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Thesis and dissertation advising preferences and best practices in the Philippines

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This study investigated the advising preferences of graduate students and the best practices of their research advisers in selected private and state universities in Cebu and Palawan. Grounded in the Expectancy-Value Theory, the research examined how students' expectations for success and the value they assign to thesis work influence their advising preferences. A quantitative descriptive survey design was used, involving 72 graduate students enrolled in thesis or dissertation seminars. Data were gathered using a validated instrument (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$) and supplemented by qualitative interviews. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed. Findings revealed that the top three advising preferences were: (1) coaching and mentoring abilities, (2) field of specialization, and (3) adviser availability. A significant relationship was found between age and advising preference. Thematic analysis yielded three key insights: The Three Cs of Advising, Respect begets Respect, and Have Fun and Enjoy the Journey. The study concludes that understanding and addressing the diverse advising needs of graduate students is essential for creating a supportive academic environment that fosters success and satisfaction. While the findings offer valuable guidance, they are limited by the study's reliance on self-reported data and its specific geographic focus, which may limit broader applicability. The Expectancy-Value Theory provided a useful lens for analysis, though future research may benefit from exploring additional frameworks. The study recommends the development of a thesis and dissertation advising handbook to institutionalize effective advising practices.

KEYWORDS

thesis and dissertation, advising, best practices, quantitative descriptive, Philippines

1 Introduction

Thesis and dissertation advising refers to the advice and assistance graduate students receive from faculty members while they work through the process of finishing their theses or dissertations. The development of students' careers and academic performance depends on this link. A master's thesis or doctorate dissertation is evidence of the contribution of a graduate student in a particular field of knowledge and should reflect the quality of the university (Pring and Bitera, 2023). As such, faculty advisers are expected to act as mentors of their advisees and guide them toward completion of their theses/dissertations (Janer, 2017).

Mentoring is supporting and encouraging people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance, and become the person they want to be (Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring, qtd. in Almoro and Concepcion, "Scientific Mentoring and Research Groups in UP Diliman, OVCRD Research Colloquium, 21 January 2013).

Mentoring for theses and dissertations may involve giving advice and guidance in different stages of the student's work, from the choice of topics, to recommending panelists, and reminding mentees about considerations regarding field activities.

In line with this, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) prescribes some requirements for the qualifications of the research adviser. In the recent CMO No. 15, s. 2019 provides that faculty research advisers shall be chosen based on the quality of their published works in peer-reviewed professional journals. In addition, CMO No. 9, s. 2003 stipulates that the faculty members in HEIs should publish research in refereed national or international journals and present their research accomplishments in local and international fora. These CHED requirements further enhance the research capability of the faculty members, making them more skilled to handle research writers.

Jordan (2012) found that primary role advisors tended to have a stronger developmental orientation when compared to faculty advisors. Gender also played a role, with female students preferring more developmental advising. The research highlighted the importance of matching advising styles to student needs and preferences, suggesting that a mismatch could affect student satisfaction with the advising process. Similarly, a case study by Suciati (2011) explored student preferences and experiences in online thesis advising. The findings indicated that while students generally had positive perceptions of online advising, there was a significant preference for traditional face-to-face feedback methods. Many students felt more comfortable receiving written feedback on printed drafts rather than electronic communication, illustrating a gap between the expectations of students and the realities of online advising environments.

The process of thesis and dissertation advising plays a critical role in shaping the academic success and development of graduate students. In the Philippines, this relationship is particularly significant, given the growing demand for quality research output across various academic disciplines. Understanding the preferences and best practices in advising is essential for improving student outcomes, fostering effective mentor-mentee relationships, and ensuring timely completion of academic requirements. This research seeks to determine the advising preferences of graduate students, identify best practices in the Philippine academic context, and offer recommendations for a proposed thesis and dissertation advising handbook.

1.1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

The study anchors on the Expectancy-value Theory developed by Eccles et al. (1983) which postulates that achievement-related choices are motivated by a combination of people's expectations for success and subjective task value in particular domains.

The Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) by Eccles et al. (1983) is a prominent framework for understanding motivation, particularly in the field of education. The theory posits that individuals' motivation to engage in a task is determined by two key factors: expectancy of success (the belief that one can succeed in the task) and the value they place on the task (how important or useful they perceive the task to be).

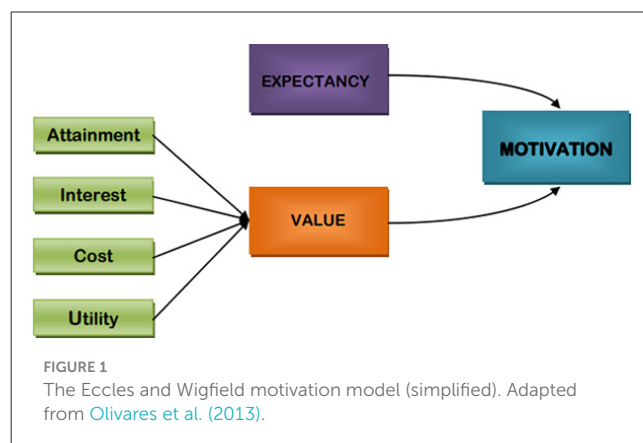
The motivation of the graduate student to engage in a task which is writing the thesis or dissertation is determined by two key factors: expectancy and value. Expectancy in this study relates to the graduate students' beliefs about their ability to complete their thesis or dissertation and value refers to how important it is for them to finish writing their thesis or dissertation, then eventually graduate.

The work of Eccles and Wigfield (2002) provides a comprehensive review of the Expectancy-Value Theory and its application to motivation in academic settings. They discuss how students' expectations of success and the subjective task value influence their achievement choices, effort, persistence, and performance in school-related activities. The study highlights that students' motivation is shaped not only by their ability perceptions but also by how much they value a task, suggesting that interventions should target both factors to enhance engagement and performance.

Another paper by Wigfield and Eccles (2000) on the Expectancy-Value Theory of Achievement Motivation elaborates on the theoretical underpinnings of EVT and provides an in-depth discussion of how children's beliefs about their abilities and the value they place on different activities evolve. The research focuses particularly on how these motivational beliefs are shaped by teachers, parents, and peers. The authors discuss how expectancy-value beliefs directly predict students' choices of academic courses and fields of study, which makes this theory crucial for educators designing curricula and support systems. Figure 1 presents a simplified model of the Motivation Model as given by Olivares et al. (2013).

The Expectancy-Value Theory by Eccles et al. has been extensively applied in various contexts, from educational choices to gender differences in career paths, student engagement, and cross-cultural comparisons. The cultural equivalencies or corresponding fit for this framework can be addressed as a potential limitation, though. The literature consistently shows that both expectancy of success and task value are crucial factors in motivating individuals' behaviors and academic decisions. These insights provide a strong foundation for educational interventions aimed at enhancing student motivation and achievement.

Different advising typologies—such as developmental, prescriptive, or collaborative advising—offer nuanced perspectives that help educators tailor their approaches to meet diverse student



needs. For instance, [Wisker \(2012\)](#) emphasizes the importance of adopting a developmental advising style that fosters independence, critical thinking, and professional growth, which aligns with the students' emphasis on coaching and mentoring qualities in the study.

Furthermore, [Jordan \(2012\)](#) highlights the significance of advising styles aligning with student preferences, suggesting that mismatches can impair satisfaction and academic success. Exploring typologies allows for an understanding that advising is not a one-size-fits-all process; instead, it involves adjusting approaches based on students' academic maturity, research experience, and personal circumstances. Incorporating these frameworks can also guide the development of targeted training programs for advisors, aligning their practices with evidence-based models.

