith & Allen, 2006). According to National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), there are many conceptualizations of academic advising quality. The concept of academic advising has its own pedagogy (i.e., the process of teaching and learning) that determines student learning outcomes (i.e., determines students' values, goals, and accomplishments) and sets curricula (i.e., curricular and extracurricular activities suitable for students). These concepts have been positively involved with the quality of academic advising (NACADA, 2006).

There are no confirmed theories of academic advising, but there have been many principles provided about academic advising practices (Creamer, 2000). Exploring the quality and importance of academic advising is significant and can be done by discussing the history of academic advising and providing evidence of advising's importance from theories.

The mission of academic advising achieved a historic accomplishment within American undergraduate education systems and gained popularity during the late 1800s (Frost, 2000). Prior to that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the colonial colleges in America served as surrogates for parents (Cook, 2001), though there is no evidence that academic advising was available during this time. Frost (2000) noted that the academic advising mission was headed by faculty, parents, professors, and tutors who created a "parent-like" role to help students academically.

There are many theories that show evidence of the quality of advising, such as Astin's (1991) inputs-environment-outcomes (I-E-O) theory. A study by Mu and Fosnacht (2016) was guided by Astin theory (1991) and was carried out to explore the relationship between academic advising and students' outcomes. Mu and Fosnacht conducted the survey among 156 bachelor-granting colleges and universities and found a positive association between academic advising experiences and student GPA.

Ender, Winston, and Miller (1984) pointed out that "The greatest difficulty students cite with the quality of their academic experiences is advising" (p. 14). This statement is significant because strong academic advising is an essential factor in student persistence and graduation rates. Using data from the National Academic Advising Association, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) showed that institutions are not able to ensure that students are receiving quality advising. On the other hand, Drake (2007) enhanced faculty to approach academic advising as a teaching process, rather than a way to transfer information (P.4).

Academic advising is the fundamental method through which faculty members can boost their communication with students, reveal a caring attitude, and promote persistence (Fralick, 1993). According to a study published by Vianden and Barlow (2015), who examined the correlation between student loyalty and perceived academic advising

quality, students who felt positively about their relationships with their advisors were more likely to stay in school. On the other hand, McFarlane (2013) conducted nonexperimental quantitative study in which he surveyed 628 first-year college students and then interviewed several advising administrators. The purpose of McFarlane's study was to determine whether the academic advising relationship is associated with student success, retention, and satisfaction with advising. The results showed that student persistence, retention, and attrition are all linked to the academic advising relationship. Students who received advice from peers were less likely to persist and felt less satisfied with their advising than students who received advising from a professional (McFarlane, 2013). While, most recent study showed that the academic advising is not just related to the completion student's degree but also for their career progress (Tudor, 2018).

4. The Importance of Academic Advising in Saudi Education

The importance of academic advising has been addressed by many institutions in Saudi Arabia. Many universities revealed their principles on academic advising through academic websites and handbooks, informing students of the quality of academic advising. The principles of academic advising at four-year institutions are important and aid college students' progress.

One of the largest universities in Saudi Arabia clarified the principles of ethical and professional conduct in academic advising. The academic advising principles included (a) adhere to the student's communications and meetings to discuss important academic progress and issues; (b) hold a meeting at least twice a year with each student in advisee groups to investigate common problems and concerns; (c) based on their concerns and problems, refer students to the appropriate offices and individuals as necessary; (d) advise students who have been misunderstood by other faculty members by leading them to suitable solutions; (e) be an advocate for students when they feel that they have been treated unjustly; (f) be an intermediary for students when it is unsuitable or improper for the students to confront certain members of the faculty directly over a disputed problem; and (g) report to the students affairs committee in cases of undue or repeated inappropriate conduct on the part of individual students or members of faculty (King Abdul-Aziz University Faculty [KAUF] Student Handbook, 2011). The importance of academic advising illustrates the dynamic relationship between students' academic and social success. Students and faculty advisors should build an ongoing relationship that contains knowledge of the student's academic and social difficulties, specifically if the difficulties conflict with the student's persistence or leaving.

5. The Quality of Academic Advising in Saudi Higher Education

The quality of academic advising is a major concern for many higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. Abuelma'atti (2006) identified several major factors associated with the attrition of engineering students in higher education in Saudi Arabia: (a) poor academic advising and support; (b) poor teaching and learning quality; (c) lack of academic and educational and social integration; (d) poor educational skills, such as English language skills, among science majors; and (e) heavy course loads.

Numerous studies have shown that Saudi students often receive ineffective advising support. Studies have found that many advisors concentrate on repetitive tasks and neglect to properly support students in their goals of academic excellence (Al-Nory, 2012). In the past, Saudi students have been responsible for making course selections without advising support. Irfan Ahmed (2015), a member of the engineering faculty at King Abdulaziz University, indicated in the *Saudi Gazette* newspaper that Saudi government-sponsored universities are now in the process of improving and expanding on academic advising to offer proper assistance to all students. The system is currently being retooled, and emphasis is being placed on providing students with sufficient initial support. However, the core issue of the lack of an integrated relationship between academic advising and first-year students remains. The previous statement implies there is a lack of academic advising resulting from insufficient institutional support to the advisors.

Institutions must respect and empower the quality of academic advising when guiding students through their first year of college. The rationale for studying the quality of academic advising is that many scholars have found that the benefits of academic advising extend beyond student retention, on-time degree completion, and graduation rates. For instance, research has emphasized that "academic advising is a collaborative educational process whereby students and their advisors are partners in meeting the essential learning outcomes, ensuring student academic success, and outlining the steps for achievement of the student's personal, academic, and career goals" (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015, p. 2).

The effectiveness of the quality of academic advising is linked directly to students' levels of satisfaction. In Saudi Arabia, the relationship between academic advising and first-year students is significantly connected to their

persistence and social and academic integration. A considerable number of Saudi students choose to drop out of college because of insufficient support or not being prepared.

For instance, many previous Saudi studies (Abuelma'atti, 2006; Al-Nory, 2012, Al-Dossary's, 2008) have shown that a lack of academic advising and poor support systems are negatively associated with student outcomes, including GPA, intent to persist, and graduation. In 2010, Hawthorne and Young's study addressed the students who are transferring from a two-year to four-year institution and how this action correlated with the first-generation students' consciousness of university experiences. They found that supporting the valuable faculty–student relationship increased students' satisfaction with professors, which was positively linked to the students' overall satisfaction with the university environment and contributed to degree completion. The study indicated that two factors were linked to students' academic outcomes: satisfaction with the academic advising and personal background. Hawthorne and Young (2010) found that satisfaction with the academic environment is positively related to students' future academic aims.

Another study indicated that 7.6% of first-year dental students at Dammam University depended on their academic advisors for assistance, 51% relied on their classmates, and 13.8% were self-reliant (Al-Ansari, Tantawi, Abdelsalam, & Al-Harbi, 2015). Many researchers have indicated that academic advising is linked to student persistence and is directly associated to degree completion rates. Various studies have also connected students' lack of satisfaction and communication failures with academic advising and student support systems. Students struggling with ineffective support systems may feel academically overwhelmed or even bored.

Students who build and maintain powerful ties with their academic advising support are more likely to successfully complete their college studies whereas a lack of academic advising can have detrimental effects. For example, Aldosary (2008) found that Saudi Arabia's King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals recorded a high number of dropouts during the summer period because of a lack of academic supervisors. This study used a mixed method, in which qualitative data were collected by interviewing staff about student retention, and quantitative data were gathered from two surveys, the first of which was distributed to 417 students at the beginning of the first semester and the second of which was distributed to the same students at the end of the first semester. The data showed that of the 417 students, 362 re-enrolled for the next semester, 52 withdrew on their own accord after finishing their freshman years, and three withdrew for academic reasons associated with the lack of advising.

In a more recent study, Mahfouz and Farag (2015) collected data from the nursing school in Princess Nourah Bent Abdulrahman University in Riyadh (PNU). The e-mail survey conducted with 106 students from a variety of academic years determined the satisfaction between students and academic advising. The findings showed that there is a strong correlation between a student's satisfaction and the information gained from academic advisors. Also, a negative correlation between GPA and academic advising was shown while there was no significant association between living inside or outside Riyadh and academic advising.

6. Students Outcomes

The quality of academic advising is found to be associated with the following student outcomes: persistence, GPA, and academic commitment.

College persistence. Tinto and Astin theorized that strong student satisfaction with academic commitment and institutional experiences increase students' intentions to persist. Many Saudi researchers have addressed the association of academic advising with students' persistence. To be more specific, researchers have sought to investigate the reasons behind the increasing rate of student dropouts and the lack of academic advising, particularly in students' first year.

A recent study by Aljohani (2016) indicated that the cause of student attrition in Saudi higher education is still uncovered by many researchers who addressed the same issue in their studies. His study was a qualitative method that followed a descriptive method by using thematic analysis. He found that Saudi students' attrition was related to a series of negative conditions, such as a lack of academic advising, low high school GPAs, low levels of parental education, and poor educational and social integration. Aljohani (2016) found that poor student–faculty relationships and lack of advising were common factors associated with student dropout rates in many Saudi studies. Aljohani (2016) further argued that students' experiences with faculty support and the educational system were more related to the student's persistence.

In addition, Al-Dossary (2008) addressed the factors related to student retention at King Saud University using a mixed-methods approach and a sample of 414 freshmen students. Al-Dossary (2008) was the first researcher to conduct an in-depth study analyzing student attrition while applying Tinto's theory (1975) of student integration.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data showed that Tinto's theory cannot be directly applied to the retention of Saudi students at King Saud University. Al-Dossary's stated that only 30% of the model variance in student retention can be explained by Tinto's factors, such as selecting or transferring for more desirable majors and discontinuing students' monthly allowance (Al-Dossary, 2008). Academic advising can play significant role in encouraging students who face challenges to make the right decision about selecting a major or transferring. The relationship between academic advising and first-year students is valuable regarding students' ability to overcome some academic or social difficulties.

According to some scholars, students who decide to leave college typically make this decision within the first two weeks of enrollment (Ketkar & Bennett, 1989). A student's desire to remain at an institution beyond two weeks is associated with the quality of academic advising, which can help students better handle stress. Some studies conducted in Saudi Arabia indicated that quality academic advising is correlated to student persistence, which was a major issue in academic institutions for both first-year students and students in subsequent years. In King Fahad University, Aldosary and Garba (1999) conducted a study to measure student retention rates by examining students' perceptions of the causes of increased attrition. The authors collected data using a 95-item structured questionnaire and identified many factors affecting students' intent to persist or drop out, including dissatisfaction with faculty relationships, food services, and course educators.

College commitment. College commitment revealed from academic and social integration. Both academic and social integration are found to be associated with students' intentions to leave or persist. College commitment can be seen through academic integration, which is usually determined by academic ability and success. Social integration is determined by the student's life and interactions with others inside and outside the institutional environment. Tinto (1988) asserted that the first semester of a student's first year was significantly linked with the student's academic and social success. Participating in institutional activities and communicating with faculty are also linked to persistence and academic success (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 1993). Students' academic and social integration are demonstrated by their intent to persist through the first year of college and to enroll in subsequent years of education; thus, these elements lay the foundation for students' success (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 1993). Braxton et al. (1997) conducted an empirical study and found that to comprehend the issue of student departures, measuring social integration, not academic integration, was necessary.

Mobarak, Alharthi, and Kees (2000) studied students and faculty to assess the factors leading students to withdraw from Umm Al-Qura University. The researchers found that the important factors associated with student persistence are a lack of advising and a lack of social and academic commitment.

Aljohani's (2014) PhD thesis addressed student retention factors. His study was conducted at a tertiary English language center in Saudi Arabia; he investigated the low number of student retentions and used a mixed-methods approach, and found the main factor associated with student retention was the lack of institutional commitment level.

Grade point average (GPA). Astin (1993) and Tinto (1993) both concurred that GPA is linked to students' outcomes controlling by institutional experiences, such as students' experiences with academic advisors. Students who do not receive advising services may feel frustrated in their efforts such as obtain extra time for graduation or may gain knowledge of campus resources, all previous could be a reason for lowering students' grades (Flaga, 2006; Hunter & White, 2004). Students' commitment to their goal of graduation and academic success is associated with their level of integration into the institution's system. Academic integration is measured by a student's desire to complete the degree or being aware of degree requirement or credits that might be achieved or obtained. Young-Jones et al. (2013) examined the correlation between academic advising and grade point average (GPA) but did not find the relationship to be statistically significant.

In contrast, Bean (2005) identified nine themes that are linked to students' retention decisions. These nine themes are correlated factors with students' persistence and are as follows: intentions and conduct, institutional adaptation and college commitment, psychological processes and crucial attitudes, academic factors, social factors, bureaucratic factors, environmental factors, student background factors, and fiscal and financial factors. The academic factors, such as lack of academic advising, are reflected in students' outcomes and academic abilities and performances.

Bean (2005) stated that some academic factors might have a different association with student persistence; for example, low GPA may be associated with withdrawal but not the reason for withdrawing. Thus, Bean argued that GPA is not linked to academic integration because some students with higher GPAs move to other colleges (p. 226). He concluded that many academic factors can affect students' intentions to persist or depart; thus, no factor should be disregarded or overvalued.

Hakeem (2007) conducted a study in Makah Teachers College with 60 students; nonpersisters had low motivation and poor relations with academic advising. The lack of academic advising led to attrition. In a more recent study by Al-Ghnaim (2010), who studied the perceived attrition of students and administrative staff, the author used a sample of first-year students at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, including 475 female students and 24 administrative staff. She used a quantitative descriptive method and found that earning low academic grades was the leading factor of student attrition. Low GPAs can influence whether students finish college or withdraw. Nonetheless, the present study focuses on students' GPAs and their intention to persist.

7. Gaps in the Existing Literature

There are gaps in the studies reviewed in this section. The most crucial gap concerns the paucity of studies on the persistence of students in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia (Aljohani, 2016, p. 190). Furthermore, although some studies have addressed the issue of persistence in individual fields, such as education or science, no study has yet been conducted on persistence across numerous majors. For example, Al-Dossary and Garba (1999) conducted a study on 35 students from the College of Environmental Design and 416 new students going through orientation; but the author failed to review student persistence issues using appropriate or adequate methods. In another study, Abuelma'atti (2006) used only statistical descriptions and lacked a conceptual or theoretical background. Finally, few studies have examined student persistence and its association with gender (Mahfouz & Farag, 2015).

To fill these gaps, this current study included both genders and participants from different academic majors, such as education, science, law, English, history, and more. The study addressed the quality of academic advising specifically among first-year students. This study may reform the gap of the student attrition that is related to the failure of graduation or decrease graduation rate. The study explored the quality of academic advising to confirm if students were receiving the advising they required to be successful.

8. Summary

This paper examined the major theories on student persistence: Tinto's theory of attrition and Astin's involvement theory. The theories are the most widely used in relation to student's outcomes including intent to dropout, college loyalty, academic integration, and social integration. This paper also addressed the quality of academic advising in Saudi Arabian higher education and its correlation with student's outcomes, putting an emphasis on the importance of the academic advising relationship and the extent of student communication with the advisor. Finally, the study explored the gaps in the existing literature on student's outcomes at four-year institutions in Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledgement

I am especially indebted to Dr. Ting Lan Ma, who has been extremely helpful, encouraging, reassuring, and attentive in the pursuit of my academic goals.

References

- Abuelma'atti, M. (2006). Engineering education in Saudi Arabia: Problems and solutions. Paper presented at the Fourth Saudi Technical Conference and Exhibition, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Retrieved from http://ipac.kacst.edu.sa/edoc/2007/162696_2.pdf
- Ahmed, I. (2015). The growth of academic advising in Gulf countries. *Saudi Gazette*. Retrieved March 21, 2016, from <http://saudigazette.com.sa/opinion/voices/the-growth-of-academic-advising-in-gulf-countries/>
- AI-Nory, M. (2012). Simple decision support tool for university academic advising. *International Symposium on Information Technology in Medicine and Education (ITME)*, 53-57. Hokodate: Hokkaido.
- Al-Ansari, A., Tantawi, M. E., Abdelsalam, M., & Al-Harbi, F. (2015). Academic advising and student support: Help-seeking behaviors among Saudi dental undergraduate students. *The Saudi Dental Journal*, 27(2), 57-62. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4459275/>
- Aldosary, A. S., & Garba, S. B. (1999). An analysis of factors contributing to college student dropout in a medium sized technical university: The case of the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. *Higher Education Policy*, 12, 313-328.
- Aldosary, A. S., & Garba, S. B. (1999). An analysis of factors contributing to college student dropout in a medium sized technical university: The case of the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. *Higher Education Policy*, 12, 313-328.

- Al-Dossary, S. (2008). A study of the factors affecting student retention at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia: Structural Equation Modelling and Qualitative Methods. Doctoral thesis, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland. Retrieved from <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/691>
- Al-Ghnaim, L. (2010). *Factors Leading to the Dropout of First-year Female Students in Full-time Undergraduate Programs at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University*. Master thesis, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Retrieved from <http://goo.gl/J8S0uV>
- Aljohani, O. (2014). *Student attrition in higher education: an exploratory study of factors influencing student retention at a tertiary English language center in Saudi Arabia*. PhD thesis, RMIT University.
- Aljohani, O. (2016). Analyzing the Findings of the Saudi Research on Student Attrition in Higher Education. *International Education Studies IES*, 9(8), 184-193. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n8p184>
- Astin, A. (1984). Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.
- Astin, A. (1999). Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 518-529.
- Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effect of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1993a). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. Phoenix: The Oryx Press.
- Astin, A.W. (1985). *Achieving educational excellence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A.W. (1991). *Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education/Oryx Press Series on Higher Education.
- Bean, J. P. (2005). Nine themes of college student retention. *College student retention: Formula for student success*, 215-244.
- Berger, J., & Braxton, J. (1998). Revising Tinto's interactionist theory of student departure through theory elaboration: Examining the role of organizational attributes in the persistence process. *Research in Higher Education*, 39(2), 103-119.
- Braxton, J.M., Sullivan, A.S., & Johnson, R. (1997). Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure. In J.S. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 12, pp.107-146). New York: Agathon.
- Brown, T. (2008). Critical concepts in advisor training and development. In V. N. Gordon, W. R. Habley, & T. J. Grites (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (2nd ed., pp. 309-322). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cabrera, A., Castaneda, M., Nora, A., & Hengstler, D. (1992). The Convergence between Two Theories of College Persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, 63(2), 143-164.
- Cook, S. (2001). A chronology of academic advising in America. *The Mentor*, 3(4).
- Creamer, D. (2000). Use of theory in academic advising. In V. N. Gordon, & W. R. Hadley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 18-34). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Daley, F. (2010). Why college students drop out and what we do about it. *College Quarterly*, 13(3).
- Demetriou, C., & Schmitz-Sciborski, A. (2011). Integration, motivation, strengths and optimism: Retention theories past, present and future. In R. Hayes (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 7th National Symposium on Student Retention, 2011, Charleston* (pp. 300-312). Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma.
- Drake, J.K. (2007). *Components of a Successful Faculty Advising Program*. Pocket Guide 5. Manhattan, KS: NACADA.
- Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide*. Translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. Glencoe: The Free Press. Originally published as *Le suicide: Etude de sociologie*. Paris: Feliz Alcané, 1897.
- Elkin, C., Santiago, G., Karoll, G., & Johanna, V. (2006). Analysis of the associated factors to drop-out and college graduation. *Lecturas de Economía*, 11(65).
- Ender, S. C., Winston, R. B., Jr., & Miller, T. K. (1984). Academic advising reconsidered. In R. B. Winston, Jr., T. K. Miller, S. C. Ender, T. G. Grites, & Associates (Eds.), *Developmental Academic Advising* (pp. 3-34). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Flaga, C. T. (2006). The process of transition for community college transfer students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 30, 3-19.
- Fralick, M. (1993). College success: A study of positive and negative attrition. *Community College Review*, 20(5), 29-35.
- Frost, S. H. (2000). Historical and philosophical foundations for academic advising. In *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (3-17). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hakeem, A.-E. (2007). Student's Drop-out Phenomenon in Teachers Colleges, Factors and Reasons. Retrieved from <http://goo.gl/c1S1XY>
- Hawthorne, M., & Young, A. (2010). First-generation transfer students' perceptions: Implications for retention and success. *Journal of College Orientation & Transition*, 17(2), 29-39.
- Hunter, M. S., & White, E. R. (2004). Could fixing academic advising fix higher education?. *About Campus*, 2, 20-25.
- Jean, D. (2010). *The academic and social adjustment of first-generation college students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses, eRepository @ Seton Hall. (Paper 1490).
- Johnson, S., & Wang, C. (2011). Developmental Advising for Academic Success Among Undergraduate Business Students. Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2011/01/advising-undergrad-business-students/>
- Ketkar, K., & Bennett, S. D. (1989). Strategies for evaluating a freshman studies program. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 1(1), 33-44.
- King Abdulaziz University-Faculty of Dentistry. (2011). *KAUFD Student Handbook*. Retrieved from http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:V0DpZk1GLCQJ:www.kau.edu.sa/GetFile.aspx%3Fid%3D143796%26fn%3DSTUDENT_HANDBOOK.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=safari
- Kot, F. C. (2014). The Impact of Centralized Advising on First-Year Academic Performance and Second-Year Enrollment Behavior. *Research in Higher Education*, 55(6), 527-563. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9325-4>
- Levitz, R., & Noel, L. (1990). Connecting students to institutions: Keys to retention and success. In Upcraft, M.L. & Gardner J.N. (Eds.), *The freshman year experience: Helping students survive and succeed in college* (pp. 65-81). San Francisco & Oxford: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Longwell-Grice, R., & Longwell-Grice, H. (2007). Testing Tinto: How do retention theories work for first-generation, working-class students?. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, 9, 407-420.
- Mahfouz, R. M., & Farag, M. K. (2015). Students' Satisfaction with Academic Advising at Nursing College, Princess Nourah Bent Abdurrahman University. *World Journal of Nursing Sciences*, 1(3), 62-67. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wjns.2015.1.3.96157>
- McCubbin, I. (2003). *An examination of criticisms made of Tinto's 1975 student integration model of attrition*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.
- McFarlane, B. L. (2013). *Academic advising structures that support first-year student success and retention* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Portland State University, Portland, OR. Retrieved from http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/1044
- Metzner, B. S. (1989). Perceived quality of academic advising: The effect on freshman attrition. *American Educational Research Journal*, 26(3), 422-442.
- Mobarak, A., Alharthi, Z., & Kees, O. (2000). A report on field research to determine the factors leading to failure and attrition phenomena among students of Umm Al-Qura University as perceived by the students who failed and dropped out and faculty members. *Umm Al-Qura University Journal of Educational, Social and Humanities Sciences*, 12(1), 165-176.
- Mu, L., & Foslacht, K. (2016). Effective Advising: How Academic Advising Influences Student Learning Outcomes in Different Institutional Contexts. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, 1-26. Retrieved April 24, 2017, from http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/presentations/2016/AERA_2016_Mu_Foslacht_paper.pdf

- National Academic Advising Association. (2006). NACADA concept of academic advising. Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising-a598.aspx>
- Noaman, A. Y., & Ahmed, F. F. (2015). A New Framework for E Academic Advising. *Procedia Computer Science*, 65 (International Conference on Communications, management, and Information technology (ICCMIT'2015), 358-367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2015.09.097>
- Norwani, N. M., Yusof, R., & Abdullah, M. K. L. (2009). Learning outcomes at higher education institutions: To what extent do institutional environments contribute?. *Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning*, 5(1), 84-94.
- Owens, M. R. (2015). *Student Perceptions of Academic Advisor Effectiveness and Student Success: Factors at Master*. Master's Theses. Paper 2361. Retrieved from <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/2361>
- Padgett, V. R., & Reid, J. F. (2003). Five year evaluation of the student diversity program: A retrospective quasi-experiment. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 4, 135-145.
- Pardee, C. F. (2004). Organizational structures for advising. *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*. Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Organizational-Models-for-Advising.aspx>
- Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How College Affects Students, Volume 2: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Reason, R. D. (2009). An examination of persistence research through the lens of a comprehensive conceptual framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6), 659-682.
- Smith, C., & Allen, J. (2006). Essential functions of academic advising: What students want and get. *NCADA Journal*, 26, 56-66.
- Spady, W. (1971). Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. *Interchange*, 2, 38-62.
- Terenzini, P., & Pascarella, E. (1977). Voluntary freshman attrition and patterns of social and academic integration in a university: A test of a conceptual model. *Research in Higher Education*, 6, 25-43.
- Terenzini, P., & Pascarella, E. T. (1976). Informal Interaction with Faculty and Freshman Ratings of the Academic and Non Academic Experience of College. *Journal of Educational Research*, 70, 35-41.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125.
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Increasing Student Retention*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *Journal of Higher Education*, 59, 438-455.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal*, 19(12), 5-9.
- Tudor, T. R. (2018). Fully integrating academic advising with career coaching to increase student retention, graduation rates and future job satisfaction. *Industry and Higher Education*, 32(2), 73-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422218759928>
- Vianden, J., & Barlow, P. J. (2015). Strengthen the Bond: Relationships Between Academic Advising Quality and Undergraduate Student Loyalty. *NACADA Journal*, 35(2), 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.12930/nacada-15-026>
- Wyckoff, S. C. (1999). The academic advising process in higher education: History, research, and improvement. *Recruitment & Retention in Higher Education*, 13(1), 1-3.
- Yamada, R. (2014). *Measuring Quality of Undergraduate Education in Japan: Comparative Perspective in a Knowledge-Based Society* (1st ed.). Springer Singapore.
- Young-Jones, A. D., Burt, T. D., Dixon, S., & Hawthorne, M. J. (2013). Academic advising: Does it really impact student success?. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 21(1), 7-19.