

Identifying Task Outcomes in the Developmental Advising Model: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

High retention and low graduation rates are the most often cited challenges of doctoral education in the United States. Research has indicated that about 40% - 60% of students enrolled in doctoral programs do not complete their degrees. Studies have also shown that the dual advising system (offering students a professional academic advisor and a faculty mentor) establishes a strong student-advisor relationship that supports and guides doctoral students to succeed in their academic endeavors. This qualitative study employed how *identifying task outcomes* in Creamer and Creamer's developmental advising model contributes to doctoral students' holistic growth and success. The *identifying task outcomes* stage specifies setting objectives to control the advising process and its impact. The study purposefully recruited nine participants (five doctoral students and four advisors) to answer the research question: What are advisors' and doctoral students' perceptions about *identifying task outcomes* in the dual advising system for students' success? Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that concepts such as influencing and broadening students' academic interests, constant reassessment, and encouraging students to persevere are critical to doctoral students' academic success in the dual advising system. The study findings can be used to enhance the quality of academic advising in meeting doctoral students' growing challenges and success expectations.

Keywords

Developmental Advising Model, Qualitative Study, Dual Advising System

1. Introduction

Research has established that over 20 million students with bachelor's degrees go further to pursue graduate degrees in the United States (Allen & Seaman, 2017;

Choudaha, 2017; Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015). Because graduate education is deemed essential to the U.S. education system, almost 10% of American adults earn an advanced degree (Jones et al., 2015; McCarthy, 2015; Penprase, 2018; Swail, 2003; Vaughan & Burnaford, 2016). For several decades, there was a 2% yearly increase in graduate program enrollment until the early 2000s (Ma & Baum, 2016; Ma et al., 2015). However, records from the last 10 years indicate a downward trend of 50% attrition rates among graduate students, particularly doctoral students (De Freitas et al., 2015; Duke & Denicolo, 2017; Parker-Jenkins, 2018).

Researchers (e.g., Archibald et al., 2019; Jones, 2017; LeTendre et al., 2018) indicated that low graduation rates from doctoral programs are among the most often cited challenges of graduate education in the United States. Approximately 40% - 60% of students enrolled in doctoral programs do not complete their doctoral degrees (Burns & Gillespie, 2018; Gittings et al., 2018; Ma & Baum, 2016). High attrition rates have led some institutions to adopt a dual advising model to help doctoral students succeed (Johnson & Stage, 2018; Lake et al., 2018). A dual advising model offers students two advisors: a professional academic advisor from a centralized office and a faculty mentor (advisor) from the department (Donaldson et al., 2016). Researchers (e.g., Drake et al., 2013; Zhang, 2018) argued that in universities where a dual advising system exists for doctoral students, the procedures and practices of advising may follow a perceived disconnect between students and advisors. Doctoral students and their advisors setting objectives to control the advising process and its impact ensures that students do not view the advising process as a routine that lacks a working relationship. A working relationship between students and their advisors prevents them from feeling disengaged, disconnected, or unmotivated in their academic pursuits (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2016; White, 2015).

This qualitative study examined the *identifying task outcomes* stage or concept in Creamer and Creamer's (1994) developmental advising model through the dual advising system at a U.S. higher education institution. The study addressed the research question: What are advisors' and doctoral students' perceptions about *identifying task outcomes* in the dual advising system for students' success? The *identifying task outcomes* stage specifies setting objectives to control the advising process and its impact. In the dual advising system, advisors refer to professional academic advisors and faculty mentors. In this study, the terms "academic advisors" and "advisors" were used interchangeably to refer to professional academic advisors and faculty mentors.

2. Literature Review

The study explored how *identifying task outcomes* in Creamer and Creamer's (1994) developmental advising model contributes to the holistic growth of doctoral students' academic, professional, and personal goals. Creamer and Creamer's (1994) developmental advising model recommends that advisors and students use shared responsibility teaching strategies to facilitate holistic development. Creamer and

Creamer's (1994) model evolved from Crookston's (1972) developmental academic advising theory by applying a developmental task process to describe the various advisor-student roles.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) defined the developmental advising model as "the use of interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies to assist students in achieving specific learning, developmental, career, and life goals" (p. 19). Creamer and Creamer (1994) developed the model to make Crookston's (1972) developmental academic advising theory practical, acknowledging that advising is a teaching process to help students grow holistically. The researchers transformed Crookston's (1972) theory into a model that focuses on developing skills and attitudes that promote students' academic and personal growth. Creamer and Creamer (1994) created the model using three concepts or stages: defining task, identifying task outcomes, and promoting task development.