Recent international studies underscore the evolving nature of effective academic advising, emphasizing the importance of relational and mentorship qualities alongside traditional research expertise. [Black and McLean \(2021\)](#) highlight that faculty mentoring significantly contributes to student success, with a focus on supportive, personalized guidance that fosters confidence and motivation. Similarly, [Horta and Mok \(2020\)](#) advocates for student-centered supervision, demonstrating that advisers who prioritize students' individual needs and foster active engagement can increase research productivity and satisfaction.

[Polonsky and Waller \(2022\)](#) further emphasize the significance of mentorship in postgraduate supervision, stressing the need for supervisors to build trust-based relationships that support academic and personal development.

[Bednail \(2018\)](#) noted that while many students enroll in Master's or PhD postgraduate research programs, only a small proportion complete them. For instance, in Australian public universities, a total of 437,030 domestic and international students enrolled in postgraduate research programs between 2010 and 2016; however, only 65,101 students completed their programs within the same six-year period, reflecting a significant attrition rate. Similarly, [Castelló et al. \(2017\)](#) investigated why some students consider abandoning their doctoral studies. Although doctoral education is gaining popularity, many students fail to complete their studies, and there is limited understanding of the reasons behind this. Understanding these motives is vital for reducing dropout rates and improving the quality of doctoral programs.

[Jones \(2013\)](#) reviewed 995 papers published between 1971 and 2012 that addressed issues in doctoral education. Through thematic analysis, six central themes were identified as shaping the management and training of doctoral students: teaching, program design, writing and research, employment and career development, the student-supervisor relationship, and the overall doctoral student experience.

Mentoring has nowadays become a prevalent educational practice in higher education, as it allows for personalized learning trajectories and competence-based education. However, the effectiveness of mentoring programs is difficult to measure due to a lack of conceptual clarity about the mentoring concept and the broad variety of measurements used ([Nuis et al., 2023](#)).

[Khosa et al. \(2023\)](#) argue that while the quality and nature of a PhD students' relationship with their supervisors is widely regarded

as pivotal for successfully completing their studies, the increasing use of multiple supervisors may challenge this relationship. This further confirm that the supervisor-student relationship's quality directly impacts academic satisfaction, recommending clear communication, mutual respect, and tailored guidance as key components of successful supervision. Collectively, these studies corroborate the findings from the local context, highlighting that personal attributes such as availability, empathy, and mentorship skills are fundamental to effective advising globally. They advocate for a holistic approach to supervision that balances academic rigor with relational support, ultimately enhancing student success and wellbeing.

Effective thesis and dissertation advising is essential to graduate student success and professional development. This literature review synthesizes recent findings on graduate student preferences and institutional best practices, highlighting the importance of timely feedback, advisor accessibility, clear expectations, inclusive approaches, and holistic support. Emerging international consensus suggests that student-centered, developmentally attuned advising leads to greater satisfaction, improved academic progress, and enhanced career readiness.

Recent studies consistently underscore the centrality of the advisor-advisee relationship to graduate student success. A strong, supportive relationship is associated with increased student satisfaction, academic achievement, and timely completion of theses and dissertations ([Liua and Ammiganb, 2024](#)). Students particularly value advisors who are trustworthy, helpful, and provide clear expectations ([Sogunro, 2015](#); [Chugh et al., 2021](#)). The ability of advisors to foster a sense of belonging and provide both academic and emotional support significantly impacts student motivation and performance ([Liua and Ammiganb, 2024](#)). Flexibility and mutual respect are also identified as key contributors to satisfaction, especially in diverse advisor-advisee pairings ([Sharma, 2019](#)). While prolific advisors may not always guarantee individual student success, an advisor's own research output and a good track record with students are strong predictors of advising success ([CEPR, 2025](#)).

Graduate students consistently value advisors who offer clear, prompt, and balanced feedback—combining constructive critique with encouragement ([Barros and Gaspar, 2024](#); [Nurie, 2019](#); [Hoomanfar, 2024](#)). The integration of both written and oral feedback fosters deeper understanding and allows for clarification through dialogue ([Smith, 2021](#); [Barros and Gaspar, 2024](#)). Timely responses, in particular, are crucial for maintaining academic momentum and reducing anxiety, especially during key stages of the thesis or dissertation process.

Accessibility, defined by responsiveness to student inquiries and the regularity of scheduled meetings, is a significant predictor of advisee satisfaction ([University of Pittsburgh, Office of the Provost, 2024](#); [Donnelly et al., 2021](#)). For distance and online learners, the strategic use of digital communication tools such as email, video conferencing, and learning management systems (LMS) enhances the advising experience by promoting flexible and frequent interactions ([Levinstein, 2021](#); [University of California Office of the President, 2022](#)).

Clarity regarding roles, expectations, deliverables, authorship, and timelines significantly shapes the quality of the advisor-advisee

relationship. Formalizing these elements through written agreements or advising handbooks reduces ambiguity and minimizes conflict (University of Iowa College of Public Health, 2019; University of Pittsburgh, Office of the Provost, 2024; University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019). Establishing shared expectations at the outset has been linked to more productive and harmonious collaborations.

Contemporary research stresses the importance of inclusive and individualized advising practices that acknowledge students' diverse academic backgrounds, cultural contexts, and learning preferences (University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019; Levinstein, 2021). Tailoring advising to meet the unique needs of international, underrepresented, and non-traditional students—particularly through advisor-advisee alignment in research interests and communication styles—fosters deeper engagement and satisfaction (Donnelly et al., 2021).

Graduate students increasingly expect advisors to provide holistic mentorship that extends beyond academic guidance. Effective advising includes support in research skills development, career planning, networking, and overall wellbeing (GradSchools.com, 2022; Barros and Gaspar, 2024). This comprehensive approach helps students build the competencies and confidence needed for post-graduate success. The results of the study of Hoomanfar (2024) showed that both master's and doctoral students expressed high levels of preference for receiving clear and encouraging feedback. A significantly higher percentage of master's students expressed their preference for specific comments. In contrast, doctoral students exhibited heightened preferences for non-appropriative and dialogic feedback.

The study of Schroeder and Terras (2015) aimed to understand and explain the perceived advising needs and experiences within and among learning environments. Findings suggest that adult learners, regardless of learning environment, require complex and holistic advising. Five themes of good graduate advising are discussed: pragmatic guidance, trust, individual, important, and immediate, electronic communication.

Across the literature, several best practices emerge: regular, goal-oriented meetings with structured agendas and consistent, actionable feedback (Barros and Gaspar, 2024; University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019); timely and constructive feedback that sustains academic motivation (Nurie, 2019; Hoomanfar, 2024; Smith, 2021); and clear advising agreements on roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols (University of Iowa College of Public Health, 2019; University of Pittsburgh, Office of the Provost, 2024).

Further, best practices include inclusive, tailored advising approaches (Levinstein, 2021); integrated professional and career development support (Barros and Gaspar, 2024); and effective use of digital tools for remote support and collaboration (Donnelly et al., 2021; University of California Office of the President, 2022; University of Illinois, 2020).

There is a growing international consensus that effective thesis and dissertation advising must be proactive, responsive, inclusive, and student-centered. When grounded in mutual respect, clear communication, and developmental support, advising relationships not only enhance academic outcomes but also prepare graduate students for future professional success.

1.2 Statement of objectives

The research aimed to determine the thesis and dissertation advising preferences of graduate students and the best practices of their advisers as a basis for a proposed thesis and dissertation advising handbook.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Describe the graduate students in terms of: age, gender, type of higher education institution, and year first enrolled in graduate school;
2. Identify the characteristics they consider when choosing a thesis/dissertation adviser;
3. Determine their perceived degree of importance for: communication and feedback, respect for the advisee, and career advising;
4. Verify the significance of the relationship between the profile of the graduate students and their perceived degree of importance for: communication and feedback, respect for the advisee, and career advising;
5. Explore the thesis and dissertation best practices experienced by the graduate students;
6. Create a thesis and dissertation advising handbook.

