

CHALLENGES IN RESEARCH ADVISING AMONG PROFESSORS OF THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSIDAD DE DAGUPAN

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Abstract

This study explored the challenges faced by faculty members in research advising at Universidad de Dagupan's School of Professional Studies. Employing descriptive survey design, the study included the 68 professors of the School of Professional Studies, Universidad de Dagupan – 31 of whom are females, and 27 are males. In terms of career stage, 16 are in their early career, 31 are in their mid-career, and 21 are in their late career. Results revealed that student preparedness (WM = 4.21) was the most significant challenge, followed by time constraints (WM = 3.3) and institutional support issues (WM = 3.42). No significant differences based on career stage [$F(2)=.34$, $p=.109$] sex [$t(67)=1.52$, $p=.15$] were found. In response, a two-day seminar-workshop was implemented to improve both students' research skills and faculty's advising strategies, addressing the identified challenges.

Keywords: research advising, student preparedness, time constraints, institutional support, faculty challenges, seminar-workshop

Introduction

Research advising is a cornerstone of higher education, especially in institutions striving to cultivate research-oriented environments (Shan et al., 2018). For faculty members, guiding students through the complexities of research is a multidimensional responsibility, requiring not only subject expertise but also the ability to manage mentorship relationships, institutional expectations, and their own professional growth (Patel, 2016). Within the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan, the challenges faced by faculty in fulfilling this role have yet to be comprehensively explored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the specific difficulties professors encounter, with a focus on career stage, sex, and key domains of research advising, including student preparedness, time constraints, and institutional support.

Effective research advising significantly influences students' academic and professional outcomes. Barres (2013) emphasized the pivotal role of advisors in shaping the trajectory of graduate students, advocating for a mentorship approach that extends beyond technical guidance to include personal and professional development. Similarly, Vogt (2008) highlighted faculty's critical function in fostering student retention and performance, particularly in demanding fields like engineering. These studies underscore the advisor's dual role as a guide and advocate, navigating both student needs and institutional requirements.

In the local context, faculty members of Universidad de Dagupan's School of Professional Studies engage in advising amid growing expectations for research output, both from their students and the institution. However, the absence of empirical studies on this topic within the university suggests that challenges unique to this setting remain unaddressed. Addressing these challenges can empower faculty to provide better support, thereby enhancing the university's overall research culture.

Several domains of difficulty have been consistently identified in research on academic advising. These include student preparedness, time constraints, and institutional support.

Student Preparedness. One of the foremost challenges faculty members face is the variable level of student readiness for research. According to Barres (2013), an advisor's workload can increase significantly when students lack foundational skills or clear research objectives. Longren (2016) observed that mismatches between student expectations and advisor expertise often lead to delays and inefficiencies in the research process. Similarly, Hardy and Ramjeet (2005) emphasized the importance of equipping students with critical research skills early in their academic journey. At Universidad de Dagupan, understanding how professors perceive and navigate these challenges can inform targeted interventions, such as skill-building workshops for students.

Time Constraints. Faculty often struggle to balance their advising responsibilities with teaching, administrative duties, and personal research. Quick and Hall (2015) identified time management as a significant hurdle, particularly for early-career academics who may lack the experience to set boundaries effectively. In their study on engineering faculty, Vogt (2008) observed that the growing administrative burden placed on professors detracted from the time available for meaningful engagement with students. These findings resonate with anecdotal evidence from Universidad de Dagupan, where professors often cite time constraints as a barrier to effective advising. Quantifying these challenges within the local context will help administrators understand the scope of the problem.

Institutional Support. Institutional frameworks play a crucial role in enabling or hindering effective research advising. Brown (2016) argued that clear policies on research advising and adequate administrative support are essential for faculty satisfaction and student success. Nicholas et al. (2015) highlighted emerging mechanisms for recognizing faculty contributions to research, suggesting that institutional acknowledgment can motivate advisors. For faculty at Universidad de Dagupan, institutional factors such as access to funding, research facilities, and workload distribution likely influence their advising experiences. This study seeks to identify gaps in institutional support and recommend strategies to address them.

Another critical dimension of this study is the examination of how challenges vary by career stage and sex. Hardy and Ramjeet (2005) noted that early-career faculty often face unique pressures, including the need to establish their credibility while navigating unfamiliar institutional systems. In contrast, senior faculty may experience burnout or disengagement due to prolonged exposure to these challenges. Additionally, Lewis et al. (2021) found that female faculty members in STEM fields reported distinct barriers in research advising, often tied to broader issues of gender inequality in academia. Understanding these differences within the Universidad de Dagupan context will allow for the development of nuanced support systems that address the needs of diverse faculty groups.

Despite the global relevance of these challenges, localized studies are essential to account for contextual differences in institutional culture, student demographics, and faculty expectations.

While research on similar topics has been conducted globally, such as studies by Hardy and Ramjeet (2005) and Lewis et al. (2021), there is an evident lack of localized studies addressing the unique dynamics at Universidad de Dagupan. The lack of documented research on this topic in this university represents a critical gap that this study aims to fill. By leveraging a quantitative-descriptive-survey method, the research will provide empirical data on the specific challenges faced by professors in the School of Professional Studies, offering insights that can guide policy and practice at the university.

Statement of the Problem

This study addressed the following problem: *What challenges do professors of the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan encounter in research advising, and how do*

these challenges vary based on their career stage, sex, and institutional factors such as student preparedness, time constraints, and institutional support?

By exploring these challenges, the research endeavored to fill a significant gap in the academic literature and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving faculty support systems.

The findings of this research have the potential to benefit multiple stakeholders within the university. For faculty, the study highlighted areas where additional training or resources are needed, empowering them to navigate the complexities of research advising more effectively. For administrators, the data could be used to inform institutional policies, such as adjustments to workload distribution, enhancements in research facilities, and the creation of support programs tailored to faculty needs. For students, improved advising practices necessarily translate into better research outcomes, contributing to their academic and professional success.

Research advising is a multifaceted responsibility that poses significant challenges for faculty, particularly in resource-constrained environments. By examining the experiences of professors at Universidad de Dagupan's School of Professional Studies, authors hoped to contribute to the growing body of literature on academic advising while addressing a critical gap in local research. The findings provided a foundation for targeted interventions, helping to align faculty support mechanisms with institutional goals and fostering a more robust research culture within the university.

This undertaking, informed predominantly by related studies (Barres, 2013; Quick & Hall, 2015; Hardy & Ramjeet, 2005; Lewis et al., 2021; Vogt, 2008), underscores the importance of investigating the challenges of research advising in a localized context. By bridging this gap, the study aimed to create meaningful improvements in both faculty and student experiences at Universidad de Dagupan.

Method

Research Design

This study adopted a **quantitative-descriptive-survey design** to investigate the challenges encountered by professors in research advising at the School of Professional Studies, Universidad de Dagupan. The **quantitative approach** allowed for systematic assessment of trends and relationships (Shank, Pringle, & Brown, 2018), while the **descriptive design** facilitated the capture of faculty experiences regarding student preparedness, time constraints, and institutional support. In doing so, the study recognized the importance of situating quantitative findings within broader institutional contexts (Castillo & Strunk, 2024).

Respondents and Sampling

The study targeted all professors engaged in research advising at the School of Professional Studies, Universidad de Dagupan. Purposive sampling was used to select faculty members actively involved in research advising for the AY 2023-2024. The respondents were categorized according to their career stage (e.g., Teacher, Master Teacher, Principal, Supervisor) and sex (Male, Female). This stratification ensured a comprehensive understanding of challenges across different professional roles and demographic factors, in line with Patel's (2016) emphasis on inclusive research design. Of the 78 professors who were requested to respond to the survey, only 68 were able to accomplish the survey form in time. The 68 responses formed the data set used in this research.

Research Instrument

The researchers developed a structured questionnaire, consisting of the following sections: 1) Demographic Profile in terms of career stage and sex; and 2) Challenges in Research Advising in the domains of student preparedness, time constraints, and institutional support.