Crookston (1972) initially developed the developmental academic advising theory to revise advising functions into a more developmental approach for the student's total growth. In the 1970s, there was significant concern for administrators as labor conditions and student attrition rates increased, propelling new attitudes toward academic advising (Roessger et al., 2019). The enrollment of diversified students, some of whom lacked the necessary skills for success and required more attention, intensified the existing challenges with academic advising. The advisors during this period only assisted students in selecting a major suitable for a career, and the clergy oversaw class scheduling and calculating grade points (Al-Ansari et al., 2015; McFarlane, 2013; Zhang et al., 2019).

Regardless of the increasing number of available choices for students, the advisors' role became noticeable with the prescriptive and authoritarian advising style, where students were given specific courses to take (Alvarado & Olson, 2020; Singleton, 2015; Vasquez, 2017). The advising process was traditionally highly prescribed and authoritative, in which the advisor became the doctor, and the student became the patient (Crookston, 1972; Levinstein, 2018). Crookston (1972) reviewed mental health development in the mid-60s, which engaged clients in personal growth and resulted in a developmental experience. He believed that, "since these developmental tasks often center around helping the individual live effectively within a rapidly changing society, developmental counseling, or advising can help the student become aware of his changing self" (p. 5). Crookston (1972) proposed that students' development theory can emerge from reviewing the long-established advising function and its related assumptions, hence the developmental academic advising theory. Crookston (1972) posited that prescriptive advising presents students with "grades, credit, and income", whereas developmental advising rewards them with "achievement, mastery, acceptance, status, recognition, and fulfillment" (p. 14).

Further, Creamer and Creamer (1994) acknowledged that other student development schools of thought influenced the developmental advising model, including cognitive-development ideas, psychosocial approaches, and person-environ-

ment interaction theories. [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) argued that while cognitive development theories describe how students organize their thinking with a whole perspective and commit to a belief system where they construct their ideology about perceiving knowledge, cognition's complex nature gives diverse meanings to student experiences. Academic advisors who use cognitive theories can precisely explain students' views and situations as they help them manipulate their thought processes and articulate them through communication. For example, advisors may simplify students' dilemmas by describing how choosing correlates with their attributes ([Cahn, 2020](#); [Gati et al., 2019](#)).

Moreover, [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) explained that psychosocial theories are used to examine individuals' development over a lifespan. Psychosocial theories examine the development of tasks or challenges that must be fulfilled before advancing to the next stage of development ([Nagy et al., 2019](#); [Newman & Newman, 2017](#)). [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) noted that psychosocial theories could resolve students' developmental tasks in succession. Thus, students may move from one stage to the next after successfully deciding on one developmental task. Psychosocial theories, as an intervention, help students cope with their unique self and purpose through their interactions with the advisor ([Crumb & Haskins, 2017](#); [Gordon & Steele, 2015](#); [Kenny et al., 2019](#); [Patton et al., 2016](#)).

Furthermore, [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) established that the person-environment interaction theory describes the impact of the educational environment on the student's behavior and growth. [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) explained that the state of the climate impacts the student's character, as the student's condition also affects the environment. A person functions under the influence of their environment and vice versa. The person-environment interaction theory helps the advisor identify and explain the environment's impact on the student's behaviors outside the classroom and determines a good connection between faculty and students. The advisor uses strategies in the teaching process to gain insight as they engage in ongoing interaction to help solve the student's concerns ([Creamer & Creamer, 1994](#)).

[Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) proposed that the three concepts or stages—defining task, identifying task outcome, and promoting task development—through which student-advisor collaborations facilitate holistic growth for the student. This study focused on the *identifying task outcomes* stage or concept, which specifies setting objectives to control the advising process and its impact.

