

Abilene Christian University

Digital Commons @ ACU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

8-2023

How Interactions With an Academic Advisor Influence the Self-Efficacy of Online and Distance Education Students

Tonya Renae Fulk
trf19a@acu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Fulk, Tonya Renae, "How Interactions With an Academic Advisor Influence the Self-Efficacy of Online and Distance Education Students" (2023). Digital Commons @ ACU, *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 663.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

Nannette W. Glenn, Ph.D.

Dr. Nannette Glenn, Dean of
the College of Graduate and
Professional Studies

Date 08 / 04 / 2023

Dissertation Committee:

Tara Hornor

Dr. Tara Hornor Chair

Karri Adams

Dr. Karri Adams

Joe Cardot

Dr. Joe Cardot

Abilene Christian University
School of Educational Leadership

How Interactions With an Academic Advisor Influence the Self-Efficacy of Online and Distance
Education Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Tonya Renae Fulk

August 2023

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Jimmy, who provided unwavering support and always believed in me. To my three daughters Destiny, Kadie, and Sadie, who always encouraged me to keep going. To my grandchildren Eloise Edwards and Booker Brady, my great nephew Walker Shaw, and future generations, always pursue your dreams and never doubt your abilities. To my parents, siblings, family, and friends, your support and guidance provided me with the strength to persevere.

This dissertation is also dedicated to adult learners who persevere and strive for academic excellence and better opportunities for themselves and their families.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Tara Hornor for her guidance, patience, and expertise throughout this dissertation journey, and Dr. Dana McMichael for her continued support throughout the entire program. I also want to thank my committee members Dr. Karri Adams and Dr. Joe Cardot for their expertise, insight, support, and guidance.

I would like to thank my mentors Dr. Bo Bennett and Dr. Pam Vesely, you are both a source of support, guidance, and inspiration. Thank you for your guidance and support over the years. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the faculty, staff, and students at the study site.

I also want to thank my family, friends, and colleagues, who were a vital source of encouragement and support. This would not have been possible without you!

© Copyright by Tonya Fulk (2023)

All Rights Reserved

Abstract

Institutions of higher education are experiencing an increasing number of students enrolling in online or distance education courses. The majority of these students are adult learners. The increase in enrollment is beneficial to institutions of higher education, but it is overshadowed by the low degree completion rate for online and distance education learners. Academic advisors play a crucial role in guiding students to degree completion. While there has been research on the potential contributing factors in online and distance education student retention, the research has been lacking in how communications with academic advisors may influence students' levels of self-efficacy. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions of online and distance education adult learners' interactions with their academic advisors and how these interactions influenced their level of self-efficacy and persistence to degree completion. The researcher conducted semistructured interviews with current and recent graduates of an online or distance education program. Semistructured interviews were also conducted with current academic advisors of online and distance education students. The data revealed that interactions with academic advisors played a vital role in students' levels of self-efficacy. Three key themes emerged from the data as contributing factors to student self-efficacy and their interactions with academic advisors: Communication-Immediacy/Individualized Advisement, Relationships-Sense of Community, and Academic Advisor Influence-Student Self-Efficacy. Developing a greater focus in these areas of academic advisement for online and distance education students may assist in increasing online and distance education student retention.

Keywords: academic advising, adult learners, andragogy, online and distance education, self-efficacy, sense of community

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Academic Advising.....	2
Adult Learners	3
Agency	4
Andragogy.....	4
Self-Efficacy	7
Sense of Community.....	8
Limited Communication	9
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Questions	12
Definition of Key Terms.....	12
Chapter Summary	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review	14
Literature Search Methods.....	15
Theoretical Framework Discussion	15
History of Andragogy	16
Andragogy Today	18
Online Learning and Digital Andragogy	19
History of Distance Education	20
Online Learning	22
Adult Learners	22
Self-Efficacy	23
Academic Self-Efficacy	24
Sense of Community.....	25
Emotional Presence and Building Relationships in the Online Environment	26
Strategies for Building a Sense of Community.....	26
Academic Advisement.....	27
History of Academic Advising	28
Prescriptive Advising	29
Developmental Advising	30
Intrusive Advising.....	31
Appreciative Advising	32
Online Learning Postpandemic.....	33

Summary	34
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	35
Research Design and Method	35
Population	36
Study Sample	38
Instrumentation	39
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	40
Data Analysis	41
Establishing Trustworthiness	42
Ethical Considerations	43
Assumptions.....	43
Limitations	43
Delimitations.....	44
Summary	44
Chapter 4: Results	45
Data Collection and Analysis.....	45
Demographics	46
Discussion of Findings.....	50
Theme I: Immediacy in Advisement.....	51
Theme II: Individualized Advisement	54
Theme III: Sense of Community.....	58
Theme IV: Importance of Advising and Self-Efficacy.....	60
Focus Group Interviews	63
Data Collection	63
Demographics	64
Discussion of the Findings.....	64
Culture.....	64
Communication-Individualized and Immediacy in Advising.....	67
Building Relationships- Sense of Community.....	70
COVID Pandemic and Online and Distance Education Adult Learners	71
Student Perspective	72
Academic Advisor Perspective	73
Summary	74
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	76
Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature	77
Student Perceptions.....	77
Academic Advisor Perceptions.....	79
Summary	81
Student Self-Efficacy Perception.....	82
Academic Advisor Self-Efficacy Perceptions	84
Summary	85

Student Self-Efficacy	85
Academic Advisor Perceptions of Student Self-Efficacy	87
Summary	87
Key Concepts Overview	88
Communication-Immediacy/Individualized Advisement	88
Relationships-Sense of Community	89
Academic Advisor Influence-Student Self-Efficacy	91
Theoretical Framework	91
Limitations	92
Implications for Practice	93
Suggestions for Future Research	95
Conclusions	96
References	99
Appendix A: ACU IRB Approval.....	123
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study	125
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in the Focus Group	126
Appendix D: Participant Interview Questions	127
Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Questions	129
Appendix F: Validation on Research and Interview Questions	131
Appendix G: Validation on Research and Interview Questions	132

List of Tables

Table 1. Pedagogical and Andragogical Assumption About Learners	6
Table 2. Participant Profiles.....	50
Table 3. Academic Advisor Demographics	64

List of Figures

Figure 1. Participant Demographics	46
Figure 2. Online and Distance Education Participants	47
Figure 3. Participant Programs	48
Figure 4. Participants per Program	48
Figure 5. Office of Institutional Research Aggregate Survey Data	89
Figure 6. Office of Institutional Research Aggregate Survey Data	90

Chapter 1: Introduction

Online learning is rapidly becoming the preferred method to gain academic knowledge and pursue degrees in higher education (Seaman et al., 2018). Institutions of higher education are experiencing a dramatic growth in the number of students enrolling in online courses and degree programs (Ellis, 2019; Seaman et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2021), in the fall of 2019, 37.2% of undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled in at least one distance education or online course. These programs allow students to learn from any geographical location at a time that is convenient for the student, allowing for students to continue working and meeting family obligations. Students may access courses and material via laptop computers, cell phones, tablets, or other electronic devices. These options provide accessibility to nontraditional or adult learners that are unable to attend traditional seated courses (Henderson et al., 2021).

The increase in online student enrollment is overshadowed by the inability for students to persist in degree completion (Garrett, 2018; Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). The NCES (2021) report stated that 43.7% of full-time traditional students pursuing a bachelor's degree finished within four years in 2018, compared to 11.6% completion rate for online or distance education students. Several factors may impact online and distance education students' ability to persist to degree completion; however, research identifies low student self-efficacy, the lack of a sense of community, and limited communication with academic advisors as potential contributing factors to the lack of student success in online learning (Cela et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2020; Trespalacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). The increasing enrollment of a diverse online student population creates a need for strong supportive academic advising (Alqurashi, 2019; Gravel, 2012).

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview on academic advising, adult learners, andragogy, self-efficacy, sense of community, and limited communication. The brief overview provides background information leading to the statement of the problem. The chapter includes the purpose of the study, research questions, and definitions of the key terms related to the study.

Academic Advising

Academic advising encompasses a student's experience throughout their college career. Academic advisors provide students with support and guidance as they pursue their academic, professional, and personal aspirations. Although some students may have the ability, many lack the knowledge or skills to navigate a pathway to degree completion without the guidance from an academic advisor (Bolkan et al., 2021). Garrett (2018) stated, "based on the available evidence, on average adults and other nontraditional students enrolled in majority online schools are significantly less likely than average to complete at that institution" (p. 26). In addition, students who have a negative academic advising experience are more likely to withdraw (Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). Academic advising is a crucial component in guiding students through institutional or program requirements to reach their goal.

The enrollment of online students continues to increase; however, many do not persist to degree completion (Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). Drake (2011) emphasized that advising is instrumental to a student's self-efficacy to persist to degree completion. A study by Bolkan et al. (2021) on completion rates of students at a 4-year institution, finds that academic advising positively contributed to a student's perceptions of self-efficacy and the ability to persist to degree completion. Hayes et al. (2020) also found that academic advisors play a crucial role in influencing a student's self-efficacy and willingness to continue to degree completion.

The high attrition rate of students enrolled in online courses identifies the need for additional research to explore factors that may contribute to online students not persisting to degree completion. Online and distance education student self-efficacy is important to explore as it contributes to the literature that examines student self-efficacy in the online learning environment (Alqurashi, 2019). Understanding the factors that support positive student self-efficacy would assist institutions of higher education in developing and implementing effective online programs and student support services (Alqurashi, 2019; Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

Adult Learners

Wladis et al. (2015) found nontraditional students are commonly defined as over the age of 25 years, delaying enrollment between high school and college. Other adult learner characteristics may include the support of dependents, single parent, the absence of a high school diploma, holding a full-time job while attending college part-time, and financial independence. Institutions of higher education recognize there are differences in student demographics between the traditional seated student on campus versus the nontraditional online student; however, research is lacking in what factors may attribute to the low degree completion rates in online learning (Walker-Roberts, 2020).

Knowles (1984) identified six assumptions in relation to how adult learners approach learning opportunities: learners' self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, problem-centered orientation, internal motivation, and the need to know. Learners' self-concept suggests that as people mature, they become more independent, self-directing, and expected to be responsible for their own well-being. The second assumption implies that an adult's life experiences are a vital resource for learning. Readiness to learn involves social roles in adult life that initiate the need for learning to occur. Problem-centered orientation suggests adults are motivated to learn in

order to solve an immediate problem. The fifth assumption is vital to adult learning. Internal motivation is the key to the continuation of learning; factors such as job advancement, improved self-esteem, or quality of life may be strong motivators in adult learning. The sixth assumption is the need to know. Adults not only need to know why they need to learn something but also how the knowledge can immediately be applied to their current situation (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Agency

As the number of online and distance education adult learners continues to increase, it is important to recognize agency. Human agency refers to the capacity of actions a person takes to make things happen (Arnold et al., 2021). Bandura (1993) suggested agency is directly associated with an individual's self-efficacy. Stenalt (2021) highlighted that agency related to the achievement of personal goals is conditional on external structures. External structures may include the access to materials, technology, transportation, and support systems (Stenalt, 2021). The ability for students and instructors to communicate in virtual settings has also exposed more personal characteristics that would otherwise be unknown, such as personal living conditions or distractions caused by children and family members in the background during virtual meetings. The characteristics of adult learners are now visible in online and distance education as opposed to being unknown or assumed in traditional settings.

Andragogy

Andragogy is considered the art and science of helping adults learn. The term andragogy first appeared in the literature in 1926 in an article by E. C. Lindeman, who presented it as a method for teaching adult learners (Henschke, 2011). In the same year, the American Association of Adult Education was founded (American Association for Adult Education Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, 1941). Thorndike et al. (1928) published the first

scientific studies on adult learning. Up until the 1970s, adult learning and methods for teaching adult learners were primarily based on the five traditional learning theories: behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, social cognitivism, and constructivism. Behaviorism suggests learning is a response to stimuli within an environment. Therefore, learning is a change in behavior. Humanism focuses on the development of the person or self-directed learning. Cognitivism relates learning to process information and views learning as a mental process. Social cognitivism suggests most learning occurs within a social environment through observations. Constructivism implies that learning is how people make sense of their environment and experiences (Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Knowles published his first article on andragogy in 1968 and quickly followed the first edition of *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* (1970). Knowles is noted as providing the first systematic formulation of the difference in pedagogy (i.e., teaching children) and andragogy (i.e., teaching adults). At the time, adult educators were seeking distinct recognition from that of pedagogy, and Knowles is credited for “professionalizing” the field of adult education. Later Knowles provided the sixth assumptions of adult learners as discussed above. The assumptions are relatable to adult educators and continue to assist them in planning meaningful instruction for their adult learners (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Table 1*Pedagogical and Andragogical Assumption About Learners*

	Aspect	Pedagogical model	Andragogical model
1.	Need to Know	Learners need to know what the teacher tells them	Learner needs know why something is important prior to learning it.
2.	The learner's self-concept	Learner has a dependent personality.	Learners are responsible for their own decisions.
3.	The role of the learner's experience	The learner's experience is of little worth	The learner's experience has great importance.
4.	Readiness to learn	Learners become ready to learn what the teacher requires	Learners become ready to learn when they see content as relevant to their lives
5.	Orientation to learning	Learners expect subject centered content.	Learners expect life centered content
6.	Motivation	Learners are motivated by external forces.	Learners are motivated primarily by internal forces.

Note. Adapted from *The Adult Learner. The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (p. 62) by M. S. Knowles, E. F. Holton, and R. A. Swanson. Copyright 1998 by Butterworth-Heinemann.

There is debate on the theory of andragogy and how it impacts learning. Scholars note that studies on andragogy have produced more questions than answers and leads to a void in the research (Strawbridge, 1994; Weinstein, 2002). Merriam and Caffarella (1991) suggested that andragogy has “caused more controversy, philosophical debate and critical analysis than any other concept proposed in adult learning” (p. 250). One glaring problem with andragogy is the lack of a valid and reliable instrument (Holton et al., 2009; Niksadat et al., 2019). Over the years, several instruments have appeared throughout the literature, but each had its limitations and flaws (Colton & Hatcher, 2004; Niksadat et al., 2019; Perrin, 2000). Another added issue to the debate is the classification of andragogy. Andragogy has been classified as a set of assumptions, guidelines, a science, a philosophy, and an art (Knowles et al., 1998). There is a failure to reach a

consensus on the classification of andragogy among researchers and the lack of a consensus fuels the debate (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Merriam, 1987; Rachal, 2002).

Today andragogy continues to play an important role in adult education. Adult educators utilize the assumptions on adult learners and continue to create meaningful instructional practices that acknowledge the learner's experiences and meet the needs of adult learners. Recent publications highlight the continued use of the andragogical model within adult education across disciplines. Andragogy is utilized in the development of adult learning practices in agriculture (Velardi et al., 2021), online learning (Hansen & Gray, 2018), and nursing (Decelle, 2016). Andragogy is still widely used today across disciplines in adult education and provides a solid link to the effectiveness of the assumptions and theoretical foundation (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Self-Efficacy

The development and growth of an individual's level of self-efficacy is determined by a multitude of factors. These factors include experienced life events, emotional reactions and states, events in the external environment, and the behaviors of the individual and others within their environment (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Bradley et al. (2017) stated, "An individual's self-efficacy determines their personal goals and aspirations and shapes the outcomes that people expect their efforts to produce" (p. 519). Online adult learners with high self-efficacy perceive challenges or weaknesses in their academic pursuits as something that can be conquered. In contrast, adult learners with low self-efficacy may perceive these same challenges as unobtainable (Bandura, 1997; Bradley et al., 2017).

Bandura (1997) proposed four sources that may attribute to the learner's ability to academically succeed. The first source—mastery experiences—suggests that when an individual

experiences the successful completion of a task, it increases their level of self-efficacy; however, an unsuccessful attempt may decrease their level of self-efficacy. Bradley et al. (2017) stated, “Mastery experiences are the most influential factor in informing a person’s self-efficacy beliefs because they give the learner concrete proof of whether he or she has the capability to master the task” (p. 519). The second source—vicarious experiences—refers to the impact of how observations of others can increase or decrease an individual’s level of self-efficacy. Witnessing others succeed may change the perception of the tasks as one that is achievable, whereas witnessing the failure of others may deem the task as unachievable. The third source—verbal persuasion and social influences—can have a dramatic impact on how an individual perceives a goal and its attainability. The fourth source—physiological and affective states—is how individuals judge their capabilities in regard to reaching a goal or completing a task. Bradley et al. (2017) stated, “These four sources provide a valuable appraisal of the learner’s skill set which will ultimately influence whether the learner pursues or avoids the task” (p. 519). Bandura’s (1997) identified sources must be taken into consideration with learners of all ages. Adult learners typically have more life experiences and social influences compared to younger learners, and these sources play a vital role in an adult’s perceived ability to pursue degree completion (Bandura, 1997; Bradley et al., 2017).

Sense of Community

A sense of community is the feeling of a shared connection with other individuals. Sarason (1974) defined a sense of community “as the sense that one was part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend and as a result of which one did not experience sustained feelings of loneliness” (p. 1). In a flourishing online learning community, students exhibit a common goal, interact, build relationships,

problem-solve, and continue progressing towards degree completion. Oliphant and Branch-Mueller (2016) emphasized the importance of relationships by stating, “To build a sense of community, providing opportunities to build relationships is key. These relationships include instructors, other students, the broader professional community, and other people that support the student” (p. 319). Establishing and continuing a sense of community includes work on the part of the advisor as well as the online instructors (Oliphant & Branch-Mueller, 2016).

Researchers have worked to identify general recommendations that promote a sense of community within the online and distance education settings. Shackelford and Maxwell (2012) found that introductions, collaborative group activities, incorporating personal experiences, online discussions, and the opportunity to exchange resources contributed to establishing a positive sense of community. Haythornthwaite et al. (2000) and Palloff and Pratt (2007) agreed and suggested similar strategies to promote sense of community. A recent study by Cornell et al. (2019) found that synchronous online discussion sessions significantly increased the participants sense of community in the online learning environment as it allowed for participants to share resources, personal experiences, and collaborate. Keehn (2015) found that students in synchronous learning viewed the experience as engaging, enjoyable, and vital to their learning experience. Research provides insight to the positive impact these strategies may provide in establishing a positive and productive sense of community within the online learning environment.

Limited Communication

Adult learners in the online environment may experience a lack of a sense of community and disconnection from student support services, the instructor, and peers due to the learning format and geographical location. Student support services, such as academic advising, play a

crucial role in filling this gap and provide a solid support system that can help to increase student self-efficacy. A study conducted by Gravel (2012) found that the majority of online students “felt they received a low level of personalization in their education and that the interactions were more prescriptive than developmental” (p. 63). In addition, Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy of needs places love and belonging above physiological and safety needs and below esteem and self-actualization. This suggests students must have a sense of community that includes a strong support system within online education courses to maintain successful academic progress (Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Limited communication coupled with deficient student support systems within online higher education programs may be a key factor in a student’s level of self-efficacy and ability to persist to degree completion. Without further research into the factors that influence the levels of self-efficacy for online and distance education students, institutions of higher education are left using advisement practices that may not meet the needs of the diverse online student population.

Statement of the Problem

The number of students enrolling in online courses and degree programs has grown exponentially over the last decade (Ellis, 2019; Seaman et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2019). The 2018 NCES report revealed that approximately 35% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one online course compared to 24% reported in 2012 (Korstange et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2019). Unfortunately, a high student attrition rate in online learning continues to plague institutions of higher education (Gravel, 2012; O’Shea et al., 2015). Coussement et al. (2020) found the dropout rates for online students can vary from 25% to 90%, significantly higher than students who attend traditional face-to-face course settings. Research has identified possible contributing factors to the high student attrition rate, such as low student self-efficacy, the lack of

a sense of community, and limited communication with advisors and instructors (Cela et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2020; Trespalacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). The continued examination of student self-efficacy within the online learning environment is essential to improve the student attrition rate (Goeman et al., 2020; Ragusa & Crampton, 2018). The research acknowledges the importance of student self-efficacy; however, there is a deficit in the literature on how periodic engagement with academic advisors may impact a student's level of self-efficacy throughout the semester (Alqurashi, 2019; Bickle et al., 2019; Ellis, 2019). Additionally, regional and cultural differences are alluded to in the research, but there is a lack of diversity among the participants and indicators of how regional and cultural differences may relate to online student self-efficacy (Chung et al., 2017).