The instrument underwent expert validation by three experts (one in education, one in research, and a one in language) and posted an overall validity WM of 4.67 in a 5-point Likert scale. This ensured the instrument met standards of clarity, relevance, and fairness (Poehner & Rea-Dickins, 2024), guaranteeing it addressed the challenges unique to the institution. In the study, 20 accomplished survey instruments were selected randomly to conduct Cronbach's alpha, a reliability test used to assess the internal consistency of the survey questions. The resulting alpha value of .87 indicates that the survey items have a high level of reliability, meaning they consistently measure the same construct.

Data Collection Procedure

Preparation. To begin the study, permission was obtained from the university administration. This ensured that the study was conducted with institutional approval. Additionally, the survey instrument underwent expert validation by three specialists in the field. This step ensured the instrument's relevance and reliability in measuring the intended constructs.

Distribution. The questionnaire was distributed both electronically and in printed form to accommodate the preferences of the respondents. To ensure the reliability of the survey instrument, a Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted using 20 randomly selected completed surveys, which confirmed the internal consistency of the instrument.

Follow-Up. To maintain a high response rate, follow-up communications were made with the respondents. These follow-ups also addressed any questions or concerns participants had, ensuring clarity and transparency throughout the research process. This approach aligns with the ethical standards of transparent and ethical research practice outlined by Rossman and Rallis (2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive Statistics. The demographic data and responses to the survey were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These measures provided an overview of respondents' profiles and the challenges they faced in research advising.

Inferential Statistics. Independent t-tests were used to assess whether there were significant differences in the challenges experienced by male and female respondents. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed to explore any variations in the challenges faced by respondents at different career stages.

This analytical approach provided a deeper understanding of the patterns and disparities in the challenges faced by professors in research advising, while also considering broader structural factors (Castillo & Strunk, 2024).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to rigorous ethical guidelines throughout its process:

- **Informed Consent:** All participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose and their voluntary involvement, ensuring ethical consent practices.
- **Confidentiality:** The data collected from respondents were anonymized and securely stored, safeguarding their privacy.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** The survey instrument was designed to be inclusive, ensuring fair representation of all participants (Poehner & Rea-Dickins, 2024).

As emphasized by Rossman and Rallis (2024), careful ethical reflection was integrated into every stage of the study, ensuring the protection and respect of all participants.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Categorization: Sex and Career Stages

Table 1 presents the categorization of the respondents in terms of their career stages and their sex.

Table 1. Respondents' Sex and Career Stages

Categorization	F	%
Career Stage		
Early Stage	16	24%
Mid-Career	31	46%
Late Career	21	30%
Sex		
Male	31	46%
Female	37	54%
Total	68	100%

The findings from the table reveal the distribution of faculty members across different career stages in the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan. The largest group is in the mid-career stage (46%), followed by late-career faculty (30%) and early-career faculty (24%).

This distribution reflects common trends observed in academic advising literature. For example, Hardy and Ramjeet (2005) highlighted that early-career faculty face significant challenges as they establish their teaching and advising practices. Mid-career faculty, as the majority in this study, may experience more advanced responsibilities but also face challenges like balancing advising with administrative duties, as noted by Quick and Hall (2015). Finally, late-career faculty may encounter different struggles, including burnout or disengagement, as discussed in Barres (2013) and Vogt (2008), which aligns with the higher percentage of faculty in this category.

The data reveals the gender distribution among the professors in the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan, with 46% male faculty (31 individuals) and 54% female faculty (37 individuals). This gender distribution allows for an exploration of potential gender-based differences in the challenges of research advising. For instance, studies such as those by Lewis et al. (2021) have shown that female faculty members, particularly in male-dominated fields, may experience unique barriers in academic advising. This gender disparity may suggest differing expectations, support systems, or challenges faced by male and female professors in their roles as research advisors. Further analysis would be necessary to identify whether the challenges differ between genders at this institution.

Challenges in Research Advising

The findings of this study shed light on the various challenges faced by professors in the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan, particularly in research advising. Table 2 presents the findings in this area.