2.1. Identifying Task Outcomes

[Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) argued that the second connection to task identification is the outcome of the advising process. The advisor and student set goals and establish predictable expectations, considering conventional projections for higher learning. Both the advisor and the student must fulfill the expectations to the end. [Creamer and Creamer \(1994\)](#) proposed specific categories for students' growth to provide a conceptual structure for developmental, academic advising,

which includes “setting career and life goals, building self-insight and esteem, broadening interest, establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships, clarifying personal values and styles of life, and enhancing critical thinking and reasoning” (p. 20). These goals must guide advisors in answering students’ inquiries during the advising process.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) believed that advisors can encounter questions that necessitate learning and growth conditions for students. For instance, “questions about avoiding academic suspension... driven by uncertain self-concept, questions about requirements... concerning goal setting and interest, questions about protesting behavior of others... reveal underlying concerns for interpersonal relationships” (p. 20). The advisor’s reactions to straightforward questions that request information or opinions must not be prescriptive because students would pose mature questions in consultation, expecting responsible and developmental feedback from the interaction (Creamer & Creamer, 1994).

2.2. Model Alignment and Application to the Study

Creamer and Creamer’s (1994) developmental advising model was appropriate for this study because the model is a blueprint that advisors use to assist students in setting academic goals for retention and successful graduation. In addition, many scholars have agreed that the model applies to solving complex situations in the student’s academic and professional life (Bridgen, 2017; J. A. Lee, 2018). Creamer and Creamer (1994) stated that good academic advising enables the student to use a broad network of on-campus university support programs and obtain valuable experiences at the university. Researchers (e.g., Cuseo, 2003; Gordon & Steele, 2015) have argued that the scope of the advising phenomenon requires advisors to comprehend a variety of theories and approaches to guide the advising processes. Creamer and Creamer’s (1994) model is grounded in many developmental advising theories and approaches that help students attain holistic growth and success. Creamer and Creamer’s (1994) model uses a wide-ranging method in the advising process to ensure that well-defined duties and the duties and responsibilities of both the advisor and the doctoral student determine the outcomes. Thus, the doctoral student’s progression is nurtured to attainment (Chen, 2017; Cuseo, 2003; Hughey et al., 2012; Winston et al., 2013).

The developmental advising model concept, identifying task outcomes, informed this study’s research question. The interactive aspect of developmental academic advising works with doctoral students to embrace every educational stage of their development, giving the doctoral students comprehensive support to ensure progression in their academic, professional, and personal goals (Drake et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2016).

3. Research Design

I employed a qualitative research design to explore participants’ perceptions about *identifying task outcomes* in the dual advising system for student success at a

higher education institution in the United States. Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained that qualitative research involves gathering narrative data on variables to gain insight into phenomena. Qualitative research provides rich information about participants' beliefs, feelings, values, and motivations that support behavior and unravels complex phenomena embedded in the context (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Tracy, 2019). Additionally, qualitative researchers make inferences through oral reports, interviews, descriptions, and observations, which allow a rich and detailed description of phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2018). By encouraging participants to speak freely, qualitative researchers can gain insight into their experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Tracy, 2019).

The study was conducted at a public university in the Southeastern United States. At the time of the study, the institution had an enrollment of 9571 undergraduate students and 3071 graduate students. The college, which was the focus of the study, had 10 centralized professional advisors, 32 department faculty mentors, and 312 doctoral students. The college had a centralized office for professional academic advisors who engaged in face-to-face contact with students and could interact remotely through emails and phone conversations. The advising center maintained a website with information on academic degrees, majors, resources, and the institution's policies and procedures. The center also operated automated software that managed advising appointments and tracked students' academic progress. The college assigned all first-time entrants, including undergraduate and graduate students, a professional academic advisor to assist in course registration, goal setting, and degree completion timeline. At the doctoral level, students also had faculty mentors through the dual advising system for academic success. These faculty mentors, assigned at the department level, assisted students with coursework, dissertation writing, and other professional and social engagements relevant to their success.

I recruited study participants from advisors and doctoral students within the college that practiced the dual advising system. During the study, this college enrolled 312 online and in-person doctoral students. The study recruited professional academic advisors and faculty mentors as participants to draw ideas from different dimensions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study participants were from diverse racial groups, including White, African American, African, Asian, and Hispanic.