Research indicates a positive relationship between the level of student self-efficacy and the degree of academic perseverance and success in online courses (Alqurashi, 2019; Mulvaney, 2020; Tsai et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013). Online and distance education student self-efficacy is important to explore as it will contribute to the literature that examines student self-efficacy in the online learning environment (Alqurashi, 2019). Understanding the factors that support positive student self-efficacy would assist institutions of higher education in developing and implementing effective online programs and student support services (Alqurashi, 2019; Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions of adult online students' interactions with their academic advisors and if these interactions influenced their levels of self-efficacy and academic success. For this study, self-efficacy will be defined as an individual's belief in their abilities to complete the online degree program. Academic success is

defined as making satisfactory progress towards degree completion. The results may help to guide institutions of higher education leaders in designing the structure of online student support and training of academic advisors working with adult learners. The knowledge gained from this study may also help to identify factors in academic advising to increase student attrition rates, therefore, increasing institutional funding.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of online and distance education adult learners' experiences with academic advising?

RQ2: How do online and distance education adult learners describe the influence of academic advising on their own self-efficacy?

RQ3: How do interactions with academic advisors influence students' levels of self-efficacy?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are provided to assist the reader in understanding their use and application.

Academic advisor. An individual that provides online and distance education students guidance on academic requirements, pathways to degree completion, and individualized student support (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018).

Adult/Nontraditional online student. These are students over the age of 25 enrolled in an online or distance education program (Wladis et al., 2015).

Andragogy. The art and science of teaching adults (Knowles, 1968).

Degree completion. Degree completion indicates that a student has satisfied all academic requirements set forth by the institution and is eligible to receive a degree (Johnson, 2012).

Distance education. The students who participate in classroom learning without attending classes on the university campus (Joo et al., 2011).

Online learning. The online platform utilized by students seeking to achieve educational and academic goals through interactions on various digital platforms (Fuster, 2016).

Pedagogy. The art and science of teaching children (Knowles, 1968).

Self-efficacy. An individual's belief or perception of their own ability to successfully complete and succeed in their academic pursuits (Bandura, 1997; Bradley et al., 2017).

Sense of community. The student's sense of connection or belongingness within the online and distance education program (Oliphant & Branch-Mueller, 2016).

Student-to-advisor interactions. Verbal or written communications between the student and their academic advisor via email, phone conversations, or virtual or face-to-face meetings (Gravel, 2012).

Chapter Summary

Online learning degree programs are experiencing an increase in student enrollment (Ellis, 2019; Seaman et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2019). High student attrition rates accompany the increase in enrollment at alarming rates (Coussement et al., 2020; Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). Chapter 1 identified the concern of online student attrition and potential connections with student self-efficacy and academic advising. I utilized a qualitative case study approach to understand how interactions between online students and their academic advisors could contribute to a student's decision to persist to degree completion. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature to support the purpose of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over the past decade, institutions of higher education have witnessed a dramatic growth in the number of nontraditional students enrolling in online or distance education programs (Ellis, 2019; Seaman et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2019). These programs provide opportunities for students to obtain a degree while meeting family and work obligations. For many of these students, these programs are their only option for obtaining a higher education (Henderson et al., 2021). The enrollment of students is increasing, however, the student retention rate for online and distance education students is concerning (Garrett, 2018; Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). Markle (2015) found that the 6-year graduation rate of 18-year-old students was triple that of adult learners. Markle (2015) emphasized that institutions of higher education must focus on adult learners as the high retention rates not only impact the student but the institution as well.

Research has identified possible contributing factors to student withdrawal, such as student level of self-efficacy, limited communication from faculty and staff, the lack of a sense of community, and feelings of loneliness and isolation (Cela et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2020; Trespalacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). Academic advisors serve a vital role in guidance and provide essential communication throughout a student's academic journey (Alqurashi, 2019; Gravel, 2012). There is limited research on how interactions with an academic advisor may influence a student's level of self-efficacy and desire to persist to degree completion.

The review of the literature begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework followed by the history of andragogy progressing to andragogy today. Second, the review provides a historical background of online and distance education, and the current state of online and distance education. In the review I further examine the characteristics of adult learners, factors related to distance education student retention, self-efficacy, and the sense of community.

Next, the review explores the literature on academic advising to include the types of advising, and interactions between students and academic advisors. Finally, the review examines the projected future growth of online and distance education.

Literature Search Methods

To gain an understanding on adult learners and the factors involving student retention in online and distance education the literature review strategy was to locate literature on andragogy, self-efficacy, and academic advising in higher education. The search utilized the ACU library, EBSCOhost, ERIC, and Digital Dissertations and Theses Global. The key words used in the search included *andragogy, adult learning theory, online and distance education, self-efficacy, online student retention, sense of community, adult learners, sense of community, communication in the online environment, academic advising, types of academic advising, academic advising adult learners, and academic advising for online and distance education students*. A wealth of scholarly articles, research studies, and dissertations were reviewed to learn the history, current status, issues, current strategies to address the issues, and the future outlook for online and distance education.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

The theoretical foundation for this study is based on Knowles's theory of andragogy. The theory of andragogy is appropriate to frame this study because the participants in the study were adult learners, and the study was focused on student self-efficacy. The fifth principle of andragogy; internal motivation, is directly related to the self-efficacy of adult learners. The six assumptions proposed in the theory of andragogy suggest that adult learners have a strong desire to understand the reason for learning and how this knowledge can be applied to their real-life situations. Adult learners in the online and distance education settings enter the educational

setting with a strong desire to learn, and their levels of self-efficacy strongly depend on their internal motivation to persist to degree completion. Radovan and Makovec (2015) asserted that adult learners' perception toward learning can greatly influence their desire to initiate and continue learning. I used the theoretical foundation of andragogy as the guiding framework for this study because it aims to assess how adult learners' levels of self-efficacy may be influenced by their interactions with an academic advisor (Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Data collection involved the perceptions of adult learners who were enrolled in or had recently completed an online or distance education program. The data collected focused on how their perceived interactions with an academic advisor influenced their levels of self-efficacy while enrolled in the program. For this study, positive interactions were defined as interactions in which the benefits of the interaction outweigh the costs (i.e., time) and increase their desire (i.e., self-efficacy) to continue in the program. Negative interactions were defined as interactions in which the costs (i.e., time) are greater than the benefits of the interaction and decreased their perceived ability (i.e., self-efficacy) to complete the program (Walker-Roberts, 2020).

History of Andragogy

A German gymnasium teacher Alexander Kapp (1800–1869) first introduced the term andragogy in 1833 (Loeng, 2018). Kapp (1833) utilized the works of Plato on educational theory for the composition of his book. He noted how Plato not only referred to the education of children but adults as well and coined the term andragogy to refer to the education of adult learners. Andragogy consists of two terms—andro (i.e., meaning man) and agourgous (i.e., meaning to lead); the term notes there are distinct differences between teaching adults and children (Knowles, 1989; Sato et al., 2017). Kapp (1833) created four subthemes from the works of Plato:

- Education before birth, marriage, and family referred to educating males for the role of fatherhood.
- Pedagogy—education received in childhood—in the areas of science, philosophy, the arts, and others.
- Andragogy—education received in adulthood.
- State pedagogy—state-provided education based on social class and occupational learning.

Kapp (1833) only referred to the education of the male population. Kapp (1833) claimed that women's abilities were not as developed as men, therefore, andragogy is the "education of the man, not adult education in general" (Sato et al., 2017, p. 631).

In 1926, Lindeman introduced andragogy in the United States through his book *The Meaning of Adult Education*. Lindeman (1961) highlighted how adult learners participate in learning opportunities voluntarily, are intrinsically motivated, and focus on problem-based learning as it directly applies to their life. He further elaborated on how adult learners perform best through collaborative learning and carry with them a wealth of life experiences that guide their learning. Lindeman (1961) noted several aspects of adult learning, such as life experiences, that are frequently attributed to Malcolm Knowles (1968). Knowles (1968) published an article titled "Andragogy, not Pedagogy," which set the path for the term *andragogy* to become a commonly used term in the field of education in the United States (Sato et al., 2017).

In the following years, Knowles continued publishing his developments and ideas on andragogy and is often credited as the father of andragogy (Carlson, 1989). In his book published in 1970, Knowles refers to andragogy as "an emerging technology for adult learning" (p. 37). In 1980, Knowles revised his book to include that pedagogy and andragogy were not separate

entities but worked together. He posed four assumptions for adult learners: learner's self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, and problem-centered orientation. In 1984, he revised his book again and noted that his thoughts and ideas on andragogy continued to evolve and added two additional assumptions for adult learners: internal motivation, and the need to know. In addition, Knowles relinquished credit for coining the term *andragogy*. However, the work of Malcolm Knowles undoubtedly opened the door for the inclusion of andragogy and the continued work today in the study of adult learning (Sato et al., 2017).

Andragogy Today

Andragogy remains a high focus within education today (Peterson & Ray, 2013). Historically, children would learn all they needed during childhood to be successful in adulthood. Cross (1981) stated, "When life was simpler, one generation could pass along to the next generation what it needed to know to get along in the world; tomorrow was simply a repeat of yesterday" (p. 1). Peterson and Ray (2013) noted that longer lifespans, social change, and rapid growth in technology demands the need for lifelong learning.

Andragogy continues to be a guiding framework used in teaching adult learners. Duke and Hinzen (2011) concluded that effectively teaching adult learners is a priority worldwide, because "lifelong learning is a key for economic growth and social development" (p. 11). Miller (2017) emphasized the need for colleges to devote resources to training faculty in andragogy, because adult learners are the largest and fastest-growing student population; however, they continue to hold the lowest degree completion rate. Ryan and Deci (2000) noted that students who fail to connect with the course content lack the motivation to continue to degree completion (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Choy (2002) defined nontraditional or adult learners as students who are enrolled at least part-time, are financially independent, and have dependents. Due to these circumstances, adult learners are typically career-driven and self-disciplined (Dixon-Saxon & Buckley, 2020). Factors impacting student success include situational, institutional, and dispositional (Bushey-McNeil et al., 2014). Nontraditional students may hold multiple roles during their academic career, such as parent, caregiver, employee, or other role, that is time consuming or they face a situational factor that may impact their ability to perform academically. These can influence their level of self-efficacy in overcoming or persisting in a program (Bushey-McNeil et al., 2014). Grabowski et al. (2016) emphasized how these competing roles may have a significant impact on the ability of a nontraditional student to persist in accomplishing academic success.

Aljohani and Alajlan (2020) conducted a study at adult-education schools and found that learners' motivation and level of self-efficacy directly impacted their ability to be self-directed learners and academically succeed. A recent study by Mitchell et al. (2021) found that students moved online during the pandemic reported that the faculty's ability to engage students increased their motivation and academic progress. The results from these studies support the six assumptions proposed by Knowles (1984) and the importance of andragogy in adult education (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Online Learning and Digital Andragogy

Andragogy is student-centered, problem-based, experience-oriented; and it requires collaboration and communication between the educator and learners (Decelle, 2016; Dunn, 2000). Andragogy assumes adults are self-directed, learn through experimental learning activities, problem solve, carry a wealth of personal experiences and background knowledge, and are aware of their specific learning needs (Knowles, 1980). Decelle (2016) stated, "Adult

education programs should center on ‘life application’ and progress in relationship to learner readiness; adults are competency-based learners and need to apply newly acquired skills in real-life applications and immediate circumstances” (p. 1264). The unique characteristics and attributes of adult learners aligns well with the concept of online learning and digital andragogy.

Blackley and Sheffield (2015) defined digital andragogy as “the practice of educators to equip and encourage adult learners to choose and use the affordances of accessible digital technologies to personalize their learning and facilitate their interactions with peers and tutors” (p. 408). Cueller (2002) argued that online education was historically developed for adult learners and rooted in andragogy. In addition, DeCelle and Sherrod (2011) highlighted the need for adult learners to have educational opportunities that allow them to live productive lives while obtaining their education.

History of Distance Education

The beginnings of distance education date back to the mid-1800s in the United States. The first documented distance education collaboration took place between the United States Postal Service and several universities (Casey, 2008). The Phonographic Institute of Cincinnati, Ohio was a pioneer in this new frontier of distance education in the United States by offering the first distance education course (Casey, 2008). In this collaboration, coursework would be mailed out to students. Once the coursework was complete, the student would return the coursework to receive a certificate of completion (Casey, 2008).

A few years later, Anna Ticknor established the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, which has also been recognized as the first correspondence school in the United States (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Corey, 2008). This group was established for women, and once accepted the women would select from six concentrations of study and received the syllabus in the mail.

Students would return the completed coursework via mail. Over ten thousand women received and completed these courses (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Corey, 2008). Over the years, correspondence schools began to open across the Northeastern United States and in 1892, the first college-level distance education course was established at the University of Chicago (Corey, 2008).

Distance education continued to evolve, and the first class delivered by radio took place on November 22, 1916, by the University of Iowa (Slotten, 2006). The University of Iowa continued their endeavor by offering the first course to earn credit hours via radio in February 1925 (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). By the mid-1920s, over 100 radio stations were licensed by institutions of higher education (Corey, 2008; Slotten, 2006). The television began to make its debut in the United States in the 1930s and the University of Iowa continued to lead the initiative for distance education by offering courses via television in 1934 (Corey, 2008).

By 1963, the Federal Communications Commission had established 20 channels at low cost for institutions of higher education (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). On November 7, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act that provided free broadcasting and led to the creation of the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, later changed to the Public Broadcasting System (PBS; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Institutions of higher education jumped at this new form of communication and transmission of educational instruction and quickly popularized the term “telecourse” (Corey, 2008; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Telecourses expanded rapidly and by the mid-1980s over 200 college courses were being offered via television with over 1,000 participating colleges and universities (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

Online Learning

The emergence of the internet into households in the mid-1990s prompted institutions of higher education to pursue its educational offering potential (Vincenzes et al., 2019). The first online institution—Jones International University—was established in 1993 and offered five bachelor's degrees and 24 graduate degrees (Corey, 2008). Bozkurt and Zawacki-Richter (2021) stated the following in reference to distance education (DE):

Following the advent of computers, online technologies, and online networks, as well as sociocultural, demographic, political, and technological shifts all over the world, DE has metamorphosed as online learning and emerged as a mainstream educational model, rather than being peripheral or supplementary. (p. 20)

The NCES (2021) reported that in 2019 over 16 million students were enrolled in distance education courses at institutions of higher education. The concept of distance education has grown and progressed with technology to meet the needs of a diverse student population for well over 100 years.

Adult Learners

The NCES classifies adult or nontraditional students based on the following criteria: 25 years or older, in school part-time, working full-time, veteran, with children, not enrolled in college until at least one year after high school graduation, with a GED, first-generation college student (FGS), enrolled in a non-degree program, or they are a returning student (Spagnola & Yagos, 2021). Modenos (2020) argued that this definition should also include “students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities” (p. 135). Chen (2017) noted “an older student population that is qualitatively, developmentally, and socially very different from the

traditional-age, late adolescent undergraduate student” (p. 9) require that institutions of higher education make changes to meet the needs of a growing, diverse student population.

Adult or nontraditional learners are currently one of the fastest growing student populations. Clinefelter and Aslanian (2016) reported that the student population under the age of 25 only consisted of 26% of the online student population. In addition, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020) reported that adult student enrollment in online programs increased by 5.5% in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (Causey et al., 2020). Yoo and Huang (2013) found that the primary reason adult learners were enrolling in higher education courses was related to their career and financial well-being. Adult learners prefer online and distance education courses because it allows adult students flexibility to balance work, school, and family obligations (Ornelles et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the growing adult learner population is shadowed by a high student attrition rate that translates to a lower graduation rate (Markle, 2015; Spagnola & Yagos, 2021).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has been widely studied within traditional learning environments; however, only a limited number of studies have been conducted within the online learning environment (Ellis, 2019; Mulvaney, 2020). The results of these limited studies does indicate a positive relationship between a student’s level of self-efficacy and the successful completion of online courses (Alqurashi, 2019; Mulvaney, 2020). Student support is a vital factor in improving self-efficacy, providing guidance, and clearing pathways to success. Researchers suggest the ability to influence and increase student self-efficacy motivates students to perform well academically (Schroeder & Terras, 2015; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010).

Ellis (2019) found that nontraditional students were more likely to complete courses; however, they do not necessarily persevere to degree completion. Ellis (2019) stated that “if nontraditional students persist in courses, they can persist in a program, but proactive intervention is crucial because it is a means for improving academic success” (p. 30). Alqurashi (2019) conducted a study focused on students’ perceived learning in online courses and found that online student self-efficacy ranks as the strongest predictor of perceived learning. Alqurashi (2019) stated, “Students with high self-efficacy don’t regard difficult tasks as obstacles to avoid, but rather as a challenge for developing their skills; this could enhance learning and performance and lead to higher satisfaction with the achieved results” (p. 134). Researchers agree that online student self-efficacy is a vital contributing factor to student success in the online environment (Alqurashi, 2019; Ellis, 2019).

Academic Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy denotes that a student’s beliefs in their capabilities to succeed in a task play a vital role in their persistence to completion (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) suggested that the decision to start and persist in a task is a direct result of an individual’s level of self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be assumed that self-efficacy and persistence are connected. In online learning and distance education, academic self-efficacy is defined as the confidence learners exhibit toward their learning and academic performance (Um & Jang, 2021).

Research conducted by Artino (2007), Meece et al. (2006), and Pintrich (1999) found that self-efficacy was positively connected with persistence and academic success. Shen et al. (2013) noted three aspects of online and distance education: online learning self-efficacy, technological self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy. Results revealed that academic self-efficacy was the dominant factor that contributes to online student satisfaction (Shen et al., 2013). A study by Um

and Jang (2021) surveyed 236 college students and found that academic self-efficacy directly influenced the level of academic success experienced by online and distance education students.

Online and distance education student's self-efficacy and their beliefs on their academic abilities relate to several variables that contribute to student learning (Boswell & Sohr-Preston, 2020). Variables include motivation, persistence, and academic success (Chemers et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2012). Boswell and Sohr-Preston (2020) conducted a study with 223 students from a public university and found that students who received positive reviews of a professor from other students resulted in an increase in their level of self-efficacy and confidence to perform well within the course. The increased self-efficacious beliefs may contribute to increased effort and social engagement within the course, both indicators that contribute to academic success (Boswell & Sohr-Preston, 2020; Kommarraju et al., 2010).

Sense of Community

Researchers agree that fostering a sense of community for online and distance education students may be a determining factor in student satisfaction and success (Gravel, 2012; Oliphant & Branch-Mueller, 2016; Peacock & Cowan, 2019; Schroeder & Terras, 2015). Peacock and Cowan (2019) stated, "All too often online learners report feelings of loneliness and anxiety in what they perceive to be an alien online learning space and are underconfident about their skills and capabilities to cope when studying online" (p. 68). Trespalacios and Lowenthal (2019) conducted a study to explore the perceptions of graduate students taking online courses. The findings indicated that the online graduate students preferred activities that promoted meaningful interactions with their classmates and instructor. Trespalacios and Lowenthal (2019) stated the following:

Although e-learning has allowed institutions to expand his education mission reaching more students outside of their physical boundaries, we are still at the beginning of understanding how to satisfy the educational needs of the more diverse population enrolled in our online education programs. (p. 65)

Emotional Presence and Building Relationships in the Online Environment

Korpershoek et al. (2016) found that building an emotional relationship with students in traditional face-to-face settings directly contributes to a student's academic success. It can be assumed that relationship building in the online environment would have a similar impact to online student academic success. Research indicates that emotional presence is a vital component to a student's ability to academically succeed in online and distance education courses (Marchand & Gutierrez, 2012; Swerdloff, 2015; Williams, 2017). Students who experience and develop a positive relationship with instructors, advisors, or other support staff are more likely to engage, persist, and achieve academic success (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). Angelaki and Mavroidis (2013) suggested that these positive relationships may decrease a student's anxiety and increase student self-efficacy.

Strategies for Building a Sense of Community

There are many factors that may impact the academic success of adult learners in distance education. The development of a sense of community is an area of interest for researchers and institutions of higher education (Trespacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). Rovai (2002) defined a classroom community in four dimensions: spirit (i.e., membership), trust (i.e., relying on others), interaction (i.e., faculty, staff, or peers), and expectations (i.e., learning). Brown (2001) suggested a three-stage process to develop a sense of community in the online learning environment: communication, feeling of acceptance, and the establishment of relationships.

Throughout the literature on the development of a sense of community within the distance learning environment, the implementation of collaborative activities is consistent (Luo et al., 2017; Oha et al., 2014). Shackelford and Maxwell (2012) found that interactions between students in group projects and class discussions are a strong indicator for the development of a sense of community. In a study on the sense of community within the online learning environment, Dawson (2006) found that students reported a higher sense of community when they experienced consistent communication with their classmates, instructor, and other support staff at the institution.

Academic Advisement

Institutions of higher education are currently facing a daunting number of students withdrawing from online programs (Coussement et al., 2020; Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). In addition, there have been challenges resulting from expanding online enrollments, shifting demographics, and the shifting responsibilities of academic advisors (Kuo & Belland, 2016). Gravel (2012) stated, "Research on student retention reveals that lack of interaction is a key factor in a student's decision to drop out" (p. 56).

Mulvaney (2020) completed a study that found online discussion groups produced significantly higher levels of performance appraisal self-efficacy (PASE). The lack of discussion boards had the opposite result and produced lower levels of PASE. Participants in the study also reported an overload in the different media formats utilized in online learning. Mulvaney (2020) suggested one approach to address low levels of PASE is ongoing advisement. Gravel (2012) conducted a study that examined the interactions between academic advisors and undergraduate online students. The results indicated the need for institutions of higher education to establish

best practices and tools for academic advisors to provide a more personalized and collaborative experience for online students.

History of Academic Advising

The field of academic advising has transformed with the increasing diverse student population. As access to higher education continued to expand, the field of academic advising transitioned from primarily a faculty role to a more formal and professional role (Cook, 2009; Gordon, 2004; Grites, 1979; Kuhn & Padak, 2008). Academic advisors assumed the role not only of guiding students on their academic journey but their career and personal development as well. Grites (1979) stated the following:

Academic advising in American higher education has evolved from a routine, isolated, single-purpose, faculty activity to a comprehensive process of academic, career, and personal development performed by personnel from most elements of the campus community. This evolution has resulted from changing enrollment patterns, a new diversity of college students, increased student involvement in academic processes, and the recent economic and labor conditions of the country; it has been reflected in the attitudes toward advising, a changing definition of advising, and a limited number of theoretical models of advising. (p. 1)

Diversity in the student population continues to grow as well as the diversity of the role of academic advisors among institutions of higher education. Institutions may have full or part-time advisors, graduate students serving as advisors, or faculty or faculty administrators occupying the role. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2006) recognizes these differences and explains, “Regardless of the diversity of our institutions, our students, our advisors, and our organizational structures, academic advising has three components: curriculum,

pedagogy, and student learning outcomes' (p. 2). NACADA supports institutions in developing advising practices from these three components while also aligning with the goals and mission of the institution.

Prescriptive Advising

The prescriptive model of advising views advising as an administrative task (Stockwell, 2015). In this model, advisors prescribe students with a path to graduation or a list of courses that must be completed to successfully earn a degree (Drake, 2011). The communication between a student and the advisor is limited and the academic advisor takes on a vital role to ensure they are providing accurate pathways for degree completion (Drake, 2011). Advising meetings with students in this model typically remains strictly academic, including needed coursework, registration, and graduation requirements. Crookston (1972) described this model of advising as one in which the academic advisor retains more responsibility than the student, the advisor informs the student of the pathway, and the student follows this pathway. Drake (2011) explained how this model of academic advising only provides students with the opportunity to ask questions regarding their graduation pathway and does not provide the opportunity to address other student concerns.

Bolkan et al. (2021) conducted a study investigating how prescriptive advising may play a role in student's ability to graduate in four years. The study found that prescriptive advising did have a direct impact on the student's ability to graduate in four years. In addition, the results revealed that advisors who help their students understand the requirements and expectations increased the student's self-efficacy and the belief in themselves that they could complete their degree in four years. In contrast, Jeschke et al. (2001) compared intrusive and prescriptive advising in a 3-year trial study of nontraditional undergraduate psychology majors. The results

revealed that students who received intrusive advising reported a higher satisfaction rate compared to those that experienced prescriptive advising. The study also found that neither of the advising approaches increased a student's level of academic success.

Developmental Advising

In contrast to prescriptive advising, developmental advising places more responsibility on the academic advisor; however, it supports communication between the student and advisor beyond a prescriptive pathway to graduation (Ohrablo, 2010). Crookston (1972) suggested that developmental advising should be the predominant model for academic advisement. In the developmental advising model, the advisor serves as a mentor, developing a relationship with students, positively influencing their level of self-efficacy to persist to degree completion (O'Banion, 1994). The core to developmental advising is the advisor working with the student to plan courses, develop a relationship with students, increase academic success, and guide students in their progress toward their goals (Fielstein & Lammers, 1992). In addition, Ohrablo (2010) posed that the developmental advising approach fosters increased academic success and retention rates in comparison to other advising models.

Davis and Cooper (2001) conducted a study on student perceptions of academic advising at a 4-year university and found that most advisors implemented developmental advising within their practice. In addition, students who experienced developmental advising indicated higher satisfaction as opposed to students that received prescriptive advising (Davis & Cooper, 2001). Hale et al. (2009) found that doctoral students who received developmental advising reported a higher degree of satisfaction when compared to those who received prescriptive advising. In a study by Harris (2018) conducted at a historically Black university (HBCU) found that 1st-year students reported a higher rate of satisfaction with developmental advising.

Research suggests students report a higher level of satisfaction when developmental advising practices are utilized by advisors (Davis & Cooper, 2001; Hale et al., 2009; Harris, 2018). Gordon (2019) implied the strategic implementation of developmental advising may face barriers within institutions. Gordon (2019) posed several barriers to developmental advising: time, lack of training, student perception of advising, lack of administrative support, inexperience, advising is not required for students, and the absence of a cohesive advising team. The increased diverse student population in correlation with establishing effective communication with online learners may also contribute to the barriers with successful developmental advising practices (Coussement et al., 2020; Gordon, 2019).

Intrusive Advising

Intrusive advising, sometimes referred to as proactive advising, utilizes qualities of both developmental and prescriptive advising models (Varney, 2007). Intrusive advising calls for academic advisors to initiate communications with students providing advice and direction in an attempt to intercede before difficulties arise (Varney, 2007). Heisserer and Parette (2002) identified that student orientation in which the roles of academic advisor and student were made clear led to students reporting a sense of community and they were more likely to contact their academic advisor more frequently.

Akers et al. (2021) investigated the online adult learner's perceptions of academic advising. The results indicated that intentional and proactive advising resulted in higher student satisfaction and success. Powers and Wartalski (2021) conducted a qualitative study focused on adult learners and their experiences with academic advisors. Three themes emerged as predictors of student satisfaction: program resources, relationship with their academic advisor, and personalized communication with their advisor. Students indicated that having direct and concise

program information and pathway to degree completion provided direction and support. In addition, the relationship and communication between the student and academic advisor was pivotal to their continued academic progress and success (Powers & Wartalski, 2021).

Appreciative Advising

The appreciative advising model poses that academic advisors prioritize collaboration and engage students through positive inquiry (Bloom & Martin, 2002). The appreciative advising approach asks students what is possible as opposed to providing possible remedies for weaknesses (DeFeo & Keegan, 2020). This method of advising requires full attention from the academic advisor and devotion to creating a positive and collaborate relationship with students (Kamphoff et al., 2007). DeFeo and Keegan (2020) emphasized the importance of appreciative advising in easing student anxiety and encourages students to set high expectations and challenge themselves to achieve their academic goals.

The appreciative advising framework includes six phases: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and do not settle (Bloom et al., 2008). The disarm phase focuses on building a relationship and establishing trust. Discover allows the student and advisor to focus on past accomplishments and strengths. In the dream phase, students share their aspirations and goals. The student and advisor work together during the design phase to develop a plan of action to obtain their goals. Academic advisors support students through their educational journey or deliver stage and challenge students to continue pursuing improvement in the do not settle phase (Bloom et al., 2008).

Kamphoff et al. (2007) utilized the appreciative advising model with students on academic probation and found this approach supports retention, academic success, and the overall well-being of students. Truschel (2015) conducted a study focused on the implementation

of appreciative advising with students that obtained below a 2.0 GPA and found that the experience was positive for both the students and the academic advisor. Pulcini (2016) suggested the appreciative advising approach may improve retention and degree attainment rates among Appalachian women.

Online Learning Postpandemic

In March 2020, countries began shutting down to slow the spread of the virus COVID-19. Governments mandated the closures of multiple businesses and institutions of education (Singh et al., 2021). The rapid spread of COVID-19 forced an emergency shift in education from face-to-face instruction to fully online (Rapanta et al., 2020). This emergency shift only gave educational institutions and students a few weeks to adjust before the move to online (Nworie, 2020). As a result of this change, student performance on standardized tests and other assignments were negatively impacted (Singh et al., 2021).

The administration, faculty, and students in higher education faced many unknowns in the world of online learning; however, they all played a vital role in the emergency shift and identifying areas of need as online learning continued (Singh et al., 2022). In some cases, there was the lack of a learning management system (LMS) to provide support during online learning. Administrators lacked the ability to provide the proper support systems for faculty and students. Faculty were not trained to deliver instruction in the virtual environment and many students were not experienced in this type of learning environment (Singh & Matthees, 2021).

In retrospect, these challenges may paint a bleak future for online learning; however, research shows that students retain 25%–60% more material and take 40%–60% less time to complete the work due to the flexibility of online learning and the ability for students to individualize their learning schedule (Li & Lalani, 2020). Nworie (2020) also pointed out that

online education programs in the future will be more planned out and not hastily thrown together to meet the needs of students during an emergency closure. Singh et al. (2022) conducted a study focused on the experiences and perceptions of administrators, faculty, and students in higher education who experienced the shift from face-to-face to online learning. The findings indicated that there is a need for improvement on structure and support, faculty training, and quality assurance in online learning; however, all recognize that the pandemic has significantly changed the future of education and foresee online learning as the dominant delivery method moving forward (Singh et al., 2022).

Summary

Chapter 2 contains the history of andragogy and distance education, a discussion of the theoretical framework, and their relevance in today's educational settings. The review examines aspects of today's adult learners and the student attrition rate associated with online and distance education. I discussed potential contributing factors to the high student attrition rate and how these may be related to student interactions with academic advisors. The purpose of this study was to explore if the interactions between distance education students and their academic advisors contribute to their level of self-efficacy and persistence to degree completion.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodology. The chapter provides information on the interview questions and procedures as well as participant population. In addition, I explain assumptions and limitations of the study. Finally, I provide an overview of the data collection and analytical process.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to reveal the perceptions of online and distance education student's interactions with academic advisors. This study aimed to give a voice to online and distance education students who have first-hand knowledge of the experience. My focus was how student interactions with an academic advisor may have impacted their level of self-efficacy. I chose a qualitative approach for this study to allow for the investigation of participants' perceptions through strategical techniques to gather information that could contribute to a deeper understanding of the experience.

The chapter provides information on the research method for the study and the research design. I also describe the population, the instruments, data collection, and analyses. Finally, I discuss ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Research Design and Method

The study utilizes a qualitative case study design. The advantages of a qualitative case study include the ability of the researcher to unveil interactions among participants within a unique setting and gain in-depth insight into their experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2017). This approach will allow me to explore how participants experienced academic advising and their perceptions. Qualitative methods allow participants to share their experience and provide a voice to those that have not previously had the opportunity to share their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Narratives can then be established around their responses to better understand their perceptions of their experience. The perceptions of students in relation to their experience with an academic advisor may play a crucial role in a student's decision to persist to degree completion. This information would assist me in evaluating the current academic advising

procedures and highlight areas where improvements may need to be made to meet the needs of the diverse student population.

I chose a case study design to provide a detailed account and understanding of the interactions between online and distance education students and their academic advisor and how these interactions may have impacted students' levels of self-efficacy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study approach provides an understanding of individual human experiences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). I asked students questions focused on their interactions with an academic advisor and how they perceived the interaction as influential to their level of self-efficacy. In addition, I conducted a focus group with academic advisors to gain their perspectives on interactions with online and distance education students.

Population

The target population for the study was current undergraduate students and recent graduates of an online or distance education program. At the time of the study, the college served approximately 1,000 students, including traditional students on the main campus, distance education students at various community colleges, and online students located in several states. The distance education program provides students with a face-to-face classroom setting at a local community college. Students attend classes two nights every week, the classes are held in the evenings to accommodate working students. The online program allows students to complete the program online without having to attend face-to-face classes.

The majority of the student population in the online and distance education program were women from the Appalachian region. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the Appalachian region includes 423 counties across 13 states (ARC, n.d.). The population within this region has a lower per capita income and a higher rate of poverty

compared to the rest of the United States (ARC, n.d.). Only 24.7% of Appalachian residents 25 years or older hold a bachelor's degree, which is below the national average of 32.1% as of 2019 (ARC, n.d.).

Bradbury and Mather (2009) found that many female students from Appalachia begin their higher education journeys when they have started a family. Fiene (1991) found that Appalachian women's level of positive self-efficacy stems from supporting her children and working to provide them with a better life. According to Pulcini (2016), this strong sense of commitment to family may pose a challenge for Appalachian women in degree completion, which may impact the next generation of women.

In order to participate in the study current undergraduate students must have been enrolled full-time and have completed at least one semester in the program. Recent graduates include those who graduated within the last 2 years from the program. Participation in the study was completely voluntary. I chose these students and graduates because they were familiar with and had recently experienced the level of support provided by the academic advisor. They would be able to directly articulate if and how the support of the academic advisor had influenced their self-efficacy to remain in the program.

I conducted semistructured interviews with recent graduates and students in the programs. I interviewed students and graduates from the distance education site and the online program. I chose these individuals because they had experienced communication with the academic advisor for the longest period of time. This provided valuable information on any differences in experience from distance education students compared to online students. Similar to a study conducted by O'Shea et al. (2015), who interviewed 19 students on their engagement

in the online learning environment, a total of 12 students provided sufficient data to reach data saturation.

In addition, I conducted a focus group with academic advisors to gain their perspectives on advising online and distance education students. Wilkinson (2004) described focus groups as a group of individuals participating in an informal group discussion on a particular topic. Halliday et al. (2021) suggested that compared to other methods of qualitative data collection, focus groups lead to a broader discussion among participants, capture a deeper understanding, and highlight the differences in perspectives. The data collected allowed for comparison of the experiences from the academic advisor and student perspectives.

Study Sample

The study utilized purposeful sampling for the recruitment of participants for the study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to obtain valid feedback and produce the most accurate data (Leavy, 2017). I emailed the recruitment flyer to graduates and current students in the program, which at the time of the study was approximately 200 full-time students. Students that have graduated within the last 2 years also received the recruitment email. Recent graduates of the last 2 years numbered approximately 250. In the event additional participants were needed, the institutions social media sites would have been utilized to recruit participants. The flyer emailed to students would also be published on the institution's social media sites.

To gain a good understanding of student's perspective of academic advising on self-efficacy, I conducted 12 semistructured interviews to reach data saturation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described data saturation as a point at which no new information or data are found that dictate the need for a new category during thematic analysis. Semistructured interviews allowed me to guide the interview via predetermined questions; however, they also provided flexibility

for the participants in their responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Semistructured interviews may lead to additional themes among the findings after analysis.

I also conducted interviews with individuals from the online program, the distance education program, and recent graduates from both the online and distance education program. Participants were asked open-ended questions in regard to their experience with the academic advisor. The questions provided the students with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences that include the application process, advisement, communications, and level of support provided by the academic advisor. The interviews were conducted in the virtual setting via Zoom. I gave participants the opportunity to review the transcriptions for accuracy.

The academic advisors at the institution received a recruitment email regarding focus group participation. Participation in the focus group was strictly voluntary. I sent a Doodle Poll to participants to assist in determining a common time that worked for the group to meet. The focus group was conducted virtually via Zoom. I facilitated the discussion with semistructured questions and also recorded and transcribed the focus group discussion. Participants were provided the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation utilized for the qualitative case study included the semistructured interview questions (see Appendices D and E). I developed the interview questions to focus on understanding the experience of the students in their interactions with the academic advisor and how these interactions may have impacted their level of self-efficacy. The questions allow the participants to detail their experiences with the academic advisor and explain how these interactions influenced their level of self-efficacy during their enrollment in the program. The interviews were conducted in a virtual setting using the meeting platform Zoom. The interviews

included semistructured questions that allowed the participants to speak openly and detail their experiences about their interactions with the academic advisor. Semistructured interviews allow for the adjustment of questions as needed and provide the participants the opportunity to elaborate on issues beyond the interview questions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2017).

I developed the focus group semistructured questions to focus on the perspectives of academic advisors in their interactions with online and distance education students. The questions prompted participants to discuss their experiences. The semistructured approach provides participants with the opportunity to elaborate, discuss, or share differing experiences or opinions regarding their work. Halliday et al. (2021) described how focus groups provide a productive environment to discover new ideas that may directly impact practices.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

I piloted the interview questions to identify weaknesses in the questions and to examine the flow of the interview (see also Appendices F and G). Piloting interview questions can help identify errors and better plan for the interview sessions (Maxwell, 2012). To that end, I conducted a mock interview with a recent graduate from the program, but this individual did not participate in the study.

I sent invitations via email to recent graduates and students in the program and academic advisors after IRB approval (see Appendices B and C). The invitation email included a detailed overview of the study and the electronic informed consent. Participants were able to sign the consent form digitally. Once the participant signed and returned the informed consent, they were emailed a link to youcanbookme.com to schedule the interview. As the dates were selected by the participant, I created a Zoom meeting that included a password and emailed the meeting

information to the participant. At the beginning of each interview session, students were reminded that the interview would be recorded. I explained the informed consent form a second time to each participant prior to conducting the interview.

I recorded the interviews and, as a measure of confidentiality, I asked participants to turn off their cameras. The participants were assigned a pseudonym as opposed to their name to ensure only the pseudonym would be recorded during the interview. The interviews were recorded via Zoom. Otter is a voice recognition software (VRS) that I utilized to assist in the transcriptions of the interviews. Otter tracked multiple speakers indicating a number on the transcription for each speaker. The use of VRS may assist in the transcription of the data; however, some feel that researchers miss the opportunity of becoming more connected to the data and minimize the ability for the researcher to critique their interview techniques to grow as a researcher (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Matheson, 2007). The interviews, transcriptions, and coding have been housed in a cloud service that is password protected.

I utilized notetaking before, during, and after the interviews and focus group. Reflexive notetaking was used as a tool to identify possible bias and influence (Shufutinsky, 2020). In addition, I followed up with each participant with an overview of their interview to ensure their experience was accurately depicted in the data.

Data Analysis

Utilizing qualitative methods, I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews. The participants' names and identifications were replaced with pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants. I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-step process of thematic analysis to analyze the interview content. I began by immersing myself in the data by reading the transcriptions. From the readings, I created initial codes using the in vivo coding procedure. I

chose in vivo coding because it allowed me to maintain the participants' language (Leavy, 2017). It allowed me to use participants own key words or phrases to create coding categories and prevented me from imposing my own ideas or bias to the data (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Examining the codes allowed me to begin searching for and identifying themes within the transcriptions. I sorted the codes into themes and created a thematic map, which helped me to visualize and gain a better understanding of the overall themes. I then began defining and naming each theme, which provided an outline for the results of the study.

Triangulation of the data refers to verifying a result by demonstrating how data gathered from different sources relate to one another (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data gathered from the focus group of academic advisors, distance education students, and online students provided the information for triangulation by data source (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness in research is vital. I took several measures to ensure the data collection and analysis were as accurate as possible. Interpretive validity was established through member checking or participant feedback. Interpretive validity refers to how accurately the researcher portrays and attaches meaning to the participants responses (Johnson, 1997). Member checking allowed for the participants to verify the themes (Creswell, 2013). After each interview, I confirmed with the participant that I could follow up after the data collection was completed. After the completion of the data analysis, each participant received an email with a copy of their description. In addition, I also acknowledged potential bias that I may bring to the study. As the researcher, I previously served as an academic advisor at the study site. I may have worked with some of the participants in the past. It was imperative that I addressed my personal

biases and assumptions on how academic advising may or may not influence a student's level of self-efficacy.

Ethical Considerations

I received approval from ACU's IRB November 14, 2022. All participants received an email that explained the study, how the information would be utilized, and how their responses and identity would be protected. All participants in the study were required to sign a consent form before completing the survey and the interviews conducted. The consent form included information on the participant's role in the study, the experiences I aimed to gain information on, and how this information would be used. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

Assumptions

Assumptions are made related to the participants of the study. The study focused on students in an online or distance education elementary education program. It was assumed that the participants were full-time students and had experienced interactions with their academic advisor. In addition, the participants were honest and only reported their personal experiences related to their interactions with their academic advisor.

Limitations

There were limitations to the study. The study was limited to only students who were enrolled in the online or distance education programs at one institution. The study did not include students from other online programs or traditional seated students at other institutions. All of the participants were from the similar geographical location. The study did not include participants from varying geographical regions. Additionally, I conducted the interviews virtually via Zoom without cameras, which eliminated the observation of facial expressions or body language. The

inability to view facial expressions and body language may have diminished my ability to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants responses.

Delimitations

I conducted the study at a small private university in the Southeastern United States. The participants in the study were current or recent graduates of the online or distance education programs. The participants had varied experiences with different instructors and academic advisors. Some participants may have experienced face-to-face advisement, whereas other students may have experienced advising via telephone, email, or virtual meetings.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of online and distance education students and their interactions with academic advisors to gain a better understanding on how these interactions may influence student's level of self-efficacy. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology, population, sample, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 4 provides a detailed overview of the participant descriptions, data collection, analysis of data, and the results of the qualitative case study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions of adult online students' interactions with their academic advisors and how these interactions influenced their levels of self-efficacy and academic success. A qualitative case study design was an appropriate research method to provide a detailed account and understanding of the interactions between online and distance education students and their academic advisor and how these interactions may have impacted a student's level of self-efficacy.

The following research questions were examined:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of online and distance education adult learners' experiences with academic advising?

RQ2: How do online and distance education adult learners describe the influence of academic advising on their own self-efficacy?

RQ3: How do interactions with academic advisors influence students' levels of self-efficacy?

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to report the results of the data analysis of the participant interviews and the academic advisor focus group. In this chapter, the relevant statements from the interviews are included.

Data Collection and Analysis

I followed the data collection procedures outlined in Chapter 3 and in the IRB guidelines (see Appendix A). I selected the participants utilizing purposeful sampling. I sent the recruitment email to 171 distance education or online students and 245 graduates of distance education and online programs within the last 2 years. Sixteen responded with an interest in participating in the study. Twelve online or distance education students or recent graduates (i.e., within last 2 years)

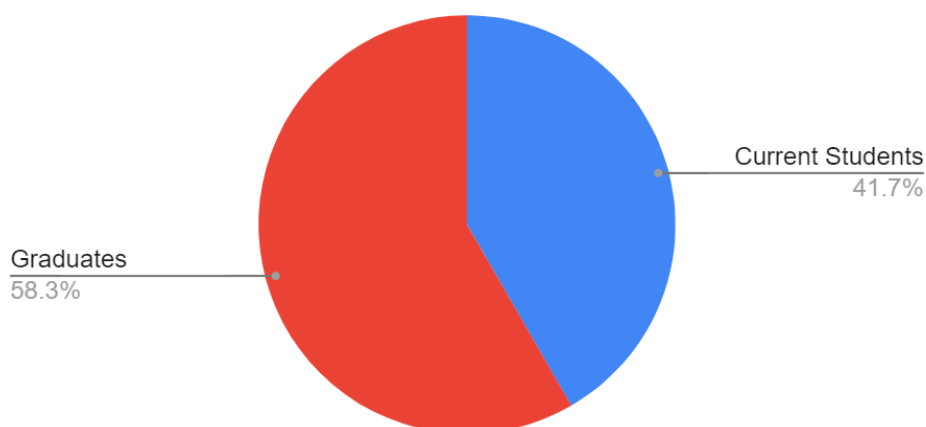
participated in the study. The participants included one man and 11 women, four participants from the distance education program, and eight from the online program. All the interviews were conducted via Zoom and audio recorded only. I transcribed each interview utilizing Otter.ai.

Demographics

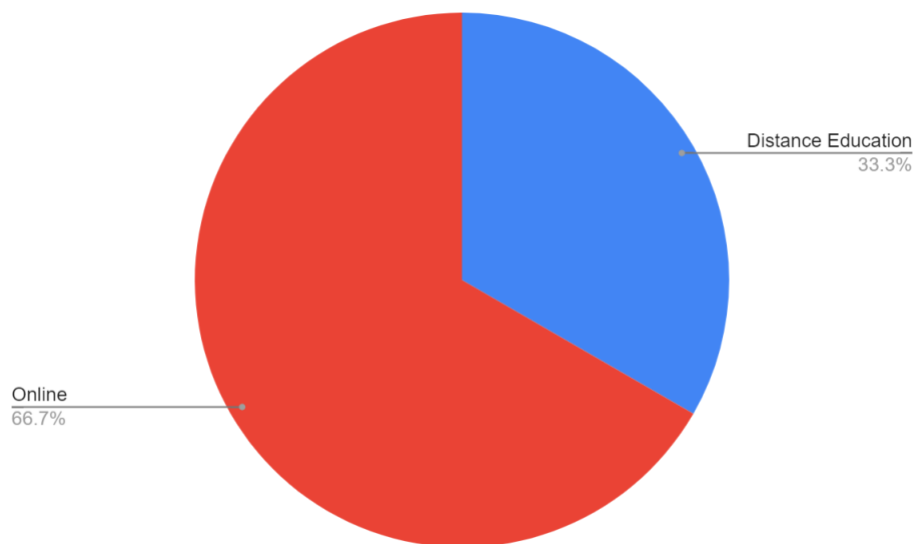
The current student and recent graduate interviews included 12 participants (Figure 1). Five participants were students (41.7%) enrolled in an online or distance education program at the research site. Seven participants were recent graduates (58.3%) of an online or distance education program within the last 2 years at the research site.

Figure 1

Participant Demographics



Students and graduates from the online programs interacted with advisors, instructors, and classmates in the virtual setting. Communications included phone calls, text, emails, Zoom meetings, and the student learning management system: Brightspace. Students and graduates from distance education programs experienced a hybrid setting. The students met face-to-face in a classroom setting two nights per week. Their experience included some face-to-face interactions with their advisor, instructor, and classmates. The participants included 66.7% online students and 33.3% distance education students (Figure 2).

Figure 2*Online and Distance Education Participants*

The research site currently offers four online or distance education programs: criminal justice, human services, elementary education, and an RN/BSN program (Figures 3 and 4). Participants included one student in the criminal justice program (8.3%), one student and two graduates from the human services program (25%), five graduates and two students from the elementary education program (58.3%), and one student in the RN/BSN program (8.3%).

Figure 3

Participant Programs

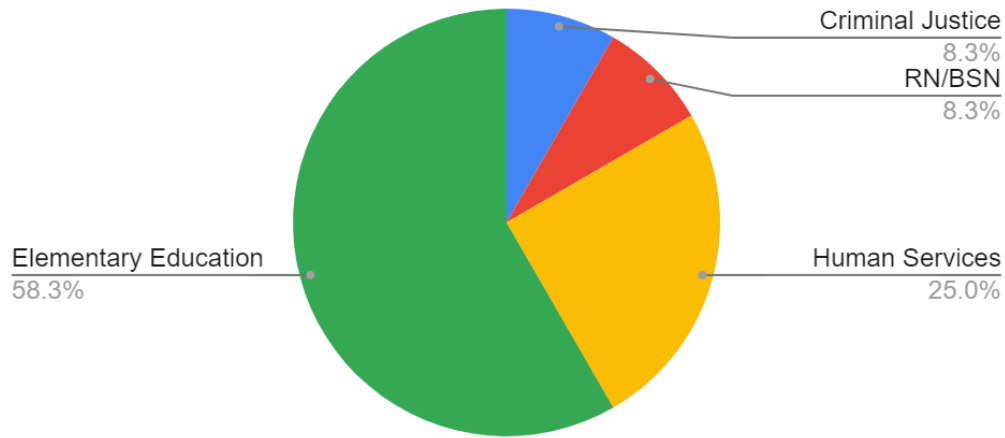
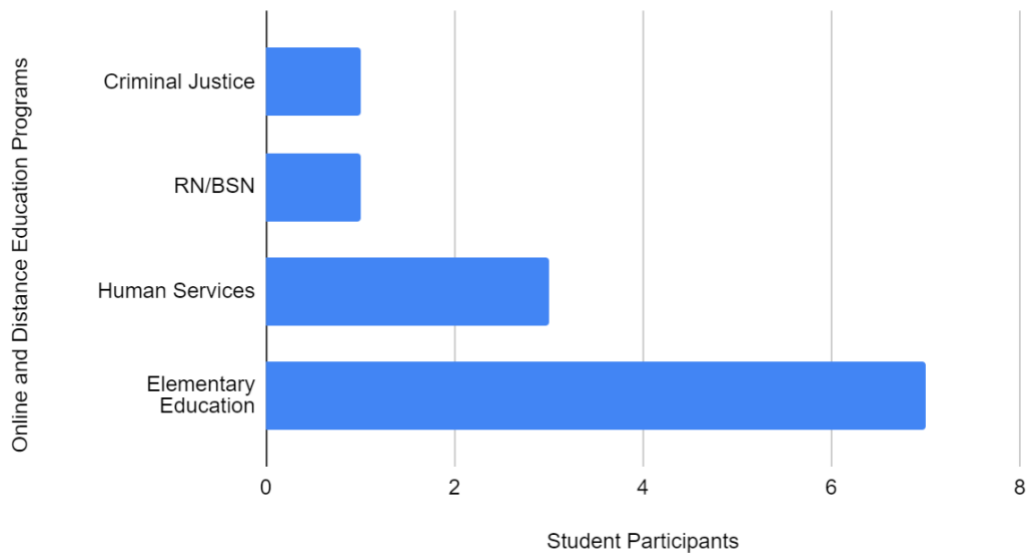


Figure 4

Participants per Program

Online and Distance Education Programs



The 12 participants in the study included one man and 11 women: One student in the online criminal justice program, one student in the online human services program, and two graduates of the online human services program. Four were graduates of the elementary education distance education program. Two were students in the online elementary education program and one was a graduate of the online elementary education program. One was a student in the online RN/BSN program (Table 2).

The female participants discussed motivating factors that guided their decision to pursue a higher education to include financial security, setting an example for their children, and providing an overall better situation for themselves and their children. In addition, geographical location and the availability of higher paying jobs were also contributing factors in their decision-making process and the degree they chose to pursue.

Table 2*Participant Profiles*

Pseudonym	Program	Student/Graduate
Austin	Online Criminal Justice	Student
Christina	Online Human Services	Student
Destiny	Online Elementary Education	Student
Diane	Online Elementary Education	Student
Eloise	Online Human Services	Graduate
Ginger	Distance Education Elementary Education	Graduate
Jane	Online Elementary Education	Graduate
Kadie	Distance Education Elementary Education	Graduate
Maggie	Online Human Services	Graduate
Sabrina	Distance Education Elementary Education	Graduate
Sadie	Online RN/BSN	Student
Taylor	Distance Education Elementary Education	Graduate

Discussion of Findings

Communication with academic advisors is essential for distance education on online students. Four themes emerged from the data analysis related to the communication experienced with academic advisors from the student perspective. These themes included Immediacy in Advisement (i.e., timely communications), Individualized Advisement (i.e., understanding of unique circumstances), Sense of Community (i.e., feeling of belonging), and the Importance of Advising (i.e., student self-efficacy).

Theme I: Immediacy in Advisement

In the analysis of the interview transcripts, the theme of communication between the student and advisor was prevalent with all 12 participants. Various forms of communication were utilized: face-to-face, phone calls, emails, text messages, and virtual meetings. Participants reported that experiencing regular and consistent communication from their advisor increased their level of motivation. Ginger emphasized this and stated the following:

They were someone I leaned on a lot, and there was plenty of times that I was in tears because of PPAT or student teaching or whatever. They were there to remind me of why I was doing it and that really greatly impacted my decision to continue on with the program even when things got challenging.

Consistent and timely communication led to the understanding of their unique circumstances and experiences. Most participants in the study were geographically located in Western North Carolina; however, a few were located on the Atlantic coast of North Carolina. Maggie highlighted how consistent communication influenced her experiences:

She was immediate. She was amazing. I always knew I'd be contacted right away the same day. I was really busy during that time and a lot of things were going on, like I had said, hurricane Florence was huge. It just was a nightmare trying to navigate that, but she really kept everything together and helped those of us who lived on the coast and kept us in the know.

Students enrolled in online and distance education courses stated that "being in the know" was an important component to their success. Consistent communication not only provides students with vital information but also provides the advisors with information that can lead to changes in their advisement or guidance they provide to the student.

Participants also identified the importance of response times to their inquiries. Academic advisors were praised for their quick responses and how their timely responses reduced their anxiety. Destiny spoke on the accessibility of her advisor:

If I have a question or something comes up, I will ask her and she usually will follow up, usually right after the phone call with an email about it, linking me to where I need to go or something I need to read. She is very accessible. I don't have to wait four or five business days to hear back from her.

Kadie further elaborated on the timely response and stated, "Regardless of whether it was before class, after class, on the weekend, I was able to really get support that I needed, and I could ask anything with no questions asked." The sense of community that developed from the student/advisor relationship provided a level of confidence and security for students.

In contrast, participants identified how delayed responses led to frustration and decreased levels of motivation. Austin has experienced communication with two academic advisors during his time as an online student at the research site. He noted that his experience with the first academic advisor lacked communication and response times were delayed. He recalls his frustrations of this experience during his first two semesters in the program:

My first two semesters I was stressed over stuff I shouldn't have been stressed over, etcetera. I emailed Advisor 1; I have a record for three times but at least two times I emailed him about it and he emailed back and was like, there's going to be changes and to just wait. I waited two weeks for that response. So, it was all disheartening. Then when Academic Advisor 2 came, I talked to her about it and she was like, I don't have any availability with courses right now, let me talk with the dean. She talked to a dean to

figure this out. I needed a humanity [course], so she got me into a humanities science.

She talked to a dean and so phenomenal. Total 360 with advisors.

Kadie also experienced a change in academic advisors during her time in the program.

The first academic advisor provided the consistent communication, whereas the second academic advisor did not:

During my senior year, the academic advisor changed. That person came from a different background, a different school, and it just didn't feel very personal anymore. It felt like it had kind of shifted from being a personal relationship with students that I could reach out for help to a more strictly professional, everything had to be exactly by the books. It became a major challenge to understand what was being asked when not a whole lot was given.

The positive and negative accounts of students' experiences with academic advisors provide a glimpse into the importance of consistent communication and timely responses. Some of the participants in the study indicated they worked a full-time job and/or had a family at home to support. The consistent and timely responses from advisors increased their level of comfort and motivation during the program.

Maggie previously stated above how she relied on the consistent communication, and she continued explaining her unique circumstances:

I am a nontraditional student. I had two teenagers living with me and I was a single mom. I worked two jobs trying to support my children and I needed something that I could do that would allow me to continue to work two jobs and get my education in my free time. The college's online program in human services allowed me to do just that.

In addition, Destiny also previously stated how her communication with the academic advisor included addressing her well-being, and she continued explaining her circumstances:

I have two children and a husband. There are no colleges or universities that would be a good travel distance for me as a mom, with kids in school to drive back and forth. I was looking around for colleges that offered online and that met my needs. I was an individual and fully online was really important. I needed to work. That is really what put me into online and honestly, I feel like are they better online because I can work at my own pace just as a mom.

Maggie and Destiny discussed their unique circumstances and how these circumstances led to their choice in choosing an online or distance education program to further their education.

Adult learners have various reasons for choosing the online learning option to continue their higher education. However, many need to meet financial and family obligations as well as obtain a higher education degree. Obtaining a degree may increase their income and ensure the financial well-being of their families. Adult learners making the decision to pursue a degree in higher education is not easy and they are pulled between work, school, and family obligations. The communication, accessibility, and timely responses from academic advisors was clearly stated by participants as an important contributing factor in sustaining their academic pursuits.

Theme II: Individualized Advisement

Participants indicated the importance of the level of support and understanding of their unique circumstances from academic advisors to their level of motivation while in the program. The ability to speak openly with their academic advisor led to a more in-depth level of support that participants appreciated and they indicated these relationships increased their level of motivation and persistence while in the program. The participants also indicated the level of

individualized advisement provided opportunities for new interests to arise, such as job pathways to explore and the decreased the level of loneliness in knowing that someone knew exactly what they were experiencing and could empathize with their unique circumstances.

Ginger expressed her appreciation for the communication and support she received from her advisors. The advisor's presence and availability promoted a sense of community and support and provided the connection she needed to maintain her motivation throughout the program:

So, for me, personally, I do not come from a family of educators. I'm the first one in my family, at work, and even my friends at the time, that was pursuing a degree in education. Nobody else was there that I could really talk to you or vent to, but my people at the college, they were always there. They knew what I had been through; they have been there themselves. They were always reassuring that I could do this even when I felt like I could not.

Students expressed their need for support from academic advisors throughout their academic journey. Sadie expressed the level of support and how the understanding of her unique circumstances made her feel welcomed. She describes her feelings on the communications with her academic advisor as follows:

She has been very supportive throughout this journey and I could feel the encouragement from her through every communication we had. Not just good luck or have fun this semester, she has just been super encouraging. She has been personal with me and told me she's kind of in a similar situation with kids going through this and trying to further her education. That just meant a lot to know that she understands.

Some students indicated the comfort level and connection with their academic advisor increased as academic advisors shared components of their personal academic journey. Destiny also discussed her experience:

She has been super, super supportive. She is great. I mean, she really is great. She is someone that I honestly feel that I could go meet her for dinner and have lunch with her and feel totally comfortable talking to her just as a person.

The sense that the academic advisor could relate to the students' unique circumstances helped to foster good communication and a student/advisor relationship. Jane is a distance education student and can meet with her advisor in person. Jane explained her experiences and support from an in-person perspective:

If we had any kind of issues or problems, all we had to do was go to them. Even if we were having a bad day, and they would give us candy, give us food, let us just sit there and vent or, "just sit there and chill for a minute. And this is what we are going to do. And you guys are doing a good job. Yes, this is tough. It will get better. Hang in there. You are doing a good job. Just hang in there." Or sometimes if we just needed to suck it up.

Jane's statement also highlights the importance of academic advisors in not only providing support but also guidance. Guidance is important during a student's academic journey. Students may experience challenges and question their ability to continue in the program. Academic advisors hold a crucial role in providing that guidance.

In contrast, participants that did not experience a sense of individualized advisement expressed negativity in their level of motivation and support received from the advisors. Kadie is

a distance education student and experienced some of her communications in a face-to-face setting. She expressed her frustrations:

There were a few times that I asked a question, but got a very snippy response back and it immediately shut me down. I felt like a lot of it was their way or the highway. It was very hard to have an honest communication and conversation about stuff. There was just a lot of miscommunications.

Miscommunication can lead to frustration and decreased academic performance for the student. Diane, an online student explained her frustrations around miscommunication and the need to be understood and heard:

The feeling was as if she wasn't understanding what I was saying, because the feedback that I was getting, didn't really correspond to exactly how I was feeling even though I was saying what happened, or how I was. Yeah, I just didn't really feel like I was being understood properly. The reason I say that is because it also has to do with my attitude about the interactions that we have and if my attitude is not positive, so to speak, or I'll just leave it in a positive.

Diane did note that her attitude at the time may have played a role in her view of the communication and this further highlights the importance of advisors making the effort to build relationships with students and understand their unique circumstances.

Austin was an online student who experienced the differences between two academic advisors. Austin elaborates on the importance of academic advisors being able to relate to students on a personal level:

Academic Advisor 1's emails were curt, to the point, which is okay, etcetera. But I think you need a degree of personal adeptness. To be an academic advisor over all these

different people. You need to be able to connect with people on a personal level, not just a professional, an academic level. I got that with Academic Advisor 2. I did not get that with Academic Advisor 1.

As indicated by the participants, individualized advisement made a difference in their academic advising experience. Students who could relate to their advisor on a more personal level viewed their experiences as positive and welcoming, whereas students who did not receive that level of individualized advisement viewed their academic advising experience as negative. Individualized advisement provides the students with a sense of importance and belongingness. For online and distance education adult learners, the sense of belongingness is crucial to their persistence to degree completion and academic success.

Theme III: Sense of Community

The importance of providing a sense of community among adult learners was prevalent in the responses from the participants. Participants spoke of their feelings of belongingness within the academic program. They elaborated on the importance of individualized advisement and how this influenced their level of motivation or self-efficacy. Sabrina, a distance education student, compared her experiences at other institutions with her current experiences with academic advising:

I feel like it boosted my self-confidence even more. I struggled with that some at college and in high school, feeling like a bother, but the teachers and advisors at the college never made me feel like that. They made me feel important and included in the classroom.

Sabrina recognized the boost in her level of self-confidence when a sense of community and belongingness was established within the academic program.

Jane is an online student and noted how the increased communications during a difficult part of the program provided her with support, comfort, and motivation: “It gave me the peace and comfort that I could do it because student teaching is always the roughest. I just remember the most support and interactions and comfort during that student teaching semester.”

The security and level of trust that students experienced with academic advisors led to a level of comfort and understanding that they could succeed and persevere. Taylor, a distance education student, and Eloise, an online student, elaborated on their level of confidence and motivation which directly stemmed from their communication experiences with their academic advisors. Taylor explains the confidence she felt the faculty and advisors had in her:

The faculty just really believed in me and that made me confident, and they would always tell us that, you know, we could do this and that hard but we actually do and we got complimented on the teachers and the growth that we showed in our classrooms and even though we were out of our comfort zone sometimes I felt confident.

Eloise further stated how knowing that someone was there for you as a student increased her level of motivation:

Knowing that I had someone there. I guess that doesn't really relate to confidence, but that would maybe go back to motivation a little bit. Just knowing that I had that support. I think that is what helped my confidence and knowing that I have the tools I need to succeed.

As Eloise stated above, academic advisors hold the keys for students to succeed in their academic journey. The ability for academic advisors to personally relate to their students and build a trusting relationship is a vital component to student success. Adult learners take on many responsibilities inside and outside the academic program. The importance of academic advisors

to understand and relate to the challenges adult learners face may be a key factor to improving the academic success rate of online and distance education adult learners.

Theme IV: Importance of Advising and Self-Efficacy

The participants interviewed in this study provided valuable insights into the importance of their communications with academic advisors. These interactions increased their motivation and willingness to persist to degree completion. For some, their communications with their academic advisor played a vital role in their level of self-efficacy. The communications provided support, understanding, and guidance. Participants shared personal details on their communications with academic advisors and how these communications influenced their self-confidence and future professional goals. Ginger is a distance education student and explained how she was able to overcome personal obstacles and grow into a more confident individual through the support of her advisors:

Prior to the program. I would not have considered myself a very confident person. I was very shy and very reserved, but through the program being around like-minded individuals I was able to open up a little bit through the communications with my professors. They were always very encouraging and didn't think less of me or down on me because I was shy. I was not confident presenting in front of people, but they helped me overcome those things. They made it a really safe space, which helps obviously with the school aspect in doing presentations and things, but also it flowed over into how I carried myself in the classroom as well. It helped me when I saw competence just in general, but then also in my work as well.

Ginger looks back on her experiences with her academic advisor with a sense of accomplishment and success. Her accomplishments in overcoming her challenges also flowed over into her professional career.

Another participant Christina notes how positive feedback from her advisor increased her level of motivation to continue working to improve and succeed. She discussed the importance of recognition and feedback from the advisor:

My academic advisor and my instructors have all been very supportive. I would honestly say that finishing this semester strong with an A in my internship and getting those hours in that I had to have done. I think the academic advisor was very proud of the time that I got it done in and the amount of dedication that I put into what I was doing. She has told me on a couple of different occasions and with some of the assignments that I have submitted that she was highly proud of our work and she's kept in contact throughout the semester, and so that was very helpful.

The positive feedback Christina received from her academic advisor increased her motivation to persist in her academic pursuits. She notes that she felt that her academic advisor was proud of her accomplishments, which further ties into the importance of individualized advisement.

Maggie's experiences with academic advising led her to further her education and pursue a master's degree. She explains how the positive feedback she received, and the overall experience influenced her decision to return to school:

There was lots of positive feedback in the experience because I have worked throughout my whole degree in the field. She really motivated me and told me what a great job I was doing and that I had a great future ahead of me in this field. Those types of things, and it was just a lot of positive affirmations and encouragement. She really was amazing. I went

on to my master's degree, she was a really instrumental factor in me going to continue my education.

Maggie's decision to return to school and pursue her master's degree after graduating with her degree was directly attributed to her interactions with her undergraduate academic advisor. The academic advisor provided support, guidance, and a sense of community that fostered the growth of her level of self-efficacy.

Austin also discussed how his interactions with the academic advisor broadened his scope on the employment opportunities available to him. He recently applied for an accepted position based on the guidance provided from his academic advisor.

Destiny is an online student that summed up the academic advising experience and highlighted the importance of being seen and appreciated as an individual:

They defiantly make me feel better, she does definitely give me a pep talk. It motivates me to do great and I feel a little sad that they're going to only [do this] twice a semester for next semester. I may just call her up next semester, because honestly, I just feel like it helps me. I feel seen as an individual and not just like a stack of papers. I know my professors have hundreds of students, but it's not just to have one person at one time just talk to you. When you are online, I love it, it's a blessing and I am so thankful for it. But you know, usually people who do online are very busy and they need that.

Destiny's experience with academic advising not only helped her with academic pursuits but also reminded her to take care of herself in the process. The advisor knew and understood her unique circumstances and was able to relate to Destiny on a more personal level to encourage her to take time, step back, and reenergize herself.

The participant interviews shed light on the positive and negative influence advisors may have on student's self-efficacy or motivation levels. It is important to recognize the components the participants indicated as contributing factors that led to their experience with academic advising as a positive or negative experience. Participants stated how their experiences with academic advisors positively and negatively influenced their level of self-efficacy. Positive experiences were referenced in response times, sense of community or belonging, building a relationship, positive feedback, and the recognition of the student as an individual. Negative experiences were referenced with slow response times, the lack of feedback, lack of a student/advisor relationship, and the lack of individualized advisement.

Focus Group Interviews

I conducted focus group interviews with academic advisors for online and distance education students. The insight gained from the academic advisors' perceptions of advising online and distance education students assisted me in identifying triangulation between the responses of students and academic advisors.

Data Collection

I followed the data collection procedures outlined in Chapter 3 and the IRB guidelines (see Appendix A). I chose the participants utilizing purposeful sampling. The recruitment email was sent to five academic advisors of distance education or online students. Four responded to interest in participating in the study. Four online and distance education academic advisors participated in the study. The participants included four women, three participants advised online and distance education students, and one participant only advised online students. All the interviews were conducted via Zoom and audio recorded only. I transcribed each interview utilizing Otter.ai.

Demographics

The focus group participants included four current academic advisors for online and distance education students at the institution. The academic advisors also serve as faculty and in varying roles at the institution. Their experience ranged from 2–10 years serving as an academic advisor at the institution (see Table 3).

Table 3

Academic Advisor Demographics

Pseudonym	Years of experience
Jennifer	2
Deanna	5
Kim	6
Debbie	10

Discussion of the Findings

I asked the academic advisors to share their experiences and perceptions of advising online and distance education adult learners. The academic advisors indicated unique aspects of advising distance education and online learners and the challenges they faced in overcoming these obstacles. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: Culture, Communication, and Building Relationships.

Culture

The student population of online and distance education students continues to grow and become more diverse. The academic advisors have a responsibility to understand the unique challenges individuals face and support them in their academic pursuits. Deanna shared the following on the student demographics from her program:

Adult learners that are in their mid- to late-20s, early-30s, all the way up until 60s. It really does run the gambit. One of the consistencies throughout all of my students, even though their ages may differ and their employment status may differ, they are all busy working in something. Either they have to work to help support their family, or they're working in the field already and they want to further their career by getting a higher degree in the field. But they all have other very important obligations that they have in their lives. That is a large part why they chose to pursue a degree online, so they could have that flexibility necessary to continue to live their very meaningful and busy lives as they are and still be able to accomplish their educational goals at the same time.

Debbie followed up on Deanna's comment noting the expansion in the diversity of the student population they were seeing coming into the program:

I have also noticed in the last two cohorts; we have had people that are just local people. So, the country folks who are trying to better their lives. This year, we just had one that started her internship and she is the lunch lady. We did not always get those folks in the past, because I do not think they really had the belief that they could finish college or that college was for them. But now that we are bringing college out into their community. They are understanding that they too can go to college, they too can finish a degree and to me, it's pretty exciting to see women that would have at one time gone through our new opportunities school for women, just to get a leg up, are now in our pipeline and are coming through, and they will graduate with a teaching degree.

The institution currently serves many regions in the Appalachian Mountains. As previously stated in Chapter 3, the Appalachian Mountain region has a high rate of poverty and women who pursue a degree in higher education place their family as a priority. Pulcini (2016)

reiterated this strong sense of commitment to family may pose a challenge for Appalachian women in degree completion, which may impact the next generation of women. Kim shares how she sees the culture within the region may work against women seeking a higher education:

I think that the culture, definitely. In many ways it plays against the women like the one Debbie was just talking about, because we have a lot of folks that are first generation students and are already parents and their husbands work the main paying job, and then they have lower income jobs, such as being a teacher assistant. I think it has taken a long time for some to really be able to see if I get this degree not only is it going to give me a job, but some of them are seeing it as a way out of bad situations. They are not being encouraged, but they're being persistent and they are hanging in there. I admire students because they are fighting on a lot of different levels, a lot of different pressures that we do not necessarily recognize. I think growing up, I had a mother that said you want to go to college, but a lot of my friends had parents that told the girls they didn't need to go to college. And I still see that mentality show its ugly head every now and again.

Deanna added to Kim's response in sharing her experience in advising human services students:

Those students are more regional. I find that human services is one of those fields that a lot of people go into, because at one point in time, they were recipients of those same services. Oftentimes, as a youth, or even as a teenager, they would say, well, I'm going to go into this field so that I can make a difference and combat some of these difficulties that I myself have experienced; and that was their impetus to get them coming and involved in getting their degree in the same field. I count myself to be an Appalachian native. And you know, growing up here, it's a rural area. It's a poor area in a lot of ways,

especially the more rural that you get. There are a lot of tendencies to access services, and there's a lot of recidivism that happens, the cyclical generations of poverty and those types of things. So, I also have to admire those students that want to stop that cycle, and they want to be the one that stops that cycle in their family forever moving forward.

Debbie added to the discussion of persistence noted by Kim:

I think once they make a commitment to themselves and the program and understand that this is a way to better their family and break the cycle. There is a tenacity that is part of Appalachia that I do not always see in other areas. Once we commit to something, we are not going to let it go. We have had students that go away for a year or two or three and they are going to come back and they are going to finish that degree. At some point in their minds, they have made a commitment to do that. I think that's admirable and I think it is specific to this region.

Academic advisors face many challenges to ensure their students are receiving adequate advisement and support. Recognizing and understanding the student population and culture is pivotal in assisting students to degree completion. The participants spoke of the student's level of persistence and that this persistence of motivation keeps them going even after taking a leave of absence due to financial or family obligations.

Communication-Individualized and Immediacy in Advising

Communication is a key factor in advising students. Academic advisors noted they have experienced issues when communicating with distance and online students. Some of the issues pertain to the clarity of the message and others include mixed messages delivered from other online faculty or students. Debbie explained her experiences with issues the team has faced:

I think one of the unique challenges is making sure that everybody on the team understands things in the same way and that we all communicate the same message.

Sometimes students will go to one person who is their advisor, but then they also might go to somebody that is a classroom teacher and ask the same question, and not very often, because we really try to program for it, but occasionally they might get different answers. So, it is really important for all of us to make sure we're acting as a team.

Deanna's team has also faced similar challenges in communication with distance and online education students:

When the challenges do arise, it is related to what Debbie commented on earlier about just the team sending mixed messages. Nothing will frustrate a student more than being told three different things on one topic by three different people because then they just feel confused, they don't feel supported, and they don't feel like their institution is really being very clear or understanding the issues of the student.

Debbie followed up on Deanna's response:

I also think that's part of the process, and it is part of the educational experience. We do not not want to have those misunderstandings, but helping them understand how to navigate it in a professional way when they do happen is also something that's part of our program. I think on the front end they don't know that, so they get more frustrated, but as they go along in our program, and we explain that piece of it to them, and then we are able to say, I really appreciated when you emailed me, and you were really frustrated, but you did it in a very professional way. That is a learning opportunity for them, and they can see that, and then they carry that lesson forward.

Debbie emphasized how her team works to negate these miscommunications but at the same time uses these obstacles as a learning experience for students. Students learn to navigate the challenges utilizing their professional skill set. In this sense, advisors can provide guidance on ways to trouble shoot challenges in a professional manner.

Interviews with students and graduates highlighted the importance of immediacy in advisement. They spoke positively of their experience when receiving timely feedback. Students or graduates who did not receive timely feedback viewed their academic advising experience as negative. The academic advisors who participated in the focus group noted their struggles in advising online and distance education students. Deanna stated the following:

The communication element can be somewhat challenging, and I have conducted advising both through email, through telephone calls, and through Zoom or teams or other face-to-face video conferencing tools. Regardless as to the method of communicating with the advisee, I find that there are still challenges that persist in those areas.

Diane also recognized similar challenges. She explained how on campus students have the opportunity to speak with them on a more regular basis and further elaborated on how she navigates advising online and distance education students:

In order to have that same kind of an outcome with one of our online students, I have to be a little bit more conscious about reaching out to them on a more regular basis. The way that I do that personally is through providing them with my cell phone number and that way I can just text them so there are certain times of the year or for the semester when things are really extra busy. For some of our online students, I will send them a little thumbs up emoji to remind them it's all okay, and we're all here for you. So, the

advising piece, more intentional, but just that little bit of outreach and more relaxed support. I just have to be a little more conscious to make sure that I actually do it.

The students and graduates expressed their appreciation for the timely responses. The academic advisors recognize that advisement requires a more intentional approach to ensure they are working to build a relationship and trust with their students.

Building Relationships- Sense of Community

The academic advisor participants in the study indicated the importance of building relationships with students. The academic advisors shared their experiences in building a relationship with online and distance education students as well as establishing trust.

Establishing trust within these relationships was crucial as they worked to guide advisees to academic success. Jennifer shared her story of guiding a student:

I had a student teacher come in, and she was in tears. She said I'm not this kind of student, I always turn my work in, but I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. She talked about her job, etcetera. We just had a really good conversation. The next week she comes in and she pops by to say, "I want to update you. I quit my job, and I feel so much better." It is that kind of thing and to see her blossom and grow and get her things in on time and using time management. She realized that she was struggling, and she sought some advice, and she took that advice, and she's doing really well. It's those kinds of things that really affirm that what we are doing is making a difference and helping them grow.

Jennifer's experience led her to recognize not only the influence she had on student decisions but the positive impact she can make within their lives. Kim furthered this point by adding, "We have relationships with our students. And that's why even after they're gone, they still stay in

touch with us. I just I feel like we form relationships without forming friendships until after they graduate.”

Debbie also contributed to the discussion:

We really invest in our students, we work to develop those relationships, we cultivate those relationships, and you end up building trust. You feel like you’re in a vulnerable situation, and sometimes our students do feel that way. They are unsure about this choice to go back to school or they’re questioning their ability to navigate the online world, because maybe it’s been a while, and then they reach out to you for support and guidance and assurance. As soon as you step into that role, in my mind, all of that falls underneath the auspice of advising and trust begins to grow and develop, and that leads into other avenues of support and mentorship when you’re talking about career advising and future planning.

Kim said that goes above and beyond that original advisee relationship. Building relationships and trust is crucial for academic advisors in assisting their students to achieve academic success. Their commitment to their student’s success is shown not only in their responses but also the responses from the student interviews. Students also acknowledged the presence and importance of forming those relationships and creating a sense of community.

COVID Pandemic and Online and Distance Education Adult Learners

The students and academic advisors who participated in the study experienced the COVID pandemic. The student participants were enrolled in courses during the COVID pandemic and expressed some interesting thoughts on the influence the events of the pandemic had on their academic journey.

Student Perspective

The students reported that the COVID pandemic was motivational in some respects as some participants lost their jobs, which led to additional time to focus on their academics. Eloise shared her experience:

As far as motivation, I think it was hard for anyone to find motivation during that time. I think school almost helped me stay motivated just in general, because it gave me something to do. I was working in a restaurant, and it shut down, so for a while I didn't have anything to do but school, and it was an interesting time.

In contrast, another participant reported that it was a very difficult time as she was in the midst of her student teaching when the schools closed. She said that the academic advisors and faculty worked closely with them, and even in the realm of the unknown she felt supported and reassured that she would be able to complete her requirements to graduate on time. Taylor explained this as follows:

COVID put a big dent in the plan, to say the least. The whole world shut down and we had been taught how to educate children for a year and a half and everything flipped upside down and we were like, "Okay, are we even going back to school? How are we going to teach? What are we going to do?" We entered our first-year teaching struggling to get a job and some of us didn't even get jobs. The numbers were dropping so low, because people were homeschooling and doing virtual academies. Then when we got jobs, we were teaching virtually, and we were not taught how to do any of it, because no one thought about this happening. It was an experience for sure. It did kind of diminish that motivation and confidence, because I remember being so upset wondering am I even

going to get to a job, get to teach, and what is it going to look like now? It took a little bit, but we made it.

Sabrina also expressed how the COVID pandemic lowered her level of motivation, but through the support of her academic advisors and instructors she was able to push forward and continue working towards her degree. Sabrina shared her experience:

For me, COVID was terrible. I did get COVID during one of the semesters and getting on class when I was at home, doing homework, being at home during COVID, and shut down you got kind of lazy and sort of burned out in the motivation. You still have to do your work and follow your dream of becoming a teacher. So just finding the time within myself and the want and the willingness to do it during COVID was a struggle for me. I have no doubt that I would not have made it if it were not for my teachers and advisors.

The COVID pandemic impacted individuals worldwide and it touched nearly all facets of our lives. The fear of the unknown and the ability of students to continue pursuing their degrees was phenomenal. The perseverance, determination, and flexibility students demonstrated during this event suggests individuals' level of self-efficacy is a crucial factor in their persistence to degree completion.

Academic Advisor Perspective

The academic advisors recall the events of the COVID pandemic and reflect on the difficulties they faced while advising students. The fear of the unknown was overwhelming as many students lost their jobs; they were unsure if they would be able to complete internships to graduate on time and care for their families. The strong relationships academic advisors had worked to build with students provided a solid platform for advisors to redirect and provide support during these uncertain times.

Academic advisors also expressed how they were still seeing the impact of the COVID pandemic on students. The world has changed, including aspects of the professional world. Kim shared her insights about the post-COVID educational realm:

I feel like they're still being affected. I think that when COVID hit, it changed so many people's lives in such exponential ways, that they're still recovering or trying to readjust to their new reality, whatever that may be for each individual person. We were online during COVID and we were online after COVID so the modality didn't change, but what changed were people's lives and people's professions. Human services and education were both hit pretty hard by the pandemic, and professionals in both of those fields were hit pretty hard. I think it really took its toll, and I've noticed a level of sensitivity that is there that I wouldn't have said was there pre-COVID and maybe a level of cautiousness and a level of unsureness. I feel like they're still being affected and so that does very much play a role in advising for me, because I find myself having to be really aware of that sensitivity and really patient, kind, and very empathetic in trying to listen and understand and mirror back and find solutions to problems that I would not have thought pre-COVID would be there.

Kim's thoughts and experiences in advising students post-COVID illustrates the impact that COVID had on individuals—a new level of sensitivity, cautiousness, and a decreased level of confidence or assuredness. Kim notes how it has changed her approach in advising students and she had needed to focus more on patience and empathy.

Summary

The rich experiences and reflections of the online and distance education students and the academic advisors provided an in-depth look into student and academic advisor perspectives on

the advising experience. In the next chapter I discuss the findings related to past literature, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Academic advisors play a vital role in student success. Students are not just a number but a member of the academic community that requires support, understanding, and guidance throughout their academic journey. Research indicates a positive relationship between the level of student self-efficacy and the degree of academic perseverance and success in online courses (Alqurashi, 2019; Mulvaney, 2020; Tsai et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013). The results of this qualitative case study indicate the importance of academic advising to student success and degree completion, but this guidance further carries over into their personal, professional, and future academic pursuits.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions of adult online students' interactions with their academic advisors and how these interactions influenced their levels of self-efficacy and academic success through semistructured interviews. I also conducted a focus group discussion with academic advisors to examine their perceptions of advising online and distance education students. To further investigate the experiences of online and distance education students with academic advisors, I developed the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of online and distance education adult learners' experiences with academic advising?

RQ2: How do online and distance education adult learners describe the influence of academic advising on their own self-efficacy?

RQ3: How do interactions with academic advisors influence students' levels of self-efficacy?

Twelve online or distance education students or recent graduates (i.e., within the last 2 years) participated in the interviews. Four academic advisors participated in the focus group

interviews. Data from the interviews and focus group discussion were collected to identify emergent themes from the interviews and focus group discussion.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

Several themes emerged throughout the study. The themes addressed in this chapter are closely aligned with the research questions, reflect the participants responses, and are prominently featured in the data. I present the data from the interviews and focus group discussion for each research question. The interview data provided the students' perceptions, and the focus group data provide the academic advisors' perceptions.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of online and distance education adult learners' experiences with academic advising?

RQ1 addresses the personal experiences of the participants in their communications with their academic advisor. Gaining insight into how students perceive these interactions and the importance of these interactions to their academic progress and success is instrumental in determining areas for improvement when advising online and distance education adult learners.

Student Perceptions

The interview data provided an in-depth look into the experiences of 12 online and distance education students or recent graduates and their experiences with academic advising. Ten of the 12 participants perceived these interactions as positive. Positive interactions were noted as timely responses and relationship building (i.e., individualized and supportive). Negative interactions experienced by two of the 12 participants were tied to delayed response times and a lack of personal connection.

Relationship building within the online learning environment may come in many different forms of communication. Participants indicated they communicated via email, text,

phone conversations, and the learning management system (LMS). The majority of the students and advisors communicated through email but noted that phone conversations and text messages were more personal and provided a sense of belongingness. Most participants reported a sense of personal connection with their advisor and contributed this connection to the multiple forms of communication and the security in knowing they had the opportunity to reach out at any time for support. Past research indicates that emotional presence is a vital component to a student's ability to academically succeed in online and distance education courses (Marchand & Gutierrez, 2012; Swerdloff, 2015; Williams, 2017). Muilenburg and Berge (2005) noted that students who experience and develop a relationship with advisors are more likely to engage, persist, and achieve academic success. Peacock and Cowan (2019) noted that online learners may experience loneliness or lack of support that diminishes their confidence to succeed in online courses. Through past research findings and the results from the participant interviews, it is apparent that building relationships with online and distance education students is a vital contributing factor to their academic success and persistence to degree completion. A sense of security, belongingness, and support are provided through relationship building.

Adult learners have numerous responsibilities outside of the learning environment. Several of the participants in the study shared some of their responsibilities to include full-time jobs, family, children, and financial obligations. Grabowski et al. (2016) emphasized how these competing roles may have a significant impact on the ability for a nontraditional student to persist in accomplishing academic success. The participants indicated that communication with their academic advisor provided them with important information, guidance, and support to keep moving forward with their academic pursuits.

The negative perception of their experiences with academic advising involved a delayed response time and a lack of personal connection. Participants who experienced a delay in response or a lack of response to an email, text message, or phone call recalled their experiences with frustration and disappointment. Participants expressed their understanding that immediate responses were not always an option as advisors have other priorities; however, going several days or weeks without a response should not be acceptable. Due to the numerous obligations of adult learners outside the classroom, timely responses in communication are essential. Garrett (2018) stated, “Based on the available evidence, on average, adults and other nontraditional students enrolled in majority online schools are significantly less likely than average to complete at that institution” (p. 26). In addition, students who have a negative academic advising experience are more likely to withdraw (Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). Adult learners must navigate competing demands on their time, and they highly value timely communication. In addition, timely communication provides a sense of security and belongingness. The communications may provide a sense of individualized advising and sense of community. Peacock and Cowan (2019) suggested that students must have a strong sense of community and support within online learning in order to maintain successful academic progress.

Academic Advisor Perceptions

The focus group discussion data revealed how academic advisors perceived their interactions with students. The academic advisors noted they needed to be intentional in communications with online and distance education students, and one of their biggest hurdles was potential miscommunication. They also voiced their strong views on the importance of building a relationship with all of their students.

The academic advisor participants voiced their understanding of how they had to be more intentional in communicating with the online and distance education students. In contrast to campus students, they do not see their students on a daily basis or engage in daily communications, which help to build those relationships. Online and distance education advisors may not know a student is struggling or facing unforeseen obstacles within their lives without those communications. If the academic advisor-student relationship is not present, students may feel reluctant to reach out for assistance or support during difficult times. Hayes et al. (2020) found that academic advisors play a crucial role in influencing a student's self-efficacy and willingness to continue to degree completion. During the focus groups discussion, the academic advisors talked about text messaging as a great way to check in with their students. They discussed how sending a message just to check in or sending positive messages such as "you can do this" has resulted in positive feedback and appreciation from the students. The problem academic advisors face is remembering to reach out at additional times during the semester and identifying times during the semester when it is best to reach out. For example, reaching out during or just prior to exams with a positive affirmation via text or before a big presentation would help build a strong relationship. These are times that are important milestones in a student's journey to academic success and degree completion. A study by Bolkan et al. (2021) on completion rates of students at a 4-year institution found that academic advising positively contributed to a student's perceptions of self-efficacy and the ability to persist to degree completion.

Online and distance education students engage in communication with their academic advisor, course instructor, and their classmates. In the online setting, communications can easily be misinterpreted or miscommunicated through varying individuals. While this may also occur in

a face-to-face setting, there is more room for miscommunication within the online setting. In addition, miscommunication may be more difficult to correct as modes of communication such as numerous emails, text messages, or phone calls may need to be completed to ensure the correct communication is understood, whereas in a face-to-face setting these miscommunications can be quickly corrected and discussion on misinterpretations can follow to quickly rectify the miscommunication.

The academic advisors who participated viewed their advisement as beneficial to students and explained that their intentions were to build relationships with their students and provide support. They noted how they strived to support every student to their degree completion. They discussed how adult learners may need to take breaks in their academic career due to financial or family obligations but that most do return to complete their degree.

Summary

Online and distance education adult learner participants in this study reported their perceived experiences with academic advisors as positive overall. The ability to have timely communications with their academic advisors and the opportunity to develop a relationship were widely regarded as a positive perception with academic advising for online and distance education students. The inability to receive a timely response, regular communication, or opportunities to build a relationship with their academic advisor were perceived as negative experiences.

The academic advisor focus group also echoed the positive and negative perceptions of online and distance education students' interactions with academic advisors. Academic advisors recognized the importance of regular and timely communications and noted the challenges to ensure these communications were taking place with students. The academic advisors also

emphasized the importance of getting to know students on an individual basis in order to provide the support they needed to persist to degree completion.

RQ2: How do online and distance education adult learners describe the influence of academic advising on their own self-efficacy?

RQ2 delves into how the participants described their experiences with academic advising in relation to their own self-efficacy. This question seeks to uncover how academic advising may influence online and distance education students' level of self-efficacy and ultimately their decision to persist towards degree completion.

Student Self-Efficacy Perception

Participants who reported a positive academic advising experience also reported an increase in their level of self-efficacy. The communications with their academic advisor provided them with support, feedback, guidance, and a sense of community. Many of the participants reported feeling comfortable speaking with their academic advisor and that they felt safe in discussing personal aspects of their lives that may impact their academic performance. The participants reported feeling supported and their academic advisors were able to relate to them on a personal level.

A couple of participants stated how their academic advisor had shared the story of their own academic journey. The sharing of their story increased the students' levels of motivation and perseverance. The participants gained an understanding that their academic advisor had walked in the students' shoes and that if the advisors could do it, then so could they. Bandura (1997) referred to vicarious experiences as a contributing factor to an individual's self-efficacy. Witnessing others succeed may change the perception of the tasks as one that is achievable, whereas witnessing the failure of others may deem the task as unachievable (Bandura, 1997).

This understanding helped to diminish the feelings of loneliness and the questioning of their ability to persist to degree completion. Adult learners may question not only their ability to complete a degree but also their age and how instructors, advisors, and fellow classmates may view them. Adult learners typically have more life experiences and social influences compared to younger learners, and these sources play a vital role in their perceived ability to pursue degree completion (Bandura, 1997; Bradley et al., 2017).

The importance of regular communication with an academic advisor and building a relationship with their students cannot be understated. Participants reported how academic advisors not only provided them with support in their academic endeavors but also helped them to plan for their future professional goals. One participant stated how the inspiration she gained from her communication with the academic advisor influenced her to pursue her master's degree after graduation. In addition, another participant reported how their academic advisor opened his eyes to new career opportunities within his field of study. Online adult learners with high self-efficacy perceive challenges or weaknesses in their academic pursuits as something that can be conquered. In contrast, adult learners with low self-efficacy may perceive these same challenges as unobtainable (Bandura, 1997; Bradley et al., 2017).

Participants who reported negative experiences with academic advising explained how the interactions reduced their level of self-efficacy. The interactions or lack of interaction made them feel a sense of disconnection from the institution and lowered their level of motivation. The participants did not feel their academic success was important to the academic advisor and only felt as if they were just a number. Maslow's (1962) hierarchy of needs places love and belonging above physiological and safety needs and below esteem and self-actualization. This suggests students must have a sense of community that includes a strong support system in online courses

to maintain successful academic progress (Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Fortunately, two of the participants that reported a negative academic advising experience were able to overcome the negative experience, because they were provided with a new academic advisor. As one participant stated, “It was a total 360,” in his experience with academic advising.

Academic Advisor Self-Efficacy Perceptions

The academic advisor participants shared experiences with former students to describe their perceptions on their influence on student’s level of self-efficacy. Their stories spoke of adult learners and their struggles with time management. Time management for adult learners was an overall theme among the academic advisors. They reported that many of their communications with students involved assistance with time management. Adult learners face many time restraints as they may be caring for children, family members, and work obligations. The ability for academic advisors to build a relationship, provide a comfortable safe environment for communication, and showcase empathy with their students is paramount in guiding students to degree completion.

The academic advisors shared examples of how they worked with students on time management in their busy lives. One academic advisor noted how she guided a student in her decision to continue working a full-time job while continuing to go to school full-time. Another advisor spoke of how students may need to take time away from their academic pursuits to focus on family or work obligations and then return to complete their degree. Academic advisors have a crucial role in guiding students that face many obstacles to degree completion. Radovan and Makovec (2015) asserted that adult learners’ perception towards learning can greatly influence their desire to initiate and continue learning. The journey may be longer for some and there may

be many mountains to climb, but the support from an academic advisor can make this possible by supporting and guiding students through difficult times.

Summary

The online and distance education student participants in this study described how interactions with academic advisors positively or negatively impacted their level of self-efficacy. The participants reported negative interactions such as a lack of communication negatively impacted their level of self-efficacy. Positive interactions with academic advisors—regular communication and positive feedback—increased their level of self-efficacy and motivation to persist to degree completion.

Academic advisors discussed their approaches to advising adult learners and assisting them in navigating the demands of family, work, and school obligations. The academic advisors noted that communication and relationship building were crucial in their ability to provide helpful and motivational guidance to students.

RQ3: How do interactions with academic advisors influence students' levels of self-efficacy?

RQ3 focuses on how online and distance education students' interactions with academic advisors influence their levels of self-efficacy. How these interactions may influence students is of great importance to institutions of higher education in their pursuit to increase retention and provide support and guidance for adult learners to successfully reach degree completion.

Student Self-Efficacy

Participants with positive experiences described life changing realizations and discovered new strengths. One participant reported overcoming her weaknesses in communication, which allowed her to become more successful in her career. Another participant spoke about how her

advisor influenced her to continue her academic journey by enrolling in a master's program after graduation. Another participant indicated he had recently accepted a new position in his field of study, and that prior to his interactions with the academic advisor, he did not realize these opportunities existed for him. The positive influence on student's level of self-efficacy was apparent throughout the interviews.

Participants described how academic advisors provided support and guidance through difficult times. They shared how academic advisors encouraged them to take time for themselves and take care of their own well-being. In addition, the advisors provided insight on how to better utilize their time management skills to ensure they were able to meet the demands of their personal and academic lives. These skills are crucial not only to students during their time in the program but also beyond the program as they embark on their professional career. Participants reported that the skills they learned in the program carried over into their professional and personal lives.

Two participants reported negative experiences with academic advisement. The negative experiences were in association with the delayed response times and the lack of a personal relationship. One participant reported how after multiple attempts to contact his advisor, he did not receive a response for two weeks. This led to a feeling of isolation and the feeling that the academic advisor did not feel his concerns were important or mattered. Another participant explained how she experienced a change in academic advisors and lacked the relationship with the new academic advisor. The lack of a relationship and the decrease in communication led to her questioning her abilities to complete the program. The negative experiences highlight the importance of timely responses and building relationships with students. Ellis (2019) stated, "If nontraditional students persist in courses, they can persist in a program, but proactive

intervention is crucial because it is a means for improving academic success” (p. 30). Gravel (2012) echoed the importance and stated, “Research on student retention reveals that lack of interaction is a key factor in a student’s decision to drop out” (p. 56).

Academic Advisor Perceptions of Student Self-Efficacy

Academic advisors provided several stories of current and past students and how they worked through these scenarios to assist them and provide guidance and support. One aspect that stood out was how several students that needed to withdraw from their program due to family or financial obligations did return later to complete their degrees. This suggests academic advisors have a far-reaching impact on student’s levels of self-efficacy and persistence to degree completion. This also speaks to how academic advisors support the students and guide them in finding pathways to degree completion even amongst the adult learners’ responsibilities outside of their academic journey.

The academic advisors exhibited understanding, support, and the importance of individualized advisement. Every student faces different circumstances and needs individualized guidance to navigate those obstacles. The examples of stories provided by the academic advisors paints a picture of adult learners in very different circumstances and their need for individualized advisement. In order to provide individualized advisement, academic advisors noted the importance of getting to know their students and working to build those relationships—relationships that may continue beyond degree completion and into their professional careers.

Summary

The participants in this study alluded to the level of impact academic advisors may have in a student’s decision to persist to degree completion and future academic and career goals.

Participants reported positive experiences with academic advisors, and also reported how these interactions continued to influence their decisions in their career and future educational goals.

Academic advisors shared their experiences in communications with online and distance education learners. The academic advisors noted specific examples of how they guided learners in overcoming obstacles in order to continue pursuing their degree. They also discussed how for some situations adult learners may need to take a break from their academic pursuits and return at a later time to complete their degree. The advisors emphasized how every student faces unique challenges and it is important for advisors to maintain communication and build relationships in order to positively influence a student's level of self-efficacy and academic success.

Key Concepts Overview

Communication-Immediacy/Individualized Advisement

The student participants as well as the academic advisors both agreed that communication was a key factor in successful academic advising. Students discussed the importance of timely responses. The ability for academic advisors to respond quickly provided the students with a sense of community and support. The lack of communication decreased the sense of community and perceived support. Academic advisors also expressed their understanding of the importance of communication with students.

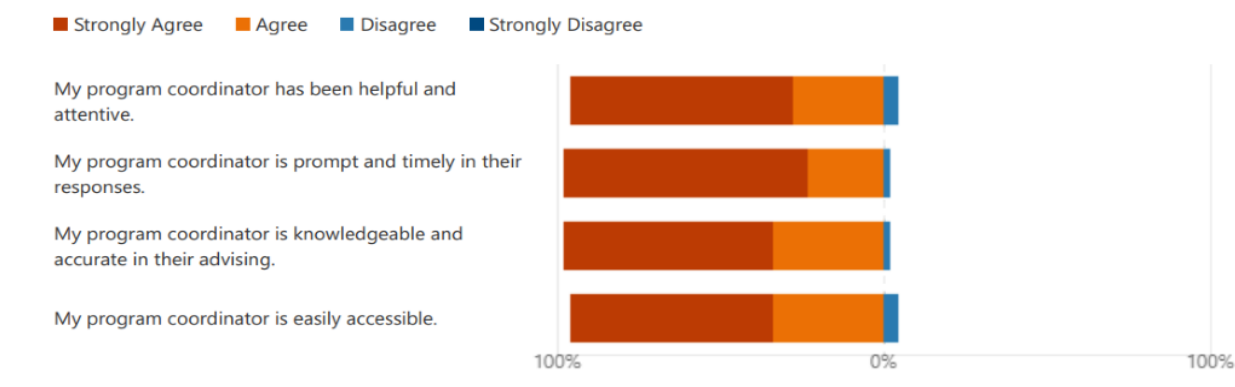
In April 2022, the Office of Institutional Research at the research site completed a satisfaction survey for online and distance education students. The survey results correlate with the findings in this study regarding communication. The survey refers to the academic advisor as the program coordinator. For prompt and timely responses, 75% of survey respondents strongly agreed that their academic advisor provided prompt and timely responses. Over 50% of survey

respondents strongly agreed that their academic advisor was helpful, attentive, and easily accessible (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Office of Institutional Research Aggregate Survey Data

10. Please state your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your Program Coordinator:



Note. Source: Office of Institutional Research, 2023.

The results from the online and distance education student survey indicate that the majority of the participants in the survey felt they receive prompt and timely responses from their academic advisor and support. These findings correlate with the findings of this research study. From the participants in this study, 10 out of 12 participants spoke positively of their interactions with their academic advisor and agreed their advisor was helpful and provided timely responses.

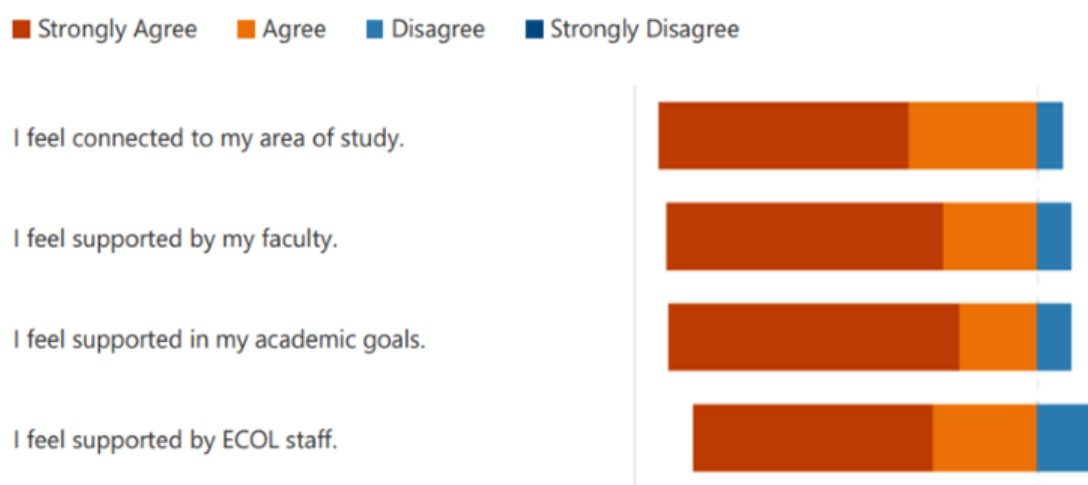
Relationships-Sense of Community

Students and academic advisors strongly agreed on the importance of developing a relationship. Students elaborated on the supportive advice received, feelings of comfort speaking with their advisor, and the influence these communications had on their academic, personal, and professional lives.

Academic advisors spoke highly of the students they advised and the unique individuality of each student's situation. The academic advisors cherished the relationships built with students and understood the importance of these relationships. Their understanding of adult learners and valuing their unique circumstances lends them the opportunity to build strong relationships with students as they guide them to degree completion. The online and distance education survey completed by Office of Institutional Research (2023) further supports the strong sense of community and advisor/student relationships reported from the participants in this study (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Office of Institutional Research Aggregate Survey Data



Note. Source: Office of Institutional Research, 2023.

The survey results indicate over 50% of participants felt connected to their area of study and received adequate support. However, 15% did not feel supported. These results also correlate with the results reported for this research study. Two of the 12 participants in this study reported negative interactions with their academic advisors. The negative experiences decreased their levels of self-efficacy, support, and sense of community.

Academic Advisor Influence-Student Self-Efficacy

Students expressed how communications with academic advisors were influential in their academic pursuits and in their personal and professional lives. One student continued on to a master's program, another student broadened their scope on job opportunities, and one student spoke of how her communications with the academic advisor assisted her in overcoming weaknesses as she started her professional career. The communications between students and their academic advisor are crucial to students as they navigate through their academic journey.

Academic advisors shared their experiences and examples of how they influenced students; however, academic advisors may not be fully aware of how far-reaching or life-changing these communications may be for students. Students may or may not have shared with their academic advisor the level of impact their communications and relationships have had in their daily lives.

The three concepts discussed above—communication, relationships, and academic advisor influence—all culminate to the level of student self-efficacy. The participants in this study expressed that communications with their academic advisor strongly influenced their level of self-efficacy and willingness to persist to degree completion. The understanding by academic advisors of how their communication with students directly influences their level of self-efficacy is vital to the success of the advisor-student relationship.

Theoretical Framework

The results of this study provide support for Knowles's theory of andragogy. The fifth principle of andragogy—internal motivation—is directly related to the self-efficacy of adult learners. The six assumptions proposed in the theory of andragogy suggest that adult learners have a strong desire to understand the reason for learning and how this knowledge can be applied

to their real-life situations. Adult learners in the online and distance education settings enter the educational setting with a strong desire to learn, and their levels of self-efficacy strongly depend on their internal motivation to persist to degree completion.

The participants in the study reported how positive interactions with their academic advisors increased their levels of self-efficacy. The positive increase in their level of self-efficacy provided them with the motivation to continue in the program. In addition, the academic advisor's ability to empathize with the students provided them with a sense of security and belonging. Adult online and distance education student's perceptions of their positive interactions with academic advisors also flowed into their professional and future academic goals. Participants reported how their interactions with academic advisors broadened their scope of career opportunities and future academic pursuits. In alignment with Knowles's theory of andragogy, adult learners were able to apply the knowledge directly to their lives in regard to their careers and future academic endeavors.

Limitations

The study was conducted at a small college in North Carolina. The online and distance education programs were degree completion programs. Participants completed their first 2 years at a local community college and then transferred into the online or distance education degree completion programs. Students only experienced academic advising at this institution for 2 years (i.e., junior and senior years) in completing their undergraduate degree.

The study included 12 online or distance education students or recent graduates from one institution. The small number of participants limited the ability to make the findings more generalizable. The focus group participants included four academic advisors from the same

institution. The limited number of focus group participants and that the study was able to gain perceptions of academic advising from one institution limited the generalization of key findings.

The methods used in the study may have limited the number of participants. Participation in interviews and focus groups takes additional time and scheduling. Adult learners and working professionals may not participate due to time constraints, whereas they may complete an online survey. In addition, student participants may have felt intimidated from the interview process and concerned for how their responses may impact their academic pursuits. Academic advisors may have chosen not to participate in the focus group due to feeling vulnerable or not feeling secure in the setting with fellow colleagues to express their true responses to the questions.

The study only included participants from 4-year degree online or distance education programs. The study only included students and graduates within the last two years. This timeframe included students who experienced the COVID pandemic during their undergraduate educational experience.

Implications for Practice

The methods of this study analyzed the impact of academic advising on student self-efficacy for online and distance education students. Understanding the factors that support positive student self-efficacy would assist institutions of higher education in developing and implementing effective online programs and student support services (Alqurashi, 2019; Phirangee & Malec, 2017). The results of this study guided me to three recommendations for institutions of higher education to consider implementing in their academic advising procedures.

The first recommendation for institutions is to set up a schedule for academic advisors to contact their students at least three times during a 16-week semester and twice during a shorter length semester. Based on the focus group discussions, academic advisors indicated they had to

be more intentional about reaching out to online and distance education students. If academic advisors are provided with a flexible schedule on suggested times to contact students, they would be reminded and more apt to reach out. In addition, asking academic advisors to document these interactions by taking brief notes for them to review before the next communication may assist in getting to know the student and their unique circumstances to begin building a relationship.

The second recommendation is for the institution to be clear in their communications with students on the available resources, including academic advising. Set the expectation that students will be scheduling times each semester to briefly speak with their academic advisor. Participants indicated some confusion on who their academic advisor was and who they should reach out to for specific questions. Adult learners appreciate timely responses and direct guidance. Many adult learners face time restraints due to work and family obligations and knowing the direct contact for questions should be a priority for institutions. The academic advisor may not have answers to specific questions but should be able to quickly direct them to the appropriate person.

Finally, institutions should have an academic advising plan and structure in place. Institutions may consider individualized plans for each of their online or distance education programs. For example, the advising required for a criminal justice major may be different than the advising required for an elementary education student. Institutions may consider holding brainstorming sessions with the faculty/academic advisors to create an individualized academic advising plan for their program. The institutions should also consider obtaining feedback from their students annually to review their academic advising procedures and ensure they are meeting the needs of their students.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current study revealed the importance of academic advising for online and distance education students. The data reveal three important aspects of the advising experience: relationship building, timely responses, and consistent communication. The data also convey that the academic advising experience goes beyond the realms of academic success but can also impact the decision to pursue future academic endeavors, career choices, and professional demeanor.

The high student attrition rate of students enrolled in online courses identifies the need for additional research. Institutions of higher education are currently experiencing a dramatic growth in the number of students enrolling in online courses and degree programs (Ellis, 2019; Seaman et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the increase in online student enrollment continues to be overshadowed by the inability for students to persist to degree completion (Garrett, 2018; Gravel, 2012; O'Shea et al., 2015). As the online student population continues to grow and become more diverse, it is crucial that additional research is conducted to identify areas for improvement in guiding online students to degree completion.

There is a need to examine online student self-efficacy on a broader scale. The current study only included a small number of participants in a degree completion program. Future research may include a broader scope of online students and students enrolled in a 4-year online program. A broader scope would provide additional insight from online students at different institutions of higher education. In addition, online students enrolled in a 4-year program would have a longer experience with academic advising and would be able to speak about how that may have changed when moving from prerequisite courses to program-specific courses.

Another area for future research is to include a quantitative or mixed-method approach. Including a survey in the study would allow researchers to reach a broader population of online students at different institutions of higher education. It would also allow researchers to gain insight from online students in various programs. The current study only focused on students enrolled in degree completion programs. Surveys would provide researchers with quantitative data that may allow researchers to pinpoint additional aspects that attribute to levels of self-efficacy for online students.

Future research may also include a quantitative or mixed-methods approach in comparing online students' and academic advisors' responses to surveys. Comparisons in responses on student self-efficacy may lead to identifying potential misconceptions on the part of the student and the academic advisors' perceptions on the impact of academic advising on student self-efficacy. In addition, the timing of this study took place following the COVID pandemic. As we move forward, future researchers may learn additional information from future students not impacted by the COVID pandemic during their academic experience. Additional research on student self-efficacy of online and distance education students is crucial in understanding how academic advising is a key factor in student success and persistence to degree completion.

Conclusions

As online degree programs continue to grow, it is crucial that institutions of higher education focus on ways to improve their academic advising processes to meet the needs of the growing diverse population of online students. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine online and distance education students' perspectives on the influence academic advising has had on their levels of self-efficacy. I interviewed 12 students and recent graduates (i.e., within the last 2 years) of an online or distance education program from one institution. The

interviewed participants were enrolled in elementary education, criminal justice, human services, or the RN/BSN degree completion program. The interview data were analyzed and four common themes emerged: Immediacy in Advisement (i.e., timely communications), Individualized Advisement (i.e., understanding of unique circumstances), Sense of Community (i.e., feeling of belonging), and the Importance of Advising (i.e., student self-efficacy).

Participants cited numerous communications with their advisors that positively influenced their level of self-efficacy. The results of the study indicated that academic advising has had a direct impact on students' levels of self-efficacy. Students noted the importance of building a relationship with their academic advisor. These relationships provided students with comfort in discussing their grades or issues they may be facing in their personal lives. The relationships allowed academic advisors to provide support and individualized guidance while enrolled in the program. In addition, these relationships made the students feel welcome and a member of the academic community.

The focus group discussion included four academic advisors working with online and distance education students at the institution. The academic advisors strongly agreed with the importance of developing a relationship with all their students. They recognized the hardships adult online and distance education students face. They understood that many had children, full-time jobs, and financial obligations. The academic advisors also recognized that they need to be more intentional about communicating with online and distance education students. One participant noted that in order to get the same success with online and distance education students as with traditional students, academic advisors must provide the same support and guidance.

The goal of this study was to examine how interactions with an academic advisor influenced online and distance education students' levels of self-efficacy. The data presented robust and realistic descriptions of the academic advising experience of online and distance education students and also the perspectives of academic advisors. The identified themes that emerged from the interview data indicate that academic advising has a positive influence for online and distance education students. In addition, the data indicate that academic advising may be instrumental in a student's future academic and professional journey.

References

- Akers, R., Carter, J., & Coder, D. (2021). Academic advising at a distance: Proactive programming to assist with student success. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 24*(2), 1–10. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1310837.pdf>
- Aljohani, O. H., & Alajlan, S. M. (2020). Motivating adult learners to learn at adult-education schools in Saudi Arabia. *Adult Learning, 31*(4), 150–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159519899655>
- Alqurashi, E. (2019). Predicting student satisfaction and perceived learning within online learning environments. *Distance Education, 40*(1), 133–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1553562>
- American Association for Adult Education Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division. (1941, October 4). *New York Public Library*. <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/65>
- Anderson, K., & Jack, D. (1991). Learning to listen: Interview techniques and analysis. In S. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words* (pp. 11–26). Routledge.
- Angelaki, C., & Mavroidis, I. (2013). Communication and social presence: The impact on adult learners' emotions in distance learning. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning, 16*(1), 78–93. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1017420.pdf>
- Appalachian Regional Commission. (n.d.). *About the Appalachian region*. <https://www.arc.gov/about-the-appalachian-region/>
- Arnold, C. H., Badenhorst, C., & Hoben, J. (2021). Reviving and reinstating adult-educators' agency within adult and post-secondary programmes. *Adult Learner* (0790-8040), 63–73. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1328212.pdf>

- Artino, A. R., Jr. (2007). Self-regulated learning in online education: A review of the empirical literature. *International Journal of Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 4(6), 3–18. https://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jun_07/article01.htm
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117–148. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Bickle, M. C., Rucker, R. D., & Burnsed, K. A. (2019). Online learning: Examination of attributes that promote student satisfaction. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 22(1), 1–8. https://ojdla.com/archive/spring221/bickle_rucker_burnsed221.pdf
- Blackley, S., & Sheffield, R. (2015). Digital andragogy: A richer blend of initial teacher education in the 21st century. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(4), 397–414. https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/47871/235893_235893.pdf?sequence=2
- Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., & He, Y. (2008). *The appreciative advising revolution*. Stipes.
- Bloom, J., & Martin, N. (2002). Incorporating appreciative inquiry into academic advising. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 4(3). <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/020829jb.htm>
- Bolkan, S., Pedersen, W. C., Stormes, K. N., & Manke, B. (2021). Predicting 4-year graduation: Using social cognitive career theory to model the impact of prescriptive advising, unit

- load, and students' self-efficacy. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22(4), 655–675. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118783485>
- Boswell, S. S., & Sohr-Preston, S. L. (2020). I checked the prof on ratemyprofessors: Effect of anonymous, online student evaluations of professors on students' self-efficacy and expectations. *Social Psychology of Education*, 23(4), 943–961. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-020-09566-y>
- Bozkurt, A., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2021). Trends and patterns in distance education (2014–2019): A synthesis of scholarly publications and a visualization of the intellectual landscape. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 22(2), 19–45. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v22i2.5381>
- Bradbury, B. L., & Mather, P. C. (2009). The integration of first-year, first-generation college students from Ohio Appalachia. *NASPA Journal*, 46(2), 258–281. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6041>
- Bradley, R. L., Browne, B. L., & Kelley, H. M. (2017). Examining the influence of self-efficacy and self-regulation in online learning. *College Student Journal*, 51(4), 518–530. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csaj/2017/00000051/00000004/art00008>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brown, R. E. (2001). The process of community-building in distance learning classes. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 5(2), 18–35. https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/jaln_article/the-process-of-community-
- Bushey-McNeil, J., Ohland, M. W., & Long, R. A. (2014, June). *Nontraditional student access and success in engineering* (Paper ID #9164) [Paper presentation]. 121st ASEE Annual

Conference & Exposition, Indianapolis, IN, United States.

<https://peer.asee.org/nontraditional-student-access-and-success-in-engineering>

Carlson, R. (1989). Malcolm Knowles: Apostle of andragogy. *Vitae Scholasticae*, 8(1), 217–234.

https://cclp.mior.ca/Reference%20Shelf/PDF_OISE/Apostle%20of%20Andragogy.pdf

Caruth, G. D., & Caruth, D. L. (2013). Distance education in the United States: From correspondence courses to the internet. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 14(2), 141–149. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/tojde/issue/16896/176051>

Casey, D. M. (2008). A journey to legitimacy: The historical development of distance education through technology. *Techtrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning*, 52(2), 45–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-008-0135-z>

Causey, J., Huie, F., Lang, R., Ryu, M., & Shapiro, D. (2020). Completing college 2020: A national view of student completion rates for 2014 entering cohort. (Signature Report No. 19). *National Student Clearinghouse*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED609975.pdf>

Cela, K., Sicilia, M.-Á., & Sanchez-Alonso, S. (2016). Influence of learning styles on social structures in online learning environments. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 47(6), 1065–1082. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12267>

Chemers, M. M., Hu, L.-T., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.93.1.55>

Chen, J. C. (2017). *Nontraditional adult learners: The neglected diversity in postsecondary education*. Sage.

Choy, S. (2002). *Nontraditional undergraduates*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002012.pdf>

- Chung, E., Turnbull, D., & Chur-Hansen, A. (2017). Differences in resilience between “traditional and nontraditional” university students. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 18(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787417693493>
- Clinefelter, D. L., & Aslanian, C. B. (2016). *Online college students 2016: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Learning House.
- Colton, S., & Hatcher, T. (2004). *The development of a research instrument to analyze the application of adult learning principles to online learning*. Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference, Austin, TX, February 29–March 4, 2004. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492501.pdf>
- Cook, S. (2009). Important events in the development of academic advising in the United States. *NACADA Journal*, 29(2), 18–40. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-29.2.18>
- Corey, G. (2008). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (8th ed.). Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Cornell, H. R., Sayman, D., & Herron, J. (2019). Sense of community in an online graduate program. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 2(2), 117–132. <https://doi.org/10.36021/jethe.v2i2.52>
- Coussement, K., Phan, M., De Caigny, A., Benoit, D. F., & Raes, A. (2020). Predicting student dropout in subscription-based online learning environments: The beneficial impact of the logit leaf model. *Decision Support Systems*, 135, 113325. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2020.113325>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed*

method approaches (5th ed.). Sage.

Crookston, B. B. (1972). A developmental view of academic advising as teaching. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 13(1), 12–17.

<https://valenciacollege.edu/faculty/development/courses-resources/documents/devviewacademicadvisingasteaching.pdf>

Cross, K. P. (1981). *Adults as learners*. Jossey-Bass.

Cueller, N. (2002). The transition from classroom to online learning. *Nursing Forum*, 37(3), 5–13. <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/a/11084/files/2015/05/Transition-from-Classroom-to-Online-Teaching-2c36jq3.pdf>

Davenport, J., & Davenport, J. (1985). A chronology and analysis of the andragogy debate. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 35(3), 152–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848185035003004>

Davis, J. S., & Cooper, D. L. (2001). Assessing advising style: Student perceptions of academic advisors. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 20(2), 53–63.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/95cf674cbbacced1b1d5e78f6ba0504/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47847>

Dawson, S. (2006). A study of the relationship between student communication interaction and sense of community. *Internet and Higher Education*, 9(3), 153–162.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2006.06.007>

Decelle, G. (2016). Andragogy: A fundamental principle of online education for nursing. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity: Education, Research & Policy*, 9(2),

1263–1273. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26554258>

- DeCelle, G., & Sherrod, D. (2011). A call to address learner diversity in health professions education. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity: Research, Education and Policy*, 4(1), 574–584. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44869371>
- DeFeo, J., & Keegan, B. (2020). Ignatian-centered and appreciative advising: Supporting the holistic development of students in 15-minute intervals. *Jesuit Higher Education*, 9(2), 57–71. <https://epublications.regis.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1344&context=jhe>
- Dixon-Saxon, S., & Buckley, M. R. (2020). Student selection, development, and retention: A commentary on supporting student success in distance counselor education. *Professional Counselor*, 10(1), 57–77. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1250978.pdf>
- Drake, J. K. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. *About Campus*, 16(3), 8–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20062>
- Duke, C., & Hinzen, H. (2011). Adult education and lifelong learning within UNESCO: CONFINTEA, education for all, and beyond. *Adult Learning*, 22(4), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104515951102200404>
- Dunn, L. (2000). *Theories of learning*. Brookes. <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/resources/theories.html>
- Ellis, H. (2019). A nontraditional conundrum: The dilemma of nontraditional student attrition in higher education. *College Student Journal*, 53(1), 24–32. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csaj/2019/00000053/00000001/art00004>
- Fielstein, L. L., & Lammers, W. J. (1992). The relationship of student satisfaction with advising to administrative support for advising services. *NACADA Journal*, 12(2), 15–20. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ445991.pdf>
- Fiene, J. I. (1991). The construction of self by rural low-status Appalachian women. *Affilia*, 6(2),

45–60. <http://doi.org/10.1177/088610999100600205>

Fuster, B. (2016, January 15). Negotiating the many definitions of hybrid, online classes. *U.S.*

News and World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/education/onlinelearning-lessons/2016/01/15/negotiating-themany-definitions-of-hybrid-onlineclass>

Garrett, R. (2018). Does online higher education reduce inequality? Exploring the geography of the market. *Eduventures Summit, Boston, June*, 13–15.

https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/Eduventures%20Summit_Garrett_Online%20and%20Inequality_15%20June%202018.pdf

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.

Goeman, K., DeGrez, L., Van Den Muijsenberg, E., & Elen, J. (2020). Investigating the enactment of social presence in blended adult education. *Educational Research*, 62(3), 340–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1796517>

Gordon, V. N. (2004). The evolution of academic advising: One institution's historical path. *NACADA Journal*, 24(1–2), 17–23.

https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/Clearinghouse/documents/0271-9517-24_1-2_17.pdf

Gordon, V. N. (2019). Developmental advising: The elusive ideal. *NACADA Journal*, 39(2), 72–76. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-19-201>

Grabowski, C., Rush, M., Ragen, K., Fayard, V., & Watkins-Lewis, K. (2016). Today's non-traditional student: Challenges to academic success and degree completion. *Inquiries Journal*, 8(3), 1–2. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1377/2/todays-non-traditional-student-challenges-to-academic-success-and-degree-completion>

- Gravel, C. A. (2012). Student-advisor interaction in undergraduate online degree programs: A factor in student retention. *NACADA Journal*, 32(2), 56–67.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-32.2.56>
- Grites, T. J. (1979). Academic advising: Getting us through the eighties. *AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Reports*, No. 7, 1979. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED178023.pdf>
- Hale, M. D., Graham, D. L., & Johnson, D. M. (2009). Are students more satisfied with academic advising when there is congruence between current and preferred advising styles? *College Student Journal*, 43(2), 313–324.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ872246.pdf>
- Halliday, M., Mill, D., Johnson, J., & Lee, K. (2021). Let's talk virtual! Online focus group facilitation for the modern researcher. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 17(12), 2145–2150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2021.02.003>
- Hansen, B. L., & Gray, E. (2018). Creating boundaries within the ubiquitous online classroom. *Journal of Educators Online*, 15(3), n3. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1199218.pdf>
- Harris, T. A. (2018). Prescriptive vs. developmental: Academic advising at a historically black university in South Carolina. *NACADA Journal*, 38(1), 36–46.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-15-010>
- Hayes, S., Lindeman, L., & Lukszo, C. (2020). The role of academic advisors in the development of transfer student capital. *NACADA Journal*, 40(1), 49–63.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1260384.pdf>
- Haythornthwaite, C., Kazmer, M., Robins, J., & Shoemaker, S. (2000). Making connections: Community among computer-supported distance learners. In *Association for Library and Information Science Education 2000 Conference*. San Antonio, Texas. (Vol. 3, p. 2003).

- Heisserer, D. L., & Parette, P. (2002). Advising at-risk students in college and university settings. *College Student Journal*, 36(1), 69–84. <https://advising.sdes.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/63/2019/06/Article20-20Advising20At-risk20Students20in20College1.pdf>
- Henderson, M. B., Houston, D. M., Peterson, P. E., Shakeel, M. D., & West, M. R. (2021). Amid pandemic, support soars for online learning: Results from the 2020 education next survey of public opinion. *Education Next*, 21(1), 6–21. <https://www.educationnext.org/amid-pandemic-support-soars-online-learning-parent-poll-shows-2020-education-next-survey-public-opinion/>
- Henschke, J. A. (2011). Considerations regarding the future of andragogy. *Futures Column, Adult Learning*, 22(1–2), 34–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104515951102200109>
- Holton, E. F., III., Wilson, L. S., & Bates, R. A. (2009). Toward development of a generalized instrument to measure andragogy. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(2), 169–193. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.20014>
- Jeschke, M. P., Johnson, K. E., & Williams, J. R. (2001). A comparison of intrusive and prescriptive advising of psychology majors at an urban comprehensive university. *NACADA Journal*, 21(1–2), 46–58. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-21.1-2.46>
- Johnson, B. R. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282–292. <http://s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/9780815365662/Appendix.pdf>
- Johnson, N. (2012). The institutional costs of student attrition. Research Paper. *Delta Cost Project at American Institutes for Research*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED536126.pdf>

- Joo, Y. J., Lim, K. Y., & Kim, E. K. (2011). Online university students' satisfaction and persistence: Examining perceived level of presence, usefulness and ease of use as predictors in a structural model. *Computers and Education, 57*(2), 1654–1664.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.02.008>
- Kamphoff, C. S., Hutson, B. L., Amundsen, S. A., & Atwood, J. A. (2007). A motivational/empowerment model applied to students on academic probation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 8*(4), 397–412.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/9652-8543-3428-1J06>
- Kapp, A. (1833). *Platon's Erziehungslehre*. Essmann.
- Keehn, M. G. (2015). When you tell a personal story, I kind of perk up a little bit more: An examination of student learning from listening to personal stories in two social diversity courses. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 48*(3), 373–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2015.1056712>
- Knowles, M. S. (1968). Andragogy, not pedagogy. *Adult Leadership, 16*(10), 350–352, 386.
- Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy versus pedagogy*. Association Press.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy* (2nd ed.). Cambridge Books.
- Knowles, M. S. (1984). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (3rd ed.). Gulf.
- Knowles, M. S. (1989). *The making of an adult educator: An autobiographical journey*. Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. Gulf.

- Komaraju, M., Musulkin, S., & Bhattacharya, G. (2010). Role of student–faculty interactions in developing college students’ academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(3), 332–342.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0137>
- Korpershoek, H., Harms, T., Boer, H. d., Kuijk, M. v., & Doolaard, S. (2016). A meta-analysis of the effects of classroom management strategies and classroom management programs on students’ academic, behavioral, emotional, and motivational outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(3), 643–680. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626799>
- Korstange, R., Hall, J., Holcomb, J., & Jackson, J. (2020). The online first-year experience: Defining and illustrating a new reality. *Adult Learning, 31*(3), 95–108.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159519892680>
- Kuhn, T., & Padak, G. (2008). From the co-editors: Is academic advising a discipline?. *NACADA Journal, 28*(2), 2–4. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-28.2.2>
- Kuo, Y., & Belland, B. R. (2016). An exploratory study of adult learners’ perceptions of online learning: Minority students in continuing education. *Education Tech Research Development, 64*, 661–680. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-016-9442-9>
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, quantitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- Li, C., & Lalani, F. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever: This is how. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>
- Lindeman, E. C. (1961). *The meaning of adult education in the United States*. Harvest House. (Original work published 1926).

- Loeng, S. (2018). Various ways of understanding the concept of andragogy. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), Article 1496643. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1496643>
- Luo, N., Zhang, M., & Qi, D. (2017). Effects of different interactions on students' sense of community in e-learning environment. *Computers & Education*, 115, 153–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.08.006>
- Lynch, J., & Lungrin, T. (2018). Integrating academic and career advising toward student success. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2018(184), 69–79. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20304>
- Marchand, G. C., & Gutierrez, A. P. (2012). The role of emotion in the learning process: Comparisons between online and face-to-face learning settings. *Internet and Higher Education*, 15, 150–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.10.001>
- Markle, G. (2015). Factors influencing persistence among nontraditional university students. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(3), 267–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615583085>
- Maslow, A. (1962). *Toward a psychology of being*. Van Nostrand.
- Matheson, J. L. (2007). The voice transcription technique: Use of voice recognition software to transcribe digital interview data in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(4), 547–560. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2007.1611>
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Meece, J. L., Anderman, E. M., & Anderman, L. H. (2006). Classroom goal structure, student motivation, and academic achievement. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57(1), 505–528. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070258>
- Merriam, S. B. (1987). Adult learning and theory building. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 37(4), 187–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848187037004001>

- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1991). *Learning in adulthood. A comprehensive guide*. Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Sage.
- Miller, N. (2017). A model for improving student retention in adult accelerated education programs. *Education*, *138*(1), 104–114.
<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/ed/2017/00000138/00000001/art00012>
- Mitchell, C., Cours Anderson, K., Laverie, D., & Hass, A. (2021). Distance be damned: The importance of social presence in a pandemic constrained environment. *Marketing Education Review*, *31*(4), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1936561>
- Modenos, L. (2020). No, nontraditional is not the new traditional. *Adult Learning*, *31*(3), 134–136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159520941082>
- Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (2012). *Distance education: A systems view of online learning*. Wadsworth.
- Muilenburg, L., & Berge, Z. (2005). Student barriers to online learning: A factor analytic study. *Distance Education*, *26*(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587910500081269>
- Mulvaney, M. (2020). Discussion groups and multi-formatted content delivery in an online module: Effect on students' self-efficacy. *College Student Journal*, *54*(1), 88–105.
<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csaj/2020/00000054/00000001/art00009>
- National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2020). *Estimates Fall 2020*.

https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2020.pdf

National Academic Advising Association Clearinghouse. (2006). *The global community for academic advising*. <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising.aspx>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2021, May). *Distance Learning*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=80>

Niksadat, N., Rakhshanderou, S., Ramezankhani, A., Ghaffari, M., Negarandeh, R., & Vasheghani Farahani, A. (2019). Development and psychometric evaluation of andragogy-based patient education questionnaire (APEQ). *American Journal of Health Education, 50*(6), 390–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2019.1662860>

Nworie, J. (2020, May 19). *Beyond COVID-19: What's next for online teaching and learning in higher education*. Educause. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2021/5/beyond-covid-19-whats-next-for-online-teaching-and-learning-in-higher-education>

O'Banion, T. (1994). An academic advising model. *NACADA Journal, 14*(2), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-14.2.10>

Oha, H. J., Ozkaya, E., & LaRose, R. (2014). How does online social networking enhance life satisfaction? The relationships among online supportive interaction, affect, perceived social support, sense of community, and life satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior, 30*, 69–78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.07.053>

- Ohrablo, S. (2010). *Developmental advising in an on-demand world*. NACADA Clearinghouse. <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/ViewArticles/Developmental-advising-toda>
- Oliphant, T., & Branch-Mueller, J. (2016). Developing a sense of community and the online student experience. *Education for Information*, 32(4), 307–321. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-160979>
- Ornelles, C., Ray, A. B., & Wells, J. C. (2019). Designing online courses in teacher education to enhance adult learner engagement. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 31(3), 547–557. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1244981.pdf>
- O’Shea, S., Stone, C., & Delahunty, J. (2015). “I ‘feel’ like I am at a university even though I am online.” Exploring how students narrate their engagement with higher education institutions in an online learning environment. *Distance Education*, 36(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2015.1019970>
- Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (2007). Online learning communities in perspective. In R. Luppici (Ed.), *Online learning* (pp. 3–16). Information Age Publishing.
- Peacock, S., & Cowan, J. (2019). Promoting sense of belonging in online learning communities of inquiry at accredited courses. *Online Learning*, 23(2), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v23i2.1488>
- Perrin, A. L. (2000). *The fit between adult learner preferences and the theories of Malcolm Knowles* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas]. Dissertation Abstracts International (UMI No. 9998105). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/973ec34d9f8db1eba9ae0d0859fa17e9/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

- Peterson, C. M., & Ray, C. M. (2013). Andragogy and metagogy: The evolution of neologisms. *Journal of Adult Education*, 42(2), 80–85. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1047343.pdf>
- Phirangee, K., & Malec, A. (2017). Othering in online learning: An examination of social presence, identity, and sense of community. *Distance Education*, 38(2), 160–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2017.1322457>
- Pintrich, P. R. (1999). The role of motivation in promoting and sustaining self-regulated learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 31(6), 459–470. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355\(99\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(99)00015-4)
- Powers, N., & Wartalski, R. (2021). Junior faculty advising for effective student growth and academic success: A qualitative study. *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*, 10(1), Article 2. <http://doi.org/10.58809/EDSR7321>
- Pulcini, B. (2016). Appreciative advising to promote degree completion by Appalachian women. *NACADA Journal*, 36(2), 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-15-016>
- Rachal, J. R. (2002). Andragogy's detectives: A critique of the present and a proposal for the future. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52(3), 210–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713602052003004>
- Radovan, M., & Makovec, D. (2015). Adult learners' learning environment perceptions and satisfaction in formal education—Case study of four East-European countries. *International Education Studies*, 8(2), 101–112. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060807.pdf>
- Ragusa, A. T., & Crampton, A. (2018). Sense of connection, identity and academic success in distance education: Sociologically exploring online learning environments. *Rural Society*, 27(2), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371656.2018.1472914>

- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guardia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the Covid-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Post digital Science and Education*, 2, 923–945. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00155-y>
- Rovai, A. P. (2002). Development of an instrument to measure classroom community. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 5(3), 197–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516\(02\)00102-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(02)00102-1)
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>
- Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. Sage.
- Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. Jossey-Bass.
- Sato, T., Haegele, J. A., & Foot, R. (2017). Developing online graduate coursework in adapted physical education utilizing andragogy theory. *Quest* (00336297), 69(4), 453–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2017.1284679>
- Schroeder, S. M., & Terras, K. L. (2015). Advising experiences and needs of online, cohort, and classroom adult graduate learners. *NACADA Journal*, 35(1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-044>
- Seaman, J. E., Allen, E. I., & Seaman, J. (2018). Grade increase: Tracking distance education in the United States. *Babson Survey Research Group*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED580852.pdf>

- Shackelford, J., & Maxwell, M. (2012). Contribution of learner-instructor interaction to sense of community in graduate online education. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 8(4), 248–260. https://jolt.merlot.org/vol8no4/shackelford_1212.pdf
- Shea, P., & Bidjerano, T. (2010). Learning presence: Towards a theory of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and the development of a communities of inquiry in online and blended learning environments. *Computers & Education*, 55(4), 1721–1731. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.07.017>
- Shen, D., Cho, M.-H., Tsai, C.-L., & Marra, R. (2013). Unpacking online learning experiences: Online learning self-efficacy and learning satisfaction. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 19, 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2013.04.001>
- Shufutinsky, A. (2020). Employing use of self for transparency, rigor, trustworthiness, and credibility in qualitative organizational research methods. *Organization Development Review*, 52(1), 50–58. https://www.academia.edu/download/93118191/UoS_in_Research_Final_PublishedODR_V52_No1_Shufutinsky.pdf
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. Sage.
- Singh, J., Evans, E., Reed, A., Karch, L., Qualey, K., Singh, L., & Wiersma, H. (2022). Online, hybrid, and face-to-face learning through the eyes of faculty, students, administrators, and instructional designers: Lessons learned and directions for the post-vaccine and post-pandemic/COVID-19 world. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 50(3), 301–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395211063754>

- Singh, J., & Matthees, B. (2021). Facilitating interprofessional education in an online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed methods study. *Healthcare, 9*(5), 567. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9050567>
- Singh, J., Singh, L., & Steele, K. (2021). Combining the best of online and face-to-face learning: Hybrid and blended learning approach for COVID-19, post-vaccine, & post-pandemic world. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 50*(2), 140–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395211047865>
- Slotten, H. R. (2006). Universities, public service experimentation, and the origins of radio broadcasting in the United States, 1900–1920. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 26*(4), 485–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439680600916777>
- Snyder, T. D., de Brey, C., & Dillow, S. A. (2019). *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, 54th Edition. NCES 2020-009. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED592104.pdf>
- Spagnola, R., & Yagos, T. (2021). Driving out fear in the nontraditional classroom: Five practical strategies from neuroscience to build adult student success. *Adult Learning, 32*(2), 89–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159520966054>
- Stenalt, M. H. (2021). Digital student agency: Approaching agency in digital contexts from a critical perspective. *Frontline Learning Research, 9*(3), 52–68. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1309730.pdf>
- Stockwell, K. (2015, June). *Academic advising approaches* [Paper presentation]. NACADA Academic Advising Summer Institute, City, ST, United States. <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/Events/SummerInst/2015/Powerpoints/W4-Approaches-LA-KS.pdf>

- Strawbridge, W. G. (1994). *The effectiveness of andragogical instruction as compared with traditional instruction in introductory philosophy course* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi]. Dissertation Abstracts International (UMI No. 9509004).
https://www.iup.edu/pse/files/programs/graduate_programs_r/instructional_design_and_technology_ma/paace_journal_of_lifelong_learning/volume_8_1999/strawbridge1999.pdf
- Swerdloff, M. (2015). Online learning, multimedia, and emotions. In S. Y. Tettegah, R. E. Ferdig, & M. P. McCreery, (Eds.), *Emotions, technology, and learning* (pp. 155–175). Elsevier Science & Technology.
- Teasley, M. L., & Buchanan, E. M. (2013). Capturing the student perspective: A new instrument for measuring advising satisfaction. *NACADA Journal*, 33(2), 4–15.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-12-132>
- Thorndike, E. L., Bregman, E. O., Tilton, J. W., & Woodyard, E. (1928). *Adult Learning*. Macmillan.
- Trespalacios, J., & Lowenthal, P. (2019). What do they really like? An investigation of students' perceptions of their coursework in a fully online educational technology program. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(5), 60–78.
<https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.4364>
- Trespalacios, J., & Uribe-Florez, L. J. (2020). Developing online sense of community: Graduate students' experiences and perceptions. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education (TOJDE)*, 21(1), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.690340>
- Truschel, J. (2015). Does the use of appreciative advising work? *Learning Assistance Review*

- (*TLAR*), 20(2), 61–76. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ818227.pdf>
- Tsai, C. L., Cho, M. H., Marra, R., & Shen, D. (2020). The self-efficacy questionnaire for online learning. *Distance Education*, 41(4), 472–489.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1821604>
- Turner, E. A., Chandler, M., & Hefer, R. W. (2009). The influence of parenting styles, academic motivation, and self-efficacy on academic performance and college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50, 337–346. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0073>.
- Um, N. H., & Jang, A. (2021). Antecedents and consequences of college students' satisfaction with online learning. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 49(8), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.10397>
- Varney, J. (2007). Intrusive advising. *Academic Advising Today*, 30(3), 11–28.
<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/ePub/documents/30-3%20Sept%202007.pdf>
- Velardi, S., Leahy, J., Collum, K., McGuire, J., & Ladenheim, M. (2021). Adult learning theory principles in knowledge exchange networks among maple syrup producers and beekeepers in Maine. *Journal of Agricultural Education & Extension*, 27(1), 3–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1389224X.2020.1773283>
- Vincenzes, K., Drew, M., Cummings, B., & Tubo, S. (2019). Transforming the art of education. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 20(4), 61–69.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2423564182>

- Walker-Roberts, G. (2020). *Nontraditional online students' perceptions of how advisor interactions contribute to degree completion rates: A phenomenological study* (Order No. 27957775) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2404290758).
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/2d19c29f6a27738692c1084ee8db92b6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Wang, C. H., Shannon, D. M., & Ross, M. E. (2013). Students' characteristics, self-regulated learning, technology self-efficacy, and course outcomes in online learning. *Distance Education, 34*(3), 302–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2013.835779>
- Weinstein, M. (2002). Adult learning principles and concepts in the workplace: Implications for training in HRD. In *Adult Learning and HRD Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492286.pdf>
- Wilkinson, S. (2004). *Focus group research. Qualitative research theory, method and practice*. Sage.
- Williams, L. S. (2017). The managed heart: Adult learners and emotional presence online. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 65*(2), 124–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2017.1320204>
- Wladis, C., Conway, K. M., & Hachey, A. C. (2015). The online STEM classroom-who succeeds? An exploration of the impact of ethnicity, gender, and nontraditional student characteristics in the community college context. *Community College Review, 43*(2), 142–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552115571729>
- Wright, S. L., Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A., & Murdock, J. L. (2012). Career development among first-year college students: College self-efficacy, student persistence, and academic

success. *Journal of Career Development*, 40(4), 292–310.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845312455509>.

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed.). Sage.

Yoo, S. J., & Huang, W. D. (2013). Engaging online adult learners in higher education: Motivational factors impacted by gender, age, and prior experiences. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 61(3), 151–164.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2013.836823>

Appendix A: ACU IRB Approval

4/24/23, 3:30 PM myACU Mail - IRB-2022-35 - Initial: Initial - Expedited – ACU



Tonya Fulk <xxxxxxxx@acu.edu>

IRB-2022-35 - Initial: Initial - Expedited – ACU

1 message

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com> Mon, Nov 14, 2022 at 2:00 PM To: xxxxxxxx@acu.edu, xxxxxxxx@acu.edu

Date: November 14, 2022

PI: Tonya Fulk

Department: ONL-Online Student, 17250-EdD Online

Re: Initial - IRB-2022-35

How Interactions with an Academic Advisor Influence the Self-Efficacy of Online and Distance Education Students

The Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for How Interactions with an Academic Advisor Influence the Self-Efficacy of Online and Distance Education Students . The approval is effective starting November 14, 2022.

Admin Check-in Date: --

Expiration Date: --

Decision: Approved

Category: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Research Notes:

Additional Approvals/Instructions:

Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Form within 30 days of study completion. If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Modification Form. If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Incident Report Form. All approval letters and study documents are located within

the Study Details in Cayuse IRB.

The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review Board. If the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfil any of these responsibilities, the Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the following:

- If there are any changes in the research (including but not limited to change in location, members of the research team, research procedures, number of participants, target population of participants, compensation, or risk), these changes must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
- Report any protocol deviations or unanticipated problems to the IRB promptly according to IRB policy.
- Should the research continue past the expiration date, submit a Continuing Review Form approximately 30 days before the expiration date.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=56ab8bc6ec&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1749499159862839862&simpl=msg-f:1749499159862839862> 1/2

4/24/23, 3:30 PM myACU Mail - IRB-2022-35 - Initial: Initial - Expedited – ACU

- When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If your study is Expedited or Full Board, submit an Inactivation Form.
- According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for 3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB request access.
- It is the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research participants and all members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as any risks to confidentiality should be minimized.

For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website

<http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp...>

or email orsp@acu.edu with your questions.

Sincerely,

Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Hello! My name is Tonya Fulk, and I am conducting research for my doctoral degree at Abilene Christian University (ACU). I am studying online and distance education student's interactions with their academic advisors. I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

In order to be included in this study you must meet the following criteria:

- Currently enrolled or a recent graduate (last two years) of an online or distance education program at XXX.
- Must be at least 18 years old.

You cannot participate if:

- You are not currently enrolled or a recent graduate (last two years) of an online or distance education program at XXX.

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to:

- Complete a 45-minute interview with me through Zoom. We will choose a time convenient for you. The interviews will be audio recorded only.

If you have questions for me, or you would like to participate, please email me at:

You can also call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in the Focus Group

Hello! My name is Tonya Fulk, and I am conducting research for my doctoral degree at Abilene Christian University (ACU). I am studying online and distance education student's interactions with their academic advisors. I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

In order to be included in this study you must meet the following criteria:

- Currently working as an academic advisor for online or distance education students at XXX.

You cannot participate if:

- You are not currently working as an academic advisor for online or distance education students at XXX.

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a 60-minute focus group with me through Zoom. We will choose a time convenient for you. The interviews will be audio recorded only.

If you have questions for me, or you would like to participate, please email me at:

You can also call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Appendix D: Participant Interview Questions

Participant Interview Questions

1. Are you enrolled in the online or distance education program?
2. How long have you been enrolled or when did you graduate from the program?
3. What program are you currently enrolled in or graduated from?
4. Describe your motivation upon entering the program. Tell me about any changes you've experienced in your level of motivation during the program?
5. Describe your experiences in the online or distance education program. Specifically, what have been your greatest challenges?
6. Describe your experiences in the online and distance education program. Specifically, what have been your greatest successes?
7. Tell me about the student support services provided for you.
8. Tell me about your experiences in communication (in-person, phone, email, text) with your academic advisor?
9. Did you feel comfortable communicating with your academic advisor?
10. What did your advisor do that influenced your level of comfort?
11. Tell me about these interactions. What topics did you discuss?
12. Do you feel these communications were supportive? Tell me more about these communications and why you feel they were supportive or not supportive.
13. Tell me about the communications with your academic advisor that had a big influence on your self confidence in the program?
14. How did these interactions influence your level of confidence or willingness to complete the program?

15. Do you feel that your academic advisor knew and understood your unique circumstances?
16. What inspirations did you draw from your experience with academic advising?
17. Describe any interactions with the academic advisor that decreased your confidence.
18. What recommendations do you have for the institution to better enhance academic advising for online and distance education students?
19. What could your institution do to better enhance your level of confidence even more?
20. Do you feel that COVID influenced your motivation?

Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Questions

Academic Advisor Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Please tell us your first name and how long have you worked in your current role.
2. Tell me about your current job description and your current role.
3. Tell me about online and distance learners and what unique aspects are associated with providing academic advising.
4. What is it like to be an Academic Advisor for online and distance education students?
5. How would you describe online and distance education adult learners' experiences with academic advising at your institution?
6. How does academic advisement influence student self-efficacy?
7. What types of interactions with academic advisors increase student self-efficacy?
8. Could you tell me more about the students that you work with?
9. How would you describe your role in supporting online and distance education students?
10. What differences do you notice in your practice when advising online students as compared to distance education students? Tell me about these differences.
11. How often do you connect with students during a semester (phone, email, text)?
12. How would you describe your students' unique needs?
13. What are your thoughts on the differences in advising adult learners compared to traditional students?
14. How do your advising duties play a role in the student's level of self-efficacy?
15. Do you feel academic advising should strictly focus on the academics or include a student/advisor relationship or mentor role?

16. What recommendations do you have for the institution to better enhance academic advising for online and distance education students?

Appendix F: Validation on Research and Interview Questions

Tonya,

Thanks for contacting me. I believe your questions will solicit substantial feedback from interviewees. Please let me know if I may be of any assistance.

--

Dr. Bo Bennett

Associate Dean, Business, Arts & Sciences

McDowell Tech

xxx.xxx.xxxx

xxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.edu

Appendix G: Validation on Research and Interview Questions

Hi Tonya,

Yes, I think the questions should provide you with enough information to answer the research questions.

Thanks,
Sherri

Sherri Routh

Associate Director, Student Admissions

Enrollment Services

Office of Student Admissions

xxxxxxxx \ xxxxxxxxxxx NC xxxxx

xxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.edu

Wake Forest University
School of Medicine