1.3 Statement of the null hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant relationship between the profile of graduate students and their perceived degree of importance for communication and feedback, respect for the advisee, and career advising.

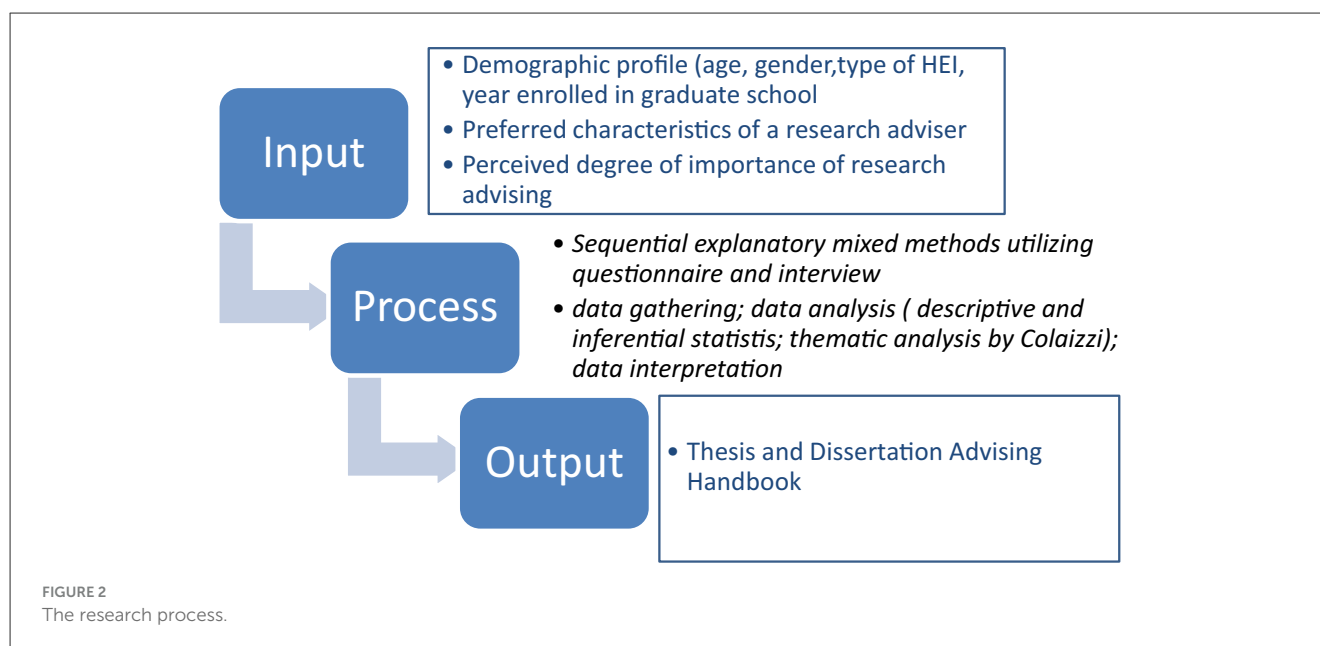
2 Research method

2.1 Research design

The explanatory sequential mixed methods design by Creswell and Clark (2017) was used in the study. This consisted of quantitative descriptive survey research to gather data on the graduate students' demographic profile, the characteristics they consider in choosing an adviser, the degree of importance of communication and feedback, respect for the advisee and career advising, and their ideas on a good thesis and dissertation adviser. For the qualitative data, the experiences of the graduate students on the best practices of their advisers were gathered.

The Input-Process-Output (I-P-O) schematic diagram of the research process is given in Figure 2. The demographic profile of the graduate students serves as the input together with their preferred characteristics of a research adviser and their perceived importance of research advising.

The process involves the sequential explanatory mixed methods design beginning with the quantitative phase on the profile of the graduate students, their preferred characteristics of a research adviser, and their perceived degree of importance of research



advising, and the qualitative phase on their experiences on the best practices of their research advisers. Research tools used to gather data were validated survey questionnaire and interviews. The data analysis for the quantitative phase employed both descriptive and inferential statistics on the significance of the relationship between the profile of the graduate students and their perceived degree of importance of research advising. Based on the results of the research, a thesis and dissertation advising handbook is created.

2.2 Research environment

The study was conducted in the graduate schools of two state universities and one private higher education institution Cebu and in Palawan, Philippines.

Cebu City is a first-class highly urbanized city in the region of Central Visayas, Philippines. According to the 2015 census, it has a population of more than 922,000 people, making it the fifth-most populated city in the Philippines. Cebu City is located in the middle of the eastern side of Cebu Island. It is the center of Metro Cebu, the second-largest metropolitan area in the Philippines by population, economy, and land area.

2.3 Research participants

The population of the study involved the graduate students in the Philippines, specifically, the provinces of Cebu and Palawan. For the quantitative part, a total enumeration of 72 graduate students participated in the study. They were enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education, Master in Public Administration, Master in Business Administration, Doctor of Education, and Doctor of Philosophy in Education in three Higher Education Institutions. In the qualitative phase, interviews were conducted with seven graduate students until data saturation was achieved. At this point, the collection of additional data ceased as it no longer

generated new categories, properties, or relationships pertinent to the developing themes. Specifically, they were enrolled during the Third Trimester; A.Y. 2022–2023.

Graduate student populations in specific HEIs in Cebu and Palawan, Philippines tend to be limited in size due to institutional capacity and program offerings. Further, the inclusion criteria are limited to those enrolled in the thesis and dissertation advising course, which is only a handful in the Philippines. The qualitative and context-dependent insights often necessitate a more focused and manageable sample to ensure depth and relevance in the data collected. Likewise, typically, quantitative studies that rely on detailed, survey-based data from a defined cohort often use smaller samples.

2.4 Research instrument

The research instrument was a modified questionnaire adopted from Janer (2017). Its contents include the demographic profile of the respondents, characteristics of a thesis/dissertation adviser, the level of importance of communication and feedback, respect for the advisee and career advising, and best practices of their research advisers. This questionnaire underwent validity and reliability measures, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, interpreted as having Good internal consistency.

In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher also obtained qualitative data on the best practices of the thesis and dissertation advisers through interviews. The graduate students were asked about their experiences on the best practices of their advisers.

2.5 Research procedure

2.5.1 Data gathering

Before initiating the data collection process, formal permission to conduct the study was diligently secured from the deans of the

graduate schools across all three participating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This crucial step ensured institutional approval and adherence to academic protocols.

Upon receiving the necessary endorsements from the deans, the research team proceeded to develop and rigorously validate the research questionnaires. This meticulous process ensured the instruments were appropriate, reliable, and capable of gathering accurate data pertaining to thesis and dissertation advising best practices.

With the validated questionnaires ready, informed consent was then obtained from all participating graduate students. This ethical safeguard ensured that each student understood the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and their voluntary involvement.

For efficient and broad reach, the questionnaires were administered via Google Forms. The links were distributed electronically to the graduate students, allowing for convenient completion and submission. Once completed, the responses were electronically retrieved, streamlining the data collection and organization process.

Data triangulation in this study involved using both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights to develop a comprehensive understanding of effective advising practices. This approach ensures that the conclusions drawn are well-substantiated and reflective of different aspects of the research problem, ultimately strengthening the overall quality and reliability of the research outcomes.