Participants included nine male and female doctoral students and academic advisors. I assigned pseudonyms to conceal their identities. The five student participants were P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. The four advisor participants were PME1, PME2, PME3, and PME4. All nine study participants were 18 years and above, and had experienced the dual advising system within the college for at least a year. Thus, with the exclusion of first-year students new to the program and the dual advising system, all active and continuing students qualified to participate in the study. Also, I included advisor participants because they frequently interacted with the doctoral students and the dual advising system.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study explored the research question: “What are advisors’ and doctoral students’ perceptions about *identifying task outcomes* in the dual advising system for students’ success?” Two themes emerged from the data to address the research question: 1) assessing academic, professional, and personal progress, and 2) the influence of setting academic, professional, and personal goals on academic success.

4.1. Assessing Academic, Professional, and Personal Progress

Researchers (e.g., Bailey et al., 2016; Donaldson et al., 2016; Drake et al., 2013) acknowledged that academic advisor-student partnerships assist doctoral students during the academic year to identify and select priority needs concerning academic, professional, and personal goals and address them accordingly. While students identify task outcomes with their advisors, they discover their progress within the dual advising system. Students’ progress usually concerns studies and research. Most student participants revealed discussions with their advisors centered on the right academic and career path and their advisors’ expectations. Participant 3 reported the following about assessing his academic, professional, and personal progress with his advisors:

I have, especially with my professional academic advisor. I remember there was a course that I was supposed to take one of the semesters, and he invited me to her office. I pulled out all the courses. After going through the courses, she realized we could substitute one course with a different one and make the same credit hours for me. So, she did that for me. At the end of the day, I was able to get the required course credits for that particular semester.

Additionally, P1 indicated she had contacted her professional academic advisor about her studies and whether she was on the right path. P1 explained:

I have reached out to my professional academic advisor about the progress of my studies at the university. However, as before, I am simply guiding you on the right path; keep it up. This is what you have to prepare for. I would typically receive that information in an email, possibly even with the layout or a link to review my path when I complete certain classes.

The theme of discussing studies and academic progress was further emphasized by P5. She expressed being able to advance in academics because she adhered to the degree plan her professional academic advisor had mapped out. P5 also shared that she discussed the outcomes of specific courses with her professional academic advisor and how those outcomes were relevant to her progression in the degree program.

Moreover, some advisor participants noted their efforts to ensure students were well prepared to meet the challenges associated with every semester. They exposed students to each course they were likely to take and the benefits associated with those courses. PME1 reported the following:

So, this definitely occurs each semester. I'll look at what I'm reaching out to students for in the upcoming semester and register students for their classes. So, when I reach out and review, I look at grades, GPAs, and different milestones. When I reach out to students regarding registration for the upcoming semester, I just let them know what I'll be registering them for. I also like to include information about their upcoming milestones and what they should be doing to prepare. So, for instance, if someone is getting near the comprehensive exam stage, I'd like to remind them of when they'll be taking that and what they need to do to prepare for that. I invite them to schedule actual appointments with me.

In addition, some advisor participants expressed that reassessing students' professional and personal progress required checking students who were having issues in their classes and ensuring they put in measures to reach the required GPA. PME1 indicated:

So, for the outcome, it is all over the place. It depends on the student. Students who are having issues with their classes—when I've had lots of success with students, especially at the undergraduate level, but at all levels—who utilize that academic recovery plan, fill it out, and meet with me, we can talk about resources and remind them about withdrawal deadlines and similar matters. This way, if they are not going to be able to meet the requirements to remain in a course, they can withdraw on time before they start damaging their GPA. Then, we can rework the schedule to determine when they can take that course again without too much delay.

PME4 supported the above submission with the following clarification:

We encourage advising meetings every semester. I do not always get them every semester, but I want to hear from my students, and I want them to hear from me. They will hear from me more than once a semester. They will hear from me several times, but yes, we definitely have time, and it is a constant reassessment, as it takes several years for a student to get through this program. So, they have issues arise along the way and their track changes. It is not a straight path to the end; there are curves and challenges. And so, it is constant reassessment. Every time I look at their progress, release their advising pin, and look at their coursework and what they have left to do, it is a reassessment. If I see that a student has withdrawn from a class, we pay attention to that. As soon as they withdraw, we look at all of their coursework and reassess what is going on, and then talk to them about it and say, okay, tell me what is happening. Let us talk about how we can move this forward now. So yes, we do that.

Furthermore, the participants indicated a strong focus on students' research progress. Thus, one area students and advisors assessed was the progress of students' research dissertations. Through email correspondence, advisors checked

students' progress on their dissertations and ascertained whether they were on schedule. Also, as advisors were usually experts in their field and offered consultation services to students, they helped students progress smoothly through the research. P3 had this to say about her advisor:

My faculty mentor, as I said, I have been consulting him for advice on my dissertation. If there is something that I am fortunate to get, it is someone who is also an expert in qualitative study, and qualitative study is what I am also doing. So, if there are other things I do not understand, I knock on his door and ask him, what is this? How are you going to treat it? He will take his time to teach me to get better or less confused.

In support of the P3's discussion, P4 added:

Yes, I will say yes because my faculty mentor is coincidentally the chair of my dissertation committee. I think I have gone to the extent of contacting him or emailing him to let him know my progress on the dissertation, and by doing so, he also replied and gave me a schedule. Whatever he said, I think was right. Can I think about the schedule he gave me? What I think when I review it is good, and that will help me with my professional academic advisor. I went to her to explain my progress, and she also encouraged me to go ahead and register.

One outcome of assessing students' progress and making provisions was helping students graduate on time. PME3 talked about how her involvement had helped many students graduate from the doctoral program. PME3 explained:

Yes, I think the dissertation work would be one such process. I mean, when I serve as a committee chair or committee member on a dissertation committee and work with the students consistently throughout that dissertation process to assess their academic, professional, and personal academic goals. That's where I would say I have spent and made the effort. I think the outcome was positive. I have had a couple of students who graduated, so it was a positive outcome when that whole process of communicating with the students and working with them toward their goals was very rewarding for me.

These findings reflect the existing literature. [Drake et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Erichsen et al. \(2014\)](#) asserted that advisors may assist doctoral students in setting goals and outcomes for holistic growth. According to the researchers, advisors and students with clearly set goals would collaborate to help doctoral students complete coursework and dissertations on time ([Drake et al., 2013](#); [Erichsen et al., 2014](#)). Identifying task outcomes helps doctoral students promptly define instructional objectives in and outside the classroom to ensure retention and graduation ([Darling-Hammond, 2017](#); [O'Clair, 2013](#)). Communicating about educational resources and policies, including course criteria and proper time management, offers accurate and successful academic advice for students to define responsibilities properly ([Bailey et al., 2016](#); [Brookhart et al., 2016](#); [Miguéis et al., 2018](#); [Sverdlik et al.,](#)

2018).

Nonetheless, only some student participants expressed satisfaction with their experiences assessing their studies and research progress with their advisors. Some participants, such as P1, appeared to face challenges in meeting their advisors. P1 expressed the following experiences:

I have not spent any personal time. Just as I said, everything is via email. Maybe it is because I am online. It makes meeting with them a bit more challenging unless it is in a Zoom meeting. Other than that, everything has been done through email.

Students like P1 would prefer more in-person interactions with her faculty mentor and professional academic advisor. I did not encounter any literature confirming or contradicting this, so I consider this finding to represent new scholarship.

4.2. Influence of Setting Academic, Professional, and Personal Goals on Academic Success

Improving academic success is a primary reason for setting academic, professional, and personal goals. Participants revealed that assessing academic, professional, and personal goals had improved students' academic success. Some student participants indicated that the process had improved their grades and GPA. From P5's perspective, setting academic, professional, and personal goals led to an increased GPA.

Talking with my professional academic advisor has given me an idea of a timeline and what is expected for progress. So, I am definitely setting goals and understanding the criteria and the grades or GPA I need to obtain to continue the program. And that has helped set goals, period.

One way of assessing academic success is through students' grades. Thus, grades are often used to measure an educational intervention's effectiveness.

P3, on the other hand, provided a detailed description of the situation in the following submission:

When goals are set, two or more people like you come together to set a goal, the advisers guide you on how you will achieve it, and you, the students, keep in mind that they are watching you and expecting something good from you. Therefore, you will never relax until that goal is achieved. Setting goals with your advisors helps you put in much effort to ensure that whatever you achieve at the end of the day will satisfy you as a student and your advisors. This process motivates you to keep striving, and my advisor expects me to reach this level at the end of the semester. Therefore, I should also put in much effort to ensure that the goal is achieved.