Table 2. Challenges in Research Advising

Indicators	WM	Description
Student Preparedness:		
Students' ability to select a clear and feasible research topic	4.21	Very Challenging
Students' foundation in research methodology	4.07	Very Challenging
Students' ability in conducting a proper literature review	3.98	Very Challenging
Students' data analysis and interpretation skills	4.1	Very Challenging
Proper citation and formatting practices	3.52	Very Challenging
Students' inclination to independently working on their research	3.43	Very Challenging
Students' actual writing capabilities	3.16	Challenging
Time Constraints:		
Allocating sufficient time for each advisee due to workload	3.3	Very Challenging
Balancing teaching, administrative duties, and research advising	2.98	Challenging
Meeting research submission deadlines in the face of other responsibilities	2.87	Challenging
High numbers of advisees	3.45	Very Challenging
Encroachment of research advising on personal time	2.56	Challenging
Conflicts in coordinating meetings with students	2.05	Manageable
Absence of structured advising schedules leading to time spent on consultations	2.00	Manageable
Institutional Support:		
Provision of adequate resources (e.g., journals, research tools)	3.12	Challenging
Insufficiency of training or workshops for research advising	3.42	Very Challenging
Recognition and compensation of efforts required for research advising	3.57	Very Challenging
Lack of financial support for student research projects	3.24	Challenging
Limited access to technical assistance (e.g., statisticians, editors)	3.15	Challenging
Inadequacy of physical facilities (e.g., libraries, consultation rooms)	3.05	Challenging
Insufficiency of incentives for professors excelling in research advising	2.96	Challenging
Overall Weighted Mean	3.25	Challenging

Student Preparedness emerged as the most significant challenge in the research advising process. Indicators such as students' ability to select a clear and feasible research topic (WM = 4.21) and their foundation in research methodology (WM = 4.07) were identified as "very challenging." This suggests that many students enter the research advising process without the necessary skills or knowledge base to navigate complex research tasks. Barres (2013) discusses how these gaps in student preparedness can lead to delays and increase the workload of faculty advisors. Similarly, Longren (2016) observed that when students do not align their expectations with the expertise of their advisors, research progress can be significantly hindered. The challenge is further compounded by other issues such as students' limited ability to conduct proper literature reviews and data analysis (WM = 4.1), which directly affect the quality and progression of the research projects. These findings call for a structured approach to equipping students with foundational research skills early in their academic careers, which could improve their preparedness and reduce the burden on faculty advisors.

Time Constraints were also a notable challenge. Faculty reported difficulty allocating sufficient time for each advisee due to their heavy workload (WM = 3.45) and the balancing act between teaching, administrative duties, and research advising (WM = 3.3). Quick and Hall (2015) have highlighted that early-career academics, in particular, struggle with time management, as they must juggle multiple responsibilities and learn how to prioritize. This study's findings suggest that the time allocated to research advising may be insufficient, affecting the quality of mentorship and slowing down the research process. High numbers of advisees (WM = 3.45) further exacerbate this issue, as professors may feel overwhelmed by the individual needs of each student. Additionally, the encroachment of research advising on personal time (WM = 2.56) reflects the broader issue of work-life balance, a challenge that has been identified in other studies (Vogt, 2008) as contributing to faculty burnout. These findings emphasize the importance of creating a more balanced workload and possibly rethinking the advising process to ensure that faculty have adequate time to dedicate to each student without sacrificing their other academic responsibilities.

Institutional Support also emerged as a significant factor influencing the challenges faced by faculty in research advising. Professors highlighted the insufficiency of training or workshops for research advising (WM = 3.42) and the lack of recognition for their efforts (WM = 3.57), which were both rated as "very challenging." These results are consistent with Brown's (2016) argument that clear institutional policies and administrative support are essential for faculty satisfaction. Without formal recognition or compensation for the time and effort involved in advising, faculty members may feel undervalued, leading to disengagement or burnout. Additionally, the lack of financial support for student research projects (WM = 3.24) and limited access to technical assistance, such as statisticians or editors (WM = 3.15), highlights systemic issues within the institution that hinder effective research advising. Brown (2016) and Nicholas et al. (2015) both emphasize that institutions must invest in providing adequate resources, including financial support and access to research tools, to ensure faculty can provide meaningful guidance to their students. The findings point to the need for the university to develop stronger institutional frameworks that support both faculty and students, including better access to research facilities and incentives for faculty excellence in advising.

The study highlights several critical challenges in research advising at the School of Professional Studies at Universidad de Dagupan. Student preparedness emerged as the most significant hurdle, followed by time constraints and insufficient institutional support. These findings align with broader trends in academic advising literature, as described by Barres (2013), Vogt (2008), and Brown (2016), and underscore the need for targeted interventions aimed at improving both the resources available to faculty and the skills of students. By addressing these challenges, the university can enhance its research culture and provide better support to both faculty and students.

Category-Nuanced Differences in terms of Challenges

Table 3 presents the result of analysis aiming to determine of the respondents' career stage and sex nuance their perceptions of these challenges.

Table 3. Analyses of Difference

Variable	Test	Statistics	P-Value	Remarks
Career Stage	ANOVA	F = 0.34	0.109	Not Significant
Sex	t-Test	t = 1.52	0.15	Not Significant

The analysis in Table 3 reveals that neither career stage nor sex significantly influenced the respondents' perceptions of the challenges they face in research advising. The ANOVA test results, with an F-value of 0.34 and a p-value of 0.109, suggest that perceptions of challenges were not meaningfully different among early, mid, and late-career faculty members. Similarly, the t-test comparing male and female respondents produced a t-value of 1.52 and a p-value of 0.15, indicating no significant differences based on sex.

These findings align with studies such as those by Hardy and Ramjeet (2005), who found that while early-career faculty face unique pressures, these challenges may not be starkly different from those encountered by faculty at later career stages when considered at a broader level. Similarly, research by Lewis et al. (2021) on gender in academia noted that although gender-based differences in academic advising may exist, their influence may not always be pronounced across all contexts, particularly when institutional structures and policies mitigate such disparities.

The lack of significant differences in this study may reflect a uniform experience among faculty members in this specific university context, where institutional factors, such as workload, resources, and support systems, likely have a greater impact on advising challenges than career stage or gender. Additionally, faculty members may share a collective understanding of the difficulties involved in research advising, with similar strategies employed across career stages and irrespective of sex, leading to less variation in perceptions.

While this study shows no significant variation, it is important to consider that career stage and sex could still affect more nuanced aspects of research advising that were not captured by this analysis. As suggested by Barres (2013), the role of advisors is multifaceted, and factors like personal experience and institutional support may influence their perceptions more than career stage or sex alone. Further qualitative research could offer deeper insights into the personal and institutional dynamics that shape research advising experiences.

Recommendations

In response to the challenges identified in research advising, a 3-day seminar-workshop was successfully implemented. The workshop was designed to be 2-pronged, offering separate sessions for researchers and research advisers. Each session focused on addressing specific issues relevant to the participants, such as enhancing research skills for researchers and improving advising strategies for faculty. This structure allowed for targeted support, which directly addressed the needs and challenges identified in the study.

The seminar-workshop aimed at retooling both researchers and research advisers has been successfully implemented, although instead of three days, the workshop was conducted for two days. The workshop featured separate sessions for the two groups, ensuring that each received tailored support in addressing their unique challenges. For researchers, the sessions focused on enhancing essential skills such as selecting feasible research topics, strengthening writing abilities, and improving data analysis techniques. Participants also gained practical insights on proper citation and literature review practices, contributing to more robust research outputs.

For research advisers, the sessions were structured to help them manage their time better while balancing advising responsibilities with other duties. The advisers were trained in new strategies to support students in refining research design and methodology, as well as techniques to enhance their role as mentors. Institutional challenges related to support for research advising were also addressed, with a focus on improving the recognition of advising efforts and providing better resources for both faculty and students.

The successful implementation of this workshop aligns with the study's findings that challenges like student preparedness and institutional support are highly significant in the research advising process. While career stage and sex did not significantly influence perceptions of these challenges, the findings underscore the importance of providing targeted and practical solutions, such as those offered in this seminar-workshop. These efforts are expected to enhance the overall quality of research advising and the research culture at the university.

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