2.5.2 Data analysis

The demographic profile of the graduate students was analyzed using means, medians, modes, and standard deviations were computed. The data on the characteristics considered in choosing a research adviser were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The degree of importance of identified constructs was determined using weighted means and medians. To test the significance of relationship between the profile of the participants and their perceived degree of importance of research advising, Multiple Regression was used. For the qualitative data on the graduate students' ideas on a good research adviser and their best practices, thematic analysis by Colaizzi (1978) was employed. This method played a pivotal role in extracting and interpreting the qualitative data gathered from graduate students regarding their best experiences with thesis and dissertation advisers. This systematic approach involved several stages, including familiarization with the data, where the transcripts were read and re-read; identifying significant statements based on the utterances of the participants relevant to the topic at hand; formulating meanings given the significant statements, clustering themes generated from the formulated meanings; and finally developing comprehensive themes that encapsulate the essence of participants' experiences.

2.6 Ethical considerations

All forms of communication and information were provided to the research participants and partner institutions during the conduct of this study. During the data collection, there were

no familial, nor were there financial matters involved between the researcher and the research participants. The involvement of research sponsors during the study was also prohibited. No participant was placed at harm or risk of either physical, mental, emotional, or psychological harm. Non-mentioning of the names of the research participants was observed to protect their identity. The desire of the research participants to provide personal information was not allowed. The utmost confidentiality is the researcher's main concern in treating all the data that will be gathered. The spreadsheet containing the research participants' scores, survey responses, and other information was secured. During survey administration, collection, and analysis, all assurances were provided to ensure confidentiality.

3 Results and discussion

The graduate students' demographic profile, the characteristics they consider in choosing an adviser, the degree of importance of communication and feedback, respect for the advisee and career advising, and their ideas on a good thesis and dissertation adviser are discussed herein.

3.1 Graduate students' demographic profile

This section presents the findings of the first objective of the study, which is to describe the graduate students in terms of age, gender, type of higher education institution, and the year they first enrolled in graduate school. These are depicted in Table 1.

In this study, 72 graduate students participated, coming from HEIs in Cebu and Palawan, Philippines. Their demographic profile is presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, the profile of the graduate students in terms of age, gender, type of HEI, and the year they first enrolled in Graduate School is given. Of the 72 graduate student respondents, the mean age is 34.72 with a standard deviation of 9.15. This suggests that the population studied includes both younger and older participants, but the majority are likely to be in their late 20s to early 40s. The standard deviation of 9.15 shows that there is some variability in the ages of the participants, with most ages falling within approximately 9.15 years above or below the mean. This spread could reflect a diverse group of graduate students which might influence their preferences and views on thesis and dissertation advising based on their different life stages and experiences.

Monk (2021) study on "Factors Affecting the Academic Success of Adult Students" focuses on adult learners (often older students) and their advising needs. The study suggests that older students, typically those over 30, tend to prefer advisors who provide clear, actionable feedback and practical guidance on balancing academic and personal commitments. Similarly, Gardner (2009) in her study on "Student and Faculty Attributions of Attrition in Doctoral Education," explores how age differences among graduate students can affect their academic experiences, including interactions with advisors. Older students often have different professional and life responsibilities, which can influence their advising preferences, such as a need for more flexible deadlines and communication styles.

TABLE 1 Demographic profile of the graduate students.

Profile	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
Below 30 years	32	44.44
31–40 years	22	30.56
Above 40 years	18	25.00
Mean = 34.72		
SD = 9.15		
Gender		
Male	19	26.39
Female	53	73.61
Type of HEI		
Public	56	77.78
Private	16	22.22
Year first enrolled		
1999–2003	2	2.78
2004–2008	2	2.78
2009–2013	10	13.89
2014–2018	17	23.61
2019–2023	41	56.94
Total	72	100.00%

The results on the gender of the respondents show that more females participated with a 7:3 female: male ratio. [Maher et al. \(2004\)](#) highlight how older students, especially those returning to academia after careers, may prefer more structured and outcome-focused advising to balance their academic and personal responsibilities. [Tinto \(1994\)](#) explored how age can affect the social integration of students in academic programs, impacting their advising preferences. Older students, especially those with professional backgrounds, may prefer more transactional advising relationships, with a focus on efficient completion of tasks and career guidance.

[Schlosser and Gelso \(2001\)](#) showed that female students often prefer more supportive, collaborative advising relationships, valuing personal connection and mentorship. Male students, on the other hand, may seek more independent, task-oriented advising interactions. This indicates that gender can influence the style and tone of advising relationships. Meanwhile, [Curtin et al. \(2016\)](#). Their study, *Mentoring the Next Generation of Faculty: Supporting Academic Career Aspirations Among Doctoral Students*, discusses how gender affects academic career trajectories. Female students tend to benefit from advisors who offer mentorship in navigating gender biases in academia. Advising preferences for women often include receiving guidance on work-life balance and overcoming institutional barriers, whereas male students may focus more on research and career development.

More graduate students came from public HEIs (77.78%) than from the private ones (22.22%). This result suggests that women may have a greater interest in participating in research

TABLE 2 Characteristics in choosing a research adviser.

Research adviser characteristic	Frequency	%
Research reputation	2	2.78
Coaching and mentoring abilities	29	40.28
Field of specialization	26	36.11
Availability	4	5.56
Attitude of the person	3	4.17
Has interest in your research	8	11.11

about advising preferences and best practices. This could be tied to findings in various studies that show women place a higher emphasis on mentoring, personal support, and communication in their advising relationships. Female participants might be more motivated to contribute to discussions on improving the advising process.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data from several reports, including [The National Center for Education Statistics \(2019\)](#), highlights that women have consistently outnumbered men in graduate programs, especially in the humanities, education, and social sciences. This gender trend in graduate education may explain why more women participate in studies on academic advising, as they represent a larger portion of the graduate student population.

3.2 Characteristics considered in choosing a research adviser

The key findings for the second objective of the study, which is to identify the specific attributes that graduate students prioritize when selecting their thesis or dissertation advisers, are presented in this section, are given in [Table 2](#). The results provide insights into the qualities students deem most important, such as field of specialization, research reputation, coaching and mentoring abilities, availability, interest in your research, and attitude. By examining these results, a deeper understanding of how students navigate the advising process and the characteristics that contribute to a productive and positive advising relationship is gained.

The graduate students were made to choose only one characteristic they consider in choosing a research adviser. [Table 2](#) shows the results.

The findings regarding student preferences and desired characteristics of research advisers reveal a nuanced landscape that both aligns with and challenges common assumptions in academic mentoring literature.

Researcher's preferences highlight coaching and mentoring abilities, field of specialization, and research reputation as the most valued attributes. Notably, coaching and mentoring abilities emerged as the top criterion, with 40.28% of students prioritizing this characteristic over others such as research reputation or availability. While many traditional view research expertise or reputation as primary, these findings suggest that

students increasingly see their adviser's mentorship quality—characterized by guidance, emotional support, and pedagogical skill—as more critical than mere academic credentials or prestige. This challenges conventional emphasis on research output and reputation alone, underscoring that personalized mentorship and emotional support are perhaps more vital to student success and satisfaction.

On the students' preferences, the findings emphasize traits such as availability, empathy, and active listening, along with technical expertise. Interestingly, students rated coachability and mentoring skills as the most important characteristic, which may contravene the common assumption that a supervisor's research reputation or field alignment are the most decisive factors in advisor selection. This indicates a shift toward valuing relational qualities and emotional intelligence over solely academic credentials, aligning with literature that recognizes the importance of interpersonal dimensions in effective supervision.

Furthermore, the characteristics considered in choosing an advisor—such as a research reputation (though less prioritized), field of specialization, and mentoring abilities—highlight a complex decision matrix. The relatively lower weight given to research reputation (2.78%) challenges the traditional view that academic prestige primarily influences choice. Instead, it points toward a more relational and support-focused criterion where students prioritize advisers who can nurture their development, both professionally and personally.

The findings of the study agree with the results of a number of related studies. According to [Paglis et al. \(2006\)](#) claims that mentoring plays a crucial role in the success of doctoral students. The study found that doctoral students who received high-quality mentoring from their advisers showed higher levels of research productivity and job satisfaction. This highlights that mentoring, rather than mere subject expertise, is a key factor in students' selection of advisers. Advisers who are good mentors help students navigate the complexities of research, develop professional networks, and provide emotional support, making them more attractive choices as research mentors. Similarly, [Wisker \(2012\)](#) in "The Good Supervisor: Supervising Postgraduate and Undergraduate Research for Doctoral Theses and Dissertations" emphasizes that effective advising extends beyond technical supervision. The ability to mentor students through the emotional and intellectual challenges of research is crucial. Wisker identifies that students often prioritize an adviser's mentoring abilities over their research accomplishments. Students value advisers who can provide personalized guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback, which is central to the mentoring relationship.

3.3 Degree of importance of research advising

The following section presents the research results of the third objective of the study, which is to determine the degree of importance attributed to various constructs of research advising, such as communication and feedback, respect for the advisee, and career advising. [Table 3](#) displays these results. The findings highlight the weight that respondents place on these different aspects of the advising relationship, offering insights into which characteristics are considered most critical by students when selecting a research adviser. By understanding these preferences, the graduate student may be greatly helped in the research journey leading toward completion and graduation.

The graduate student respondents were asked to rate the degree of importance of communication and feedback, respect for the advisee, and career advising in their preference for a research adviser. The results are given in [Table 3](#). It can be seen that the graduate students considered the three constructs Very Important, with an overall mean rating of 3.86. But they gave the highest mean rating of 3.88 and interpreted it as Very Important to the construct Respect for the Advisee. The lowest mean rating was given to Career Advising, 3.84, though still interpreted as Very Important. The overall standard deviation is 0.35, interpreted as exceptionally small. This indicates a very high degree of consensus and consistency among graduate students regarding the importance of research advising along communication and feedback, respect for the advisee and career advising.

The preference for "respect for the advisee" as a top criterion in choosing a research adviser among graduate students is supported by various studies and literature that emphasize the importance of mutual respect and effective communication in the advisor-advisee relationship.

Research indicates that mutual respect is fundamental to a successful advising relationship. Graduate students often seek advisers who treat them as equals and acknowledge their contributions. This respect fosters a positive working environment where students feel valued and supported in their academic pursuits.

The study of [Monk \(2021\)](#) highlighted that students who perceive their advisers as respectful are more likely to report higher satisfaction with their advising experience. Respectful interactions contribute to a sense of belonging and encourage students to engage more fully in their research projects. Meanwhile, effective communication is closely tied to respect. Advisers who maintain open lines of communication and show genuine interest in their advisees' wellbeing create an atmosphere of trust. This trust allows

TABLE 3 Degree of importance of research advising constructs ($n = 72$).

Degree of importance of ...	Weighted mean	Median	SD	Verbal interpretation
Communication and feedback	3.87	4.00	0.34	Very important
Respect for the advisee	3.88	4.00	0.33	Very important
Career advising	3.84	4.00	0.36	Very important
Overall rating	3.86	4.00	0.35	Very important

TABLE 4 Degree of importance of communication and feedback (n = 72).

Degree of importance of ...	Weighted mean	Median	SD	Verbal interpretation
Communication and feedback	3.87	4.00	0.34	Very important
<i>Indicators</i>				
1. Provide clear, timely, and honest communication about dissertation work. Communicate frequently with advisees about expectations and responsibilities, ensuring with each communication that there is mutual understanding.	3.94	4.00	0.23	Very important
2. Help advisees to plan, set attainable goals, and establish a timeline for the completion of the dissertation.	3.92	4.00	0.28	Very important
3. Assist advisees in matters concerning the dissertation committee.	3.86	4.00	0.35	Very important
4. Decode or demystify departmental and OGS policies, requirements, and terminology regarding the dissertation.	3.76	4.00	0.43	Very important

TABLE 5 Degree of importance of respect for the advisee (n = 72).

Degree of importance of ...	Weighted mean	Median	SD	Verbal interpretation
Respect for the advisee	3.88	4.00	0.33	Very important
<i>Indicators</i>				
1. Provide an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment.	3.90	4.00	0.30	Very important
2. Understand and respect that each advisee brings different perspectives, experiences, and interests.	3.85	4.00	0.36	Very important
3. Listen to and support an advisee's scholarly and professional goals.	3.88	4.00	0.33	Very important

students to express concerns, seek guidance, and share ideas without fear of judgment.

considering that the graduate students trust these guidelines to their research advisers to help them each and every step of the way.

3.3.1 Degree of importance of communication and feedback

Communication and feedback play a critical role in effective research advising. Clear, consistent communication between adviser and advisee is foundational to guiding the student through the complexities of research work, from conceptualization to completion. Timely and constructive feedback not only facilitates academic progress but also builds the student's confidence and skills in addressing research challenges. The results on the degree and importance of communication and feedback for the graduate students along thesis and dissertation advising are given in Table 4.

The importance of communication and feedback was given an overall mean rating of 3.87, a median of 4.00, and interpreted as Very Important. The computed standard deviation SD is 0.34, interpreted as exceptionally small. The graduate students' responses are consistent and in consensus. The research findings emphasize that students highly value advisers who communicate effectively and provide regular, actionable feedback, as these elements are key to a productive and positive advising relationship. Among the indicators, providing clear, timely, and honest communication about dissertation work was rated highest, with 3.94, interpreted as Very Important. Meanwhile, decoding or demystifying departmental and graduate policies, requirements, and terminology regarding the dissertation was given the least rating of 3.76, still considered Very Important. This could be so

3.3.2 Degree of importance of respect for the advisee

Among the various factors influencing graduate students' choice of an adviser, the concept of respect for advisees emerges as a cornerstone preference. By understanding the critical role of respect, we can better appreciate how it informs graduate students' preferences and influences their choices in selecting an adviser. Shown in Table 5 are the indicators for the degree of importance of respect for the advisee as a preference of the graduate school student.

The degree of importance of respect for the advisee was given a mean rating of 3.88 and a median of 4.00 interpreted as very important. The computed standard deviation is 0.33, considered as low, with the responses of the graduate students not deviating much from each other. This low SD is a very strong positive finding. It means that respect for the advisee is overwhelmingly recognized as crucial by the graduate student body. Among the three indicators, providing an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment was given the highest rating of 3.90, interpreted as Very Important.

The importance of respect in the advisor-advisee relationship is a critical factor influencing graduate students' preferences when selecting an advisor. Numerous studies and literature highlight the significance of mutual respect, communication, and understanding in fostering a productive advising environment.

TABLE 6 Degree of importance of career advising (n = 72).

Degree of importance of ...	Weighted mean	Median	SD	Verbal interpretation
Career advising	3.84	4.00	0.36	Very important
<i>Indicators</i>				
1. Recognize and promote an advisee's contributions to research in publications or presentations at conferences.	3.82	4.00	0.39	Very important
2. Support the development of teaching skills when relevant to career goals.	3.81	4.00	0.40	Very important
3. Acknowledge the advisee's service, for example, mentors and graduate student peers, etc.	3.79	4.00	0.41	Very important
4. Connect an advisee to your own professional networks and support opportunities for the advisee to cultivate professional and technical skills that may open up broader career outcomes.	3.83	4.00	0.38	Very important
5. Be realistic, open, and honest about career prospects and options.	3.89	4.00	0.32	Very important
6. Understand and respect that each advisee brings different perspectives, experiences and interests.	3.86	4.00	0.35	Very important
7. Listen to and support an advisee's scholarly and professional goals.	3.90	4.00	0.30	Very important

The advisor-advisee relationship significantly influences a graduate student's academic journey. A respectful relationship can enhance motivation, engagement, and overall academic performance. Conversely, a lack of respect can lead to misunderstandings and hinder a student's progress (University of Illinois Urbana, 2024). The findings agree with Schroeder and Terras (2015) who emphasized the importance of immediate and electronic feedback, and Hoomanfar (2024) who found that both master's and doctoral students expressed high levels of preference for receiving clear and encouraging feedback.

3.3.3 Degree of importance of career advising

As students navigate the complexities of their fields, the right adviser can play a crucial role in shaping their professional trajectories, offering insights into industry trends, networking opportunities, and pathways to employment. The results of the degree of importance of career advising in the choice of an adviser are given in Table 6. It can be gleaned that the graduate students gave an overall mean rating of 3.84, and a median of 4.00 interpreted as Very Important. A standard deviation of 0.36 was computed for the perceived importance of career advising. This means that the responses of the graduate students strongly indicate that, as a group, they hold a very consistent and similar view on this. The accompanying mean score of 3.88, which is high, signifies a widespread consensus that career advising is highly valued and considered critically important.

Listening to and supporting an advisee's scholarly and professional goals was rated highest with 3.90 as the mean rating and interpreted as very important. Graduate students face distinct challenges in career development compared to undergraduates, often requiring tailored support due to their advanced academic pursuits and life responsibilities. They may have more work experience, but also face complexities like family obligations, which can strain their ability to navigate the job market effectively (Hardaway et al., 2023).

Critically, these findings suggest that students are seeking more than just technical guidance; they value advisers who can serve as mentors, emotional supporters, and collaborators, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal skills. This insight calls for a reevaluation of faculty development programs, urging institutions to focus not only on research productivity but also on mentorship training, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills.

The preferences and desired characteristics reflect a broader, more holistic view of advising—one that integrates technical expertise with relational competencies, potentially challenging the traditional hierarchy that privileges reputation and specialization. These findings advocate for a paradigm shift in faculty development and advising strategies, emphasizing the human and relational aspects of mentoring as central to student success.

The findings of this study highlight that graduate students highly value advising practices characterized by coaching, mentoring, and respect. This aligns closely with the principles of the anchor theory of the study—the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) by Eccles et al. According to EVT, students' motivation to engage in academic tasks—such as working on their thesis or dissertation—is influenced by their beliefs about their own abilities (expectancy of success) and the importance they assign to completing the task (task value).

The emphasis students place on advisers who demonstrate support, expertise, and respectful communication reflects their perception that such qualities enhance their confidence in their capacity to succeed (expectancy) and increase the perceived value of the advising process. For instance, students' appreciation for advisers who provide constructive feedback and emotional support suggests that these behaviors reinforce their belief in their ability to complete the research successfully. Moreover, the recognition of diverse advising preferences underscores the importance of aligning advising practices with students' subjective perceptions of value, which in turn can boost their motivation to persist and excel.

Therefore, integrating EVT facilitates an understanding of how specific advising characteristics influence students' motivational states and their overall satisfaction with the research process.

TABLE 7 Test of Significance of the relationship between profile and perceived degree of importance of research advising.

Profile variables paired with perceived degree of importance of research advising	Multiple R	R-square	p-value	Significance
Age	0.28521	0.08134	0.019913*	Significant
Gender			0.892726	Not significant
Type of HEI			0.979008	Not significant
Year enrolled			0.235948	Not significant

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.4 Test of the significance of the relationship between profile and perceived degree of importance

This section presents the results of the fourth objective of the study, which is to verify and test the significance of the relationship between the profile of the research participants and their perceived degree of importance of research advising. Multiple Regression was used to do this. The results are presented in Table 7.

As gleaned in Table 7, a computed Multiple $R = 0.28521$ represents the strength of the linear relationship between the combined set of predictor variables (Age, Gender, Type of HEI, Year Enrolled) and the perceived importance of research advising. This value of 0.28521 indicates a *weak positive linear relationship* which means that as these profile variables change, there's only a *very slight tendency* for the perceived importance of research advising to change in a related, predictable way.

Moreover, an R -Square = 0.08134, the coefficient of determination, represents the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (perceived importance of research advising) that can be explained by the independent variables (Age, Gender, Type of HEI, Year Enrolled) in the model. An R -Square of 0.08134 implies that approximately 8.134% of the variability in graduate students' perceived importance of research advising can be accounted for by their age, gender, type of higher education institution (HEI), and year enrolled. Conversely, about 91.866% of the variability in perceived importance is not explained by these variables. This suggests that other factors, not included in this model, are much more influential in shaping students' perceptions of research advising's importance.

The p -values for each predictor variable tell us whether that specific variable has a statistically significant linear relationship with the perceived importance of research advising when controlling for the other variables in the model. We typically compare these p -values to a pre-determined significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

For the predictor variable age, a p -value = 0.019913 is less than 0.05. Age is a statistically significant predictor of the perceived importance of research advising. This suggests that there is a *significant linear relationship* between a graduate student's age and their perception of research advising's importance, holding other variables constant.

In terms of Gender, a p -value = 0.892726 was obtained. This p -value (0.892726) is much greater than 0.05, thus, Gender is not a statistically significant predictor of the perceived importance

of research advising. This implies that there is no significant linear relationship between a graduate student's gender and their perception of research advising's importance, after accounting for age, type of HEI, and year enrolled. In simpler terms, gender does not appear to influence how important students perceive research advising to be.

When it comes to the Type of HEI, a p -value = 0.979008 resulted and since this p -value (0.979008) is much greater than 0.05, Type of HEI is not a statistically significant predictor. This suggests that the type of higher education institution (public vs. private) does not significantly predict how important graduate students perceive research advising to be, when controlling for other variables in the model.

Lastly, the Year Enrolled obtained a p -value = 0.235948, greater than 0.05, thus, Year Enrolled is not a statistically significant predictor. This indicates that there is no significant linear relationship between the year a student enrolled (or their progress in their program) and their perceived importance of research advising, when accounting for other variables.

The regression model explains only a very small proportion (about 8.13%) of the variability in graduate students' perceived importance of research advising. This suggests that the included profile variables are not strong drivers of this perception. Among the tested profile variables, only Age emerges as a statistically significant predictor. Gender, Type of HEI, and Year Enrolled do not appear to have a significant influence on how graduate students perceive the importance of research advising within this model.

3.5 Thesis and dissertation best practices experienced by the graduate students

The results of the fifth objective of the study, which is to explore the thesis and dissertation best practices experienced by the graduate students, are presented in this section. In the context of this study, Colaizzi's method facilitated a rigorous and structured exploration of students' narratives to reveal core themes such as "The Cs of Advising," "Respect begets Respect," and "Have Fun and Enjoy the Journey." For example, the "Cs of Advising" (Commit, Communicate, Comply) emerged as fundamental qualities and behaviors that students associate with effective advising. Through detailed analysis, these themes encapsulate the interpersonal and professional dynamics that students perceive as impactful in the advising relationship.

Applying Colaizzi's approach ensured that the themes were rooted in the students' own words and experiences, maintaining the authenticity and richness of their perspectives. It also allowed the researchers to distill complex, nuanced insights into clear, actionable themes that can inform best practices. Overall, this method not only organized qualitative data effectively but also provided deeper understanding of how advising practices influence students' motivation, satisfaction, and academic success, aligning with the study's goal of informing an advising handbook that supports positive adviser-advisee interactions.

Guided by data saturation, there were six graduate students interviewed on the best practices they have experienced with their thesis and dissertation advisers. Findings revealed the themes generated as The Cs of Advising, Respect begets Respect, and Have Fun and Enjoy the Journey.

The graduate students shared their experience with the best practices of their thesis or dissertation advisers. The vignettes are given in the discussion that follows:

3.5.1 The Cs of advising

The Cs of Advising encapsulate core behaviors essential for a productive advising relationship: Commit, Communicate, and Comply. These elements underscore the importance of consistency, clarity, and adherence to agreed-upon roles. For instance, students valued advisors who actively checked on their progress, responded promptly to submissions, and demonstrated genuine interest, emphasizing that committed and proactive engagement fosters trust. These elements align with best practices in mentorship literature, emphasizing reliability and open dialogue as critical for student success.

Vignettes from the participants reflect the C's of advising: commit, communicate and comply.

Commit:

P4: "She always checked on me and made sure prepared from Ppts and all write- -ups."

P3: "When I submitted my write-ups, my adviser immediately checked them and sent it back to me as soon as possible."

P2: "Her love toward her craft encouraged me to do my best also."

P5: "Monitor the advisee on the development of their dissertation. Ready at all times if need arises."

Communicate:

P5: "He answered all my questions and queries always."

P1: "My adviser is very patient, kind and caring. And most of all, she is very knowledgeable about thesis/dissertation writing. She really helped me a lot."

P2: "Always have an open and honest communication regarding the project and timelines."

Effective communication—answering queries patiently and providing constructive feedback—serves as the backbone for mutual understanding.

Comply:

P2: "He oriented me on what will happen during the final oral exam, which I really appreciate because I felt he was always there to support me."

P5: "Apart from support and guidance, the adviser should also be responsive and give timely and relevant feedback to the output of his/her advisee."

P6: "Review drafts and materials promptly. Offer honest, specific, and actionable feedback that promotes growth and refinement."

Compliance reflects the importance of setting clear expectations, especially regarding procedural aspects such as final exams, which helps students feel supported and prepared.

3.5.2 Respect begets respect

Respect Begets Respect highlights the reciprocal nature of the advising relationship. When advisors exhibit patience, motivation, and genuine care, students are more likely to reciprocate with dedication and perseverance. This theme underscores the emotional and relational dimensions of advising, suggesting that fostering a respectful and supportive environment enhances motivation, reduces stress, and promotes resilience among students. Respect also implies acknowledging students' efforts and individuality, which can reinforce their confidence and commitment.

P1: "Should help his/her advisee with heart."

P6: "When I felt I couldn't do it anymore, you were always there to motivate me and assure me that we can do it together."

P2: "A good dissertation adviser always provides a friendly environment to the advisee to help the advisee become more inspired in doing the research work."

P5: "I think a thesis adviser should be gentle but firm to advisees. Gentle in the sense that he/she is patient in explaining things and firm at the same time, especially in accomplishing the task of the advisee."

3.5.3 Have fun and enjoy the journey

Have Fun and Enjoy the Journey introduces an element of positive engagement and relational warmth. When advising is approached with a sense of enjoyment and light-heartedness, it transforms a potentially stressful process into a more meaningful and fulfilling experience. Students appreciated advisors who created an encouraging atmosphere, recognizing their role not only as technical guides but also as mentors who can inspire passion and enthusiasm for research. This theme aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of emotional support and fostering a sense of purpose and enjoyment in academic pursuits.

The following are utterances from the participants about having fun and enjoying the research journey.

P4: "I told my adviser, This is it. My adviser has been part of my success for being gentle but firm during my thesis writing journey."

P5: "Accommodating and always willing to help his/her advisee."

P6: "Also, motivate their advisee's to do the best and to never give up."

Together, these themes depict advising as a holistic process that combines professional behaviors, relational respect, and emotional support. Recognizing these facets can guide advisors in fostering more effective, satisfying, and human-centered mentoring relationships that ultimately enhance student achievement and wellbeing.

In the study of [Janer \(2017\)](#), the availability of the faculty member topped the list of students' preferences in choosing their thesis adviser, with the coaching and mentoring abilities placing second. In comparison, in this study, the coaching and mentoring abilities ranked first, and the field of specialization second.

The recent findings regarding graduate students' preferences for thesis advisors, particularly their emphasis on coaching and mentoring abilities, align strongly with contemporary research from 2020–2025. Prior studies consistently highlight the shift from a prescriptive advising model to a more developmental and holistic approach, where advisors act as mentors and coaches rather than mere instructors. This developmental role, which includes empowering students and providing expert insights, guidance, and support, is recognized as an invaluable asset for graduate student success and wellbeing ([CITI Program, 2024](#); [University of Nebraska Omaha \(UNO\), 2023](#)). The convergence of these findings underscores a clear implication for higher education: institutions must prioritize formal training for faculty in coaching and mentoring techniques, moving beyond traditional academic oversight to foster comprehensive student development.

The high weighted mean of 3.87 for the importance of communication and feedback further reinforces a well-established theme in recent advising literature. Research from 2020 to 2025 consistently identifies clear, timely, and frequent communication as a critical characteristic of effective advising ([CITI Program, 2024](#); [University of California Office of the President, 2022](#); [Yale University, 2025](#)). Studies indicate that regular contact, including weekly meetings and constructive written feedback, is strongly correlated with higher advisor satisfaction and increased student engagement in their academic work ([University of California Office of the President, 2022](#)). This continuity in findings suggests that while the importance of communication is widely acknowledged, institutions must ensure that advisors are equipped with the skills and support systems necessary to maintain consistent, high-quality communication and feedback loops, which are vital for student progress and satisfaction.

Finally, the significant weighted means for “respect for the advisee” (3.88) and “career advising” (3.84) reflect a growing emphasis on holistic student support and preparation for diverse professional futures. Recent literature from 2020 to 2025 stresses that students expect advisors to demonstrate respect for their individuality, culture, and diversity, fostering an emotionally supportive, safe, and inclusive environment ([University of Massachusetts Boston, 2019](#); [Yale University, 2025](#)). Concurrently, students highly value realistic and open discussions about various career paths, both within and outside academia, with satisfaction in career advice correlating positively with optimism about post-graduation prospects ([University of California Office of the President, 2022](#); [Yale University, 2025](#)). These findings imply that institutions must invest in training advisors in cultural competency and equip them with the knowledge and resources to provide comprehensive career guidance, integrating it as a core component of the advising relationship rather than a peripheral service.

3.6 Proposed graduate school thesis and dissertation advising handbook

The sixth objective of the study, which is to create a proposed graduate school thesis and dissertation advising handbook, is addressed in this section. The handbook incorporates the salient findings of the study guided by the preferences of the graduate students, prioritizing advisers who excel in coaching and mentoring, possess expertise in relevant fields, and actively listen to and support their professional goals. By recognizing and addressing these preferences, the adviser-advisee relationship can be enhanced, fostering an environment that not only promotes academic excellence but also nurtures the professional development of future leaders in their respective fields. The [University of Central Florida Graduate Studies \(2024\)](#) emphasized that having a detailed Program Handbook can help students know what to expect at all stages of their graduate study in your program, including the thesis and dissertation stage.

The proposed graduate school Thesis and Dissertation Advising Handbook is designed to serve as a comprehensive, practical guide aiming to enhance the quality of adviser-advisee interactions, promote best practices, and ultimately facilitate student success. It is tailored to fostering an effective adviser-advisee relationship. By including explicit guidelines, templates, and resources, the handbook minimizes vagueness and provides clear pathways for implementing best practices in thesis and dissertation advising for better student outcomes.

The handbook commences with a substantive Foreword and Introduction, establishing the foundational rationale for its existence. It articulates with precision its Purpose: to standardize advising methodologies across the institutional landscape, thereby ensuring consistency, equity, and transparency in faculty-student interactions. Beyond mere procedural standardization, the handbook endeavors to cultivate robust, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships between faculty advisors and graduate students, ultimately culminating in the efficacious and timely completion of advanced scholarly works. The Scope and Applicability section delineates the intended readership, confirming its relevance to all faculty advisors, matriculated graduate students, and pertinent program coordinators. Underlying the entire edifice of the handbook are explicitly stated Underlying Principles: these core tenets encapsulate unwavering respect, stringent professionalism, uncompromised integrity, and, fundamentally, a pervasive commitment to student-centered mentorship, ensuring that the intellectual and professional development of the advisee remains the paramount objective.

Chapter 1, “Foundations of Effective Advising,” systematically delineates the synergistic components of this pivotal academic relationship. It meticulously outlines the distinct yet interdependent Roles and Responsibilities of both parties. The Adviser's Role is posited as multifaceted: encompassing profound mentorship, strategic guidance, the judicious facilitation of essential resources, and the rigorous oversight of ethical research conduct. Concurrently, the Advisee's Role is characterized by proactive engagement, adherence to timely communication protocols, and a resolute assumption of accountability for their academic progression. The discourse then transitions to the critical establishment of Expectations and Mutual Commitments, emphasizing the imperative of collaborative goal-setting—a

process that integrates academic milestones with broader professional development and personal growth objectives. This section underscores the necessity of unequivocally articulating expectations concerning the parameters of faculty support, the frequency of scheduled meetings, and the preferred modalities for communication. The intrinsic nature of The Advising Relationship is thoroughly explored, underscoring the foundational importance of cultivating trust, fostering mutual respect, and sustaining open channels of communication, all elegantly encapsulated by the mnemonic “The Cs of Advising”: Commit, Communicate, and Comply.

Chapter 2, “Communication and Feedback,” elevates the strategic imperative of effective scholastic discourse. It disaggregates Effective Communication Strategies, advocating for a judicious blend of regular, formally scheduled meetings and responsive, *ad hoc* interactions as necessitated by research progression. The chapter unequivocally underscores the critical importance of delivering clear, constructive, and expeditious feedback, alongside the prudent integration of technological platforms for seamless informational exchange. Within the discussion of Feedback Principles, the handbook champions the efficacy of positive reinforcement, advocating for the provision of specific, actionable suggestions designed to stimulate intellectual dialogue and cultivate student ownership of their scholarly output. Recognizing the administrative cornerstone of effective advising, it mandates Documenting Advising Interactions, requiring the meticulous maintenance of comprehensive records pertaining to meetings, critical decisions, and all forms of delivered feedback.

Proceeding to the pragmatic application of advising principles, Chapter 3, “Advising Best Practices and Supporting Student Success,” offers a compendium of actionable strategies. Mentoring Strategies elucidate how advisors can effectively guide students through the complex exigencies of research design, methodological rigor, and the formidable task of scholarly exposition. The scope extends to actively supporting professional development and the critical pursuit of academic publication, while also addressing subtle yet potent motivational techniques—underscoring that mutual respect is foundational and that the cultivation of intellectual enjoyment is integral to sustained academic endeavor. A pivotal theme emerges in Fostering Independence, detailing methodologies for incrementally augmenting student autonomy, thereby cultivating advanced critical thinking and sophisticated problem-solving proficiencies. Crucially, the chapter addresses Respect and Cultural Sensitivity, a cornerstone of inclusive and equitable mentoring, emphasizing the imperative of recognizing diverse intellectual and cultural backgrounds and actively practicing cultural humility.

In anticipation of the inevitable challenges inherent in advanced research, Chapter 4, “Managing Challenges and Conflicts,” provides a robust framework for navigating potential impediments. It identifies prevalent Common Advising Challenges, such as incongruent expectations, impediments to effective time management, and fluctuations in student motivation. For Strategies for Resolution, the handbook champions open, direct dialogue as the primary recourse, followed by established mediation procedures and clear protocols for discerning when and how to appropriately engage departmental or institutional support mechanisms. The chapter rigorously addresses Addressing Ethical

Issues, providing comprehensive guidance on upholding research integrity and meticulously addressing concerns related to academic plagiarism and scholarly misconduct.

Chapter 5, “Institutional Support and Resources,” contextualizes the advising relationship within the broader institutional ecosystem of support. It systematically outlines Adviser Support Systems, detailing available faculty development programs and the demonstrable benefits of peer mentoring networks. In parallel, it delineates Student Support Services, directing students to invaluable institutional resources such as writing centers, specialized research support units, and critical counseling and mental health services. The chapter also underscores the paramount importance of Utilization of Institutional Policies, ensuring that all stakeholders are comprehensively conversant with graduation requirements, critical deadlines, key milestones, and established feedback and evaluation protocols.

Finally, Chapter 6, “Evaluation and Continuous Improvement,” reinforces the dynamic and evolving nature of effective advising. It details methodologies for Monitoring Advising Effectiveness through structured feedback surveys administered to students and encourages advisors to maintain comprehensive advising portfolios and reflective logs. It champions ongoing Professional Development through targeted workshops and seminars focused on mentoring best practices, advocating for continuous reflective engagement. This unwavering commitment to iterative enhancement extends to Updating Practices, necessitating a regular review of advising protocols and the imperative integration of feedback from both students and advisors, thereby ensuring that the handbook itself remains a living, adaptable, and perpetually relevant document.

The handbook culminates with comprehensive Appendices, serving as an invaluable practical toolkit for navigating the advising journey. These include illustrative Sample Forms and Templates for meeting agendas, progress assessment instruments, and structured feedback forms, designed to streamline administrative processes. Sample Communication Templates offer standardized yet adaptable examples for email correspondence and meeting confirmations. Lastly, a detailed Resource Directory provides precise references to institutional research guidelines, relevant overarching policies, and specific regulations, thereby rendering this handbook a truly self-contained and indispensable companion throughout the arduous yet rewarding pursuit of graduate scholarship.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

The study looked into the thesis and dissertation advising preferences of graduate students and the best practices of their advisers as a basis for a proposed thesis and dissertation advising handbook. It highlights the importance of prioritizing coaching, mentoring, and mutual respect in thesis and dissertation advising. Recognizing diverse student preferences and implementing best practices can enhance the advising experience, leading to greater student satisfaction and success. Developing a comprehensive advising handbook based on these findings can serve as a valuable tool in fostering effective advisory relationships. Understanding

the preferences of graduate students regarding their thesis and dissertation advising is paramount for developing effective and supportive educational environments. These preferences are not merely anecdotal desires but foundational elements that significantly influence student outcomes and institutional success.

More importantly, recognizing and addressing the diverse advising preferences of graduate students is important in fostering a supportive academic environment that enhances student achievement and satisfaction.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were generated:

1. Universities should implement or strengthen training programs for advisers, focusing on developing coaching and mentoring skills. These programs could include workshops on active listening, providing constructive feedback, and supporting students emotionally and academically.
2. Institutions should emphasize the importance of respect in the advising process, encouraging open communication and mutual understanding between advisers and advisees. This could be reinforced through regular adviser-advisee meetings, where both parties can discuss expectations, challenges, and goals.
3. Institutions may consider recognizing and rewarding advisers who demonstrate exceptional coaching and mentoring abilities and respect for their students. Awards or recognition programs can motivate advisers to cultivate these important attributes.
4. At minimum, the cultural equivalencies or corresponding fit for the framework used in the can be addressed as an area for further exploration and inquiry.
5. Clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of both advisers and students should be established. These guidelines can help manage expectations, reduce conflicts, and ensure that both coaching/mentoring and respectful communication are prioritized in the advising process. Thus, the thesis and dissertation advising handbook comes in handy along with this recommendation.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

MD: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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