According to P4, he constantly emailed his mentor, who provided meaningful contributions to his dissertation. P4 revealed:

This is about my faculty mentor. Whenever I send him an email concerning my progress, he provides helpful feedback. For instance, in the last email I sent him, he provided me with many articles to help me progress during the dissertation. Therefore, I will say he has been helpful to me.

For P4, setting academic, professional, and personal goals contributed to improvement in dissertation writing.

Furthermore, some advisor participants reported discussing with students the changes required to ensure they succeed academically. PME1 reported discussing with students the ramifications of not meeting the minimum grade and how she prepared them to retake the failed courses. PME1 shared:

So, if a student cannot achieve that minimum grade, we have to discuss the different ramifications of withdrawal. We need to talk about the deadline. I need to remind them that if they're using financial aid, they need to contact their financial aid counselor to ensure it won't impact their eligibility. Then, when they retake that class, we have to determine when they'll retake it because of the schedule.

PME4 revealed the need to break down tasks for students to ensure that they can be successful in their program. PME4 explained:

I think it improves their success. Most people perform better when the tasks that they have in front of them can be broken up into smaller bits. It is a very overwhelming idea when they're looking at a doctorate from the first semester of admission. Usually, when they first enter the door, it is vague and huge, and they're not entirely sure what to expect moving forward. From that point on, we set all those goals with them. We talk about semesters moving forward and what they need to be doing in their classes, which is significant. Much of the material they need to work on from the beginning is not in their coursework. It involves building faculty relationships and figuring out their dissertation topic and all those things early on.

To ensure academic success, students need to commit and push through every hurdle that may come their way. Thus, some advisor participants spoke about encouraging students to persevere due to the lengthy nature of the program. PME3 shared this information:

Academic goals include completing the doctoral program, and personal goals include presenting and publishing in a professional setting, as well as pursuing a career in a foreign country like the United States. When they are in this doctoral program, they have to make significant efforts toward all those goals. It is a very lengthy process that requires perseverance and commitment. When they go through that process and achieve those goals, the process itself contributes to their academic success. For example, after they have graduated with an EdD in hand and look back, they will see that they have learned quite a lot academically. They went from being doctoral students to

young researchers upon graduation. The entire dissertation process, which includes all these academic, professional, and personal goals, leads to academic success when students go through it, or perhaps preliminary academic success. After they have their doctorate in hand, they should continue to pursue publications. When they get their doctorate, they have preliminary academic success.

Some student participants elaborated on the role that setting academic, professional, and personal goals had played in their academic interests. P1 indicated that speaking with her professional academic advisor had helped broaden all aspects of her life. Their interactions gave her an understanding of how close she was to realizing her goals. P1 explained:

Talking to my professional academic advisor sometimes calms me down and brings me closer to the end goal. I know I haven't talked much to my mentor; that was on my list to do before the year ends. Of course, I know I'm still far away. I think I still have about four years left in my studies, but it has broadened from what I obtained. It has broadened my life academically and professionally. It has made me a stronger person in my role and has improved my understanding of the research. It has also helped me with my students and teaching them.

Similarly, P2 expressed how helpful setting academic, professional, and personal goals had been in his academic interests. He established the relevance of the advisor to students in knowing whom to reach out to and developed a great interest in the doctoral program. P2 added that his advisors were very knowledgeable and sparked his interest in achieving a higher status than they have. Also, P5 expressed a broadened academic interest due to the influence of her professional academic advisor.

Several student participants expressed genuine improvement in their academics and dissertation writing due to setting goals with their advisors. However, for P1, there had not been any significant academic improvement. P1 expressed concerns about online studies and reiterated her self-sufficiency in not relying extensively on advisors. She elaborated on how online classes had limited her interaction with her faculty mentor and professional academic advisor. P1 shared:

At the moment, I do not think interactions with advisors have improved. I think I am pretty self-sufficient at this point, but just as I said, I am online. Expressing the goals, they just gave me a layout. Well, this is the pathway; this is how you achieve it. Here is the email based on some courses you can take or seminars you may want to engage in. Everything has been through email. Being more self-sufficient, if you would, to help me improve my academic success.

Moreover, the study participants indicated the impact of the relationship between students and advisors on their values. Participants noted that student and advisor relationships helped clarify students' career aspirations and their strengths

and weaknesses. These relationships also created an understanding of values. They helped students achieve their chosen research areas and modify some initial values, such as their identity and writing. P3 illuminated the impact of his relationship with his faculty mentor and professional academic advisor:

Yes. As an individual, I may have values I cherish in life, but along the way, you could see that this is what the faculty mentor or the professional academic advisor is doing. And he wants you to do that to help build you up. So, in a way, it has modified some of my initial values. Some of my values have now been modified in a way. It's not like I've developed, I will say, a new identity for myself through my interaction with my faculty mentor and academic advisers, except that I don't hold the original values that I came here with; things gradually changed. For example, how I used to write and how I used to approach topics that I want to write about are gradually changing, and I'm seeing improvement in it. So, I will say that my values have never been the same. There have been some modifications through my contact and interaction with advisors.

Likewise, P4 emphasized the impact of the relationship with the professional academic advisor and faculty mentor. According to P4,

My faculty mentor has been able to explain certain things to me in such a way at this crucial stage in my dissertation. I can do the writing, and I know I will be able to finish it. As for my professional academic advisor, I really do not know. She has helped me understand my values.

In addition, P1 noted how her professional academic advisor had helped her clarify her long-term academic plans. P1 reported:

It gave me a clear understanding of speaking with my professional academic advisor to solidify where I want to be in the next couple of years and ensure I am on track. That was one of the things that she mentioned to me when I asked her a question. You are on track; you have to make sure you are successful in these particular classes to graduate at this time. So, I think it influenced my values as far as wanting to achieve what I want in that specific timeframe.

In support, P2 added that his professional academic advisor had helped clarify his self-efficacy. P2 indicated:

The relationship with me after the ordeal that I went through in the first phase of my doctoral experience created a stronger relationship between my advisor and myself. That helped me know that I am indeed capable and interested in moving forward through the program to finish with the institution on the topic I'd like to research. I am almost undoubtedly clear about the format I want to use. So, I think my relationship with her helped me know I can achieve that if that is a value, but yes.

According to P5, it was more of an encouragement than a clarification of values.

P5 noted:

The values were already evident when I entered the program, so my relationship with my professional academic advisor did not enhance or change them. I think I talked more with my faculty mentor; he just encouraged and supported them, but did not necessarily clarify them.

Furthermore, some advisor participants reported that helping students achieve their goals built their self-esteem. According to PME1, student assistance in their program successfully improved self-esteem. PME4 discussed helping students overcome challenges and improving their self-esteem. Also, PME2 noted the essential role of advisors in students' success in their degree programs:

I hear a lot of feedback from students about how they could not get through the degree without their advisor and similar support. I think that, in itself, completing a doctoral program is a huge accomplishment. So, in and of itself, I think it will build self-esteem. I do not ever ask people that specifically, but I hear back from students about how they would not have made it through the program if they did not have that support and guidance.

PME4 shared an experience of how she helped a student who had difficulties with the doctoral program.

When I first started advising, in one of the first semesters, I had a student who was going on academic suspension. For anybody, any student at any level, that was a tricky thing to handle. It feels like a huge failure. It's a personal failure, and it's tough for most students to get over that hurdle, return, and get reinstated. And I think, in some ways, it's more challenging at the doctoral level when that happens. Students have a hard time. Most of them don't come back. When that happened, this student and I had many conversations, and we built out very detailed and specific plans for each semester moving forward, and exactly what she needed to do.

In addition, some student participants talked about how they have gained confidence and insight into professional careers and what is expected of them. P2 stated, "those supports that my advisors provided, I truly believe, contributed to my success now, and I feel much more confident." P3 noted the impact advisors have had on his professional career.

I have learned many professional career-related things that I did not know before starting this doctoral program, such as academic writing and writing proposals. My faculty mentor, for example, has been assigning me those tasks. It is not something we have been taught in any organized classroom, but I have learned many things through my interactions with them [advisors].

Also, P5 indicated that her advisors had helped her gain insight into the entire doctoral program.

Working with, talking with, the relationship with my professional academic advisor has, of course, given me some insights into what is expected of the overall program and made me evaluate myself as to whether or not I felt I believed that I could make it in the program. Each time I have accomplished each course, it is like I have accomplished something great. She [professional academic advisor] has given me something. She has built my self-esteem.

These findings align with existing research. [Rahim \(2023\)](#) argued that interpersonal and working relationships between students and advisors impact doctoral students' retention and graduation. According to the researchers, interpersonal relationships establish effective rapport and conflict resolution for doctoral students. In contrast, working relationships help doctoral students with course study, time management, and meeting dissertation timelines ([Rahim, 2023](#)). In addition, researchers (e.g., [Odena & Burgess, 2017](#); [Smith, 2020](#); [Sverdlik et al., 2018](#)) have confirmed that the academic community, comprising professional academic advisors and faculty mentors, shapes doctoral students' professional growth.

As established in the literature ([Odena & Burgess, 2017](#); [Rahim, 2023](#); [Smith, 2020](#); [Sverdlik et al., 2018](#)) and confirmed by the study's findings, professional academic advisors and faculty mentors serve separately in clear and distinct roles to ensure doctoral students' retention and success. The findings revealed how faculty mentors and professional academic advisors employed a multi-phase, prolonged process to influence and broaden students' academic interests, provide constant reassessment, and encourage students to persevere. The findings support the assertion that professional academic advisors and faculty mentors are significant contributors to doctoral students' development and academic success in the dual advising system. The findings also support [Creamer and Creamer's \(1994\)](#) developmental advising model premise on setting objectives, such as building self-insight and esteem, broadening interest, and clarifying personal values and styles of life, that control the advising process and its impact on students' holistic growth.

5. Conclusion

Regarding participants' perceptions about *identifying task outcomes*, the student participants made strong positive remarks about the goals their academic advisors and faculty mentors set to improve their academic success. The advisor participants also reported helping build their students' insight and esteem by updating them on current ideas and theories. Both the student and advisor participants indicated that the dual advising system has clarified students' values through constant observation and study. Participants generally revealed concepts, such as influencing and broadening students' academic interests, constant reassessment, and encouraging students to persevere, as critical to *identifying task outcomes*.

The study inferred from reviewing the data for advisors' and doctoral students' perceptions about *identifying task outcomes* that constant reassessment of academic, professional, and personal goals is essential for doctoral students' success

in the dual advising system. Some student participants admitted to advancing in academics because they adhered to the degree plan their advisors mapped out. Also, some advisor participants expressed the importance of reassessing students' professional and personal progress. These participants checked students having issues in their classes and ensured they took measures to reach the required GPA. Some advisors complete this task by reviewing students' coursework to see their completed courses and releasing registration numbers for the remaining courses. Other advisors monitor students' progress and pay attention to students who withdraw from courses to assess the reason for the withdrawal. Drake et al. (2013) and Erichsen et al. (2014) asserted that advisors may assist doctoral students in setting goals and outcomes for holistic growth. When advisors and students set clear goals, they collaborate to help students complete coursework and dissertations on time (Drake et al., 2013; Erichsen et al., 2014).

The study concluded that constant reassessment of academic, professional, and personal goals is critical to *identifying task outcomes* for doctoral students' success. Advisors assist doctoral students in identifying and selecting priority needs concerning academic, professional, and personal goals and how to address them accordingly (Bailey et al., 2016; Donaldson et al., 2016; Drake et al., 2013). For example, P5, a participant in this study, discussed being able to advance in her academics because she adhered to the degree plan her professional academic advisor had mapped out for her. Also, P5 shared that discussing the outcomes of specific courses with her professional academic advisor was relevant to her progression in the degree program. According to Donaldson et al. (2016), students identify task outcomes with their advisors to determine their progress within the dual advising system, which is usually studies- and research-related.

6. Limitations of the Study

Nine participants from a single institution were recruited for this study, although a larger sample size from multiple institutions may have provided different perspectives on the findings (Devos et al., 2017). Researchers should use the study's findings with caution because they do not represent the views of advisors and doctoral students in all higher education institutions in the United States.

7. Implications of the Study

This study contributes to qualