

**THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES*****Dr. Aliero, H. S. and Muza, S. H.**

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Received 15th June 2020; Accepted 24th July 2020; Published online 31th August 2020**Abstract**

The thrust of this paper is to examine of the role academic advisers at undergraduate level. A survey research design was used. 250 students participated in the study. The instrument was ensured by Cronbach alpha method which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. The t-test was employed to test the hypotheses generated. There was a difference in the academic performance of male and female students ($t=2.53, p=0.000$). Discussions and conclusion were offered. It is recommended that Academic advisors should be given adequate professional training to focus on student personal wellbeing in the learning environment.

Keywords: Impact, Academic Advising, Undergraduate and Nigerian Universities.**INTRODUCTION**

It is an indisputable fact that the absence of an effective academic advising leads students to commit a lot of academic blunders leading to the breach of university rules and regulations. This is as a result of lack of proper understanding of the philosophy, concepts, objectives, procedures and even the programme they are pursuing. It is often thought that the classroom teacher is responsible for counselling, directing and advising students on their academic difficulties. However, high academic intake of students in the university necessitated the need for professional academic advisors and experts as well as coming into effect the formulation of comprehensive advising programme (Frost, 1991). A turning point in the history of academic advising was recorded when the first national conference on academic advising was held in the United State of America in 1977, which followed the establishment of National Association of Advising in 1979. The Association further published its first referred journal in 1981 (Beatty, 1991). This development set the ball rolling in motivating many universities to set up their own academic advising centres during seventies and eighties. Academic advising is an opportunity to exchange information between the adviser and the advisee design to help students reach their educational and career goal. This educational facility is not very familiar among students themselves. Students are not often enlightened as to what their expected role should be in academic advising. It is important to note that good academic advising is a shared responsibility between the adviser and students. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the students to make decisions about his/her goals by creating a plan to reach these goals. Academic adviser can assist in the process by helping student understands options, determines resources and where necessary identify alternatives available at the students disposal. While students are encourage keeping their parents informed about their plans and progress, the advising relationship uniquely is between the academic adviser and the student. Academic adviser requires significant formal education. They guide student scholastic decisions.

A master's degree is earned by most academic advisers; certification and prior work experiences may be necessary depending on experiences on organization. Academic advisers help students to recognize and achieve their educational goals. They help students examine school programmes, recognize their academic strengths and weaknesses, they also help students in the selection of their majors. An academic adviser work closely with other University administrators and stay up to date on programmes changes.

Concept of Academic Advising

Academic advising has different interpretation in educational literature. Before the Second World War academic advising was not very prominent. It is the response to tremendous advancement in education where goals set to be achieved became difficult to accomplish. There is, therefore, the need to counsel and advise students relating to selecting and enrolling of courses and other academic programs. After the Second World War, despite remarkable increase in student's enrolment in Colleges and Universities, Academic advising receives little or no attention in the field of educational research. Academic advising is a process of information exchange that empowers students to realize their maximum educational potential. The advising process is student centered and will result in the students gaining clearer understanding of him/her, and the experience of higher education David (1987). Academic Advising is a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor. The intent of this collaboration is to assist the student in the development of meaningful educational goals that are consistent with personal interests, values and abilities. The academic advisor is granted formal authority by an academic unit (College, School or Department) to approve the student academic programme of study and assist the student in progressing toward the appropriate degree-University of Michigan-Dear born (2002). Academic advising along with teaching, research and service, is central to achieving the fundamental goals of higher education. Academic advising is an intentional educational process that requires concern for and consideration of all these fundamental goals. One of the major significance to academic advising are: teaching students to understand the meaning of higher

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education; the purpose of the curriculum, and fostering students' intellectual and personal development towards academic success and lifelong learning. Though, it may vary from one context to another, in every setting academic advising is a multidimensional and intentional process, grounded in teaching and learning with its own purpose, content, and specified outcomes NACADA (2003). An academic advisor is a professional staff or a counsellor who works with students at College or University level. They direct academic activities of students. They are responsible for helping students choose their major and minor subjects. They also ensure that students meet the basic requirement for graduation in their various fields of specializations. Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the framework of their academic aspirations and abilities. Reinartz, and White (1995) considered academic advising as a process of helping students to discover their capabilities and potentials in order to help make decisions related to their academic performance in overcoming the difficulties which might obstruct their studies. Lowerten, (2005) noted that academic advising is more than given higher educational directions, but an interactive relationship between the advisor and the students.

Benefits of Academic Advising

According to Miller, (2002) Academic advising has the following benefits:

- Identification of University requirements, Faculty requirements, major requirements, paradigm and study programme offered by the faculty in addition to the stipulations and pre requisite of each programme.
- Identification of the level of academic progress and performance and the way to match the students actual capabilities with the level of his academic ability.
- Identification of students' own capabilities, aptitudes and academic levels based on test given to them in order to advice and direct them accordingly.
- Helping the students to determine the programmes and specializations that best suit their aptitudes, capabilities, potentials and interest.
- Improving students study skills like the use of Library, note taking, report writing and exam preparations.

Similarly, Columbia southern University, (2020) submitted that:

- Advisor is a resource, he or she can offer advice, listen and refer you to academic support if needed.
- Advisor can advise you with course selection and other options that may fulfil program requirement, he can also assist with aligning your academic goals with personal and career goals
- He can help you to project ahead as much as the program will allow when helping you in your academic schedules
- Help you in choosing electives and other optional courses that best suit your interest and goals
- Help to ensure that you complete all courses required in your program and do not complete any unnecessary course
- Help you put together an enrolment plan that best fits your schedule- taking into consideration your work and family schedules and the requirements of your Degree and individual course

Factors to be considered in academic advising include the following:

- Advisors should be knowledgeable about the students' academic position and programmes.
- Advisors should focus towards student's personal wellbeing in the learning environment.
- Advisors should be available to the students in person, telephone, e-mail etc
- Advisors should always be honest with their clients.
- Advisors should develop and maintain peer- to - peer relationship with the adult learner.
- Academic advising will help students to know how and where to access information about policies, procedures and requirements. Students will be encouraged to make decisions that support their goals, abilities and aspiration.

Students Responsibilities

- Come to appointment cancel on time
- Cancel if you cannot attend
- Come to appointment well prepared by writing questions/ concerns in advance
- Come with list of courses you are interested in taking and those you dislike
- An advisor provide, not positive outlets and decisions to students
- Create positive relationship with your adviser

Advisor Responsibilities

- Help students make practical academic plans and decisions
- Assist students on how to discover a range of options available
- Assist students on how to think of the consequences of the students own choices
- Assist in development of an academic/ career plans consistent with students stated goals , interest and abilities
- Provide accurate information about policies procedures and requirements
- Create positive working relationship with students
- When appropriate, refer students to other university resources and services

Developmental Approaches to Academic Advising

The prescriptive or traditional advising model: In this type of model, the attention is usually centred on providing students with information that is directly relevant to their academic programmes in the College or University. The bulk of the activities include academic policies, Course/programme requirements and selection of Course of study. One of the major characteristics of this model is that it is student initiated and is meant to address the immediate questions of the students in order to improve on their academic programmes. In this model the student is not expected to form a long term goal which is beyond his academic aspirations.

Intrusive or Proactive Model: This model is directly the reverse of the one mentioned above. An important feature of this model is that the contact is initiated by the advisor rather than the student. Contact with the students may be necessitated during critical periods of his academic career, such as before taking remedial courses, during his first year of study, when

selecting a major or before graduation. Similarly, this approach could be used to students who are academically at-risk (students on probation) or high achieving students. In practice, this approach seems to have a significant impact on developmental/ remedial mathematics courses at undergraduate level as well as their ability to retain information and degree academic achievement. Majority of students prefer this model over the prescriptive or traditional approach.

Developmental model: The primary aim of this approach is to help students in the exploration of their career and life goals, academic targets, problem-solving and decision making skills. This approach helps to foster relationship between the advisor and the student which is centred on adult and students development theory. Students generally, showed greater interest in this model; however, it needs greater commitment of time and resources before accomplishment.

Academic Advising and student's Academic Achievement

Winston, (1994) noted that academic advising influences and increases students motivation and interest in studying. Habley,(2003) reported that students value most highly academic advisors who are accessible, approachable and helpful in providing guidance that connects their present academic experience with their future life plans. Similarly, Haught, Hills, Walls and Nandi (1998) noted that students who receive academic advising had a higher semester grade point average (GPA) at the end of the semester, and a higher cumulative grade point average at the end of the following semester as compared to a control group. Research finding also indicate that academic advising improves student's retention through improve academic performance kuhn, (2008). Students who do not receive academic advising take more time to graduate or have lower grade point average. Super, (1983) noted that Interaction with Faculty members through academic advising can positively affect a student's "intellectual, academic, and personal development"

Cook, (2009) observed that academic advising services emerged as a significant predictor of academic achievement. Ryan, (1995) reported a relationship between academic advising and student's satisfaction with college development. Schockle (2012) on the other hand, found no significant relationship between academic advising and student academic performance. Abelman and Molina (2000) confirmed that the impact of advising interventions has a significant positive relationship to students grades and persistence. Similarly, O, Banan (2016) argues that academic advising is the second most important function in the college outside classroom teaching. Pascarella and Tenezini (2005) submitted that a consistent and positive relationship was found between advising and students success. Habley, Blooms and Robbins (2012) have continued to advance our understanding of the role academic advising should play in supporting students services.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To determine if differences exist in academic performance of students between those who participate in academic advising and those who do not.
- ii. To find out the level of awareness of academic advising among students of Nigerian Universities.

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant difference in the academic performance between male and female students who participate in academic advising.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCEDURE

A survey research design was adopted for the study. Fifty students from each of the five faculties were drawn using simple random sampling. A total of 250 students participated in the study (150 males and 100 females). A five points Likert scale questionnaire was designed and administered to the respondents. The instrument was adequately validated by experts. Reliability of the instrument was determined by Cronbach alpha method which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79 Section A sought to find out the background information of the respondents while section B sought students' opinion on the impact of academic advisers in their academic activities. Two hundred and forty seven questionnaires were returned showing 98.8% rate of return. The data generated from the field were collated and the mean score analysis was conducted to provide answers for the hypotheses raised. The t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female students who participate in academic advising. The hypothesis was tested using t-test statistical tool. Result was presented in table 1 below;

Table 1. Two-tailed t-Test Result In Respect of Mean Responses of Male and Female students who participated in Academic advising

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Df	t-value	Std.Error	Sig.@0.05	Decision
Male	48.60	4.60	52	93	2.53	0.1455	0.0000	Significant
Female	47.80	5.20	43					

The results of the t-test statistics in table 1 revealed that, there is a significance difference in the academic performance of male and female students who participate in academic advising. This implies that male had mean of 27.17 and SD of 10.34, against the male students that had mean of 48.60 and SD of 4.60 while the t value is 2.53. The *p* value of 0.0000 is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null Hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students of Nigerian universities

The hypothesis was tested using t-test statistical technique. Result was presented in table 2 below;

Table 2. Two-tailed t-Test Result In Respect of level of awareness of Academic Advising between male and female students of Nigerian universities

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Df	t-value	Std.Error	Sig.@0.05	Decision
Male	18.43	5.62	35	63	0.57	0.1455	0.3424	Not Significant
Female	17.84	6.24	30					

The results of the t-test statistics in table 2 shows that, there is no significance difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students of Nigerian university. This means that, male had mean of 18.43 and SD of 5.62, against the female students that had mean of 17.84 and SD of 6.24. The p value of 0.3424 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null Hypothesis is accepted.

Summary of Findings

The data collected for the study were sorted and analyzed using t-test statistics and the results of the analysis shows the following findings;

- 1 There was a significance difference in the academic performance of male and female students who participate in academic advising. ($t=2.53, p=0.0000$).
- 2 There is no significance difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students of Nigerian universities. ($t=0.57, p=0.3424$).

The two hypotheses generated were tested at 0.5 level of significant. Hypothesis one was rejected while hypothesis two was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The first research hypothesis sought to establish whether there is a significant difference between male and female students who participate in academic advising. The t-test statistical tool result was presented in table 1. The findings of the first hypothesis showed that there was significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students. In other words, male and female students who participate in academic advising differed significantly in their academic performance. This result support earlier findings by Haught *et al.* (1998) who in a research of 69 freshman found that students who received academic advising had a higher semester grade point average at the end of the semester, and a higher cumulative grade point average at the end of the following semester as compared to a control group. A total of 144 (77%) of the students involved in this study indicated that they needed help to maintaining high grades. This could mean that if they were to get academic advising, their scores could possibly improve. The second research hypothesis sought to establish whether there is a significant difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students of Nigerian universities. The t-test statistical tool result was presented in table 2. The findings of the second hypothesis revealed that no significant difference in the level of awareness of academic advising between male and female students of Nigerian university. This can be explained by the fact that, students need information on career and academic goals as they make decisions on the programmes and subjects to choose. Students may also need information on many issues concerning life on campus. These results imply that, students do not seek academic advising. Out of the 65 student who were involved in this study, only few of them knew their academic advisors as compared to those who did not know. This means that although all the students were allocated academic advisors at the beginning of the academic year and the information displayed on student notice boards in the departments, only about few of them took it as their responsibility to check the

information. These finding were in contrast with earlier research findings that have tended to show that men are less willing to seek help in dealing with academic difficulties (Ryan and Pintrich, 1997; Daubman and Lehman, 1993) psychological problems (Möller-Leimkühler, 2002; Cook, 1984; Padesky and Hammen, 1981; Kligfield and Hoffman, 1979), and career counseling (Di Fabio and Bernaud, 2008; Rochlen *et al.*, 1999) in (Moula, 2011). The number of male and female students seeking academic advising is surprisingly low which means that it may be sensible to institute an "intrusive" form of mentoring according to Redmond (1990), in which the mentor takes the initiative to reach out the students in need on a periodic basis rather than waiting for them to come for help. The mentorship programme could also be made mandatory as part of student's experience in their academic growth.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made from the study:

- i. Academic performance of students in the university may be affected by academic advising services and the need for academic advising does not seem to be influenced by gender.
- ii. The number of male and female students seeking academic advising is surprisingly low which means that it may be sensible to institute an "intrusive" form of mentoring in which the adviser takes the initiative to reach out the students in need on a periodic basis rather than waiting for them to come for help.

Recommendations

- I. Students academic performance is greatly influenced by academic advising, hence the need to be given all necessary encouragement.
- II. Students should avail themselves the opportunity to identify their academic potentials and interest to improve on their study skills.
- III. Academic advisors should be given adequate professional training to focus on student personal wellbeing in the learning environment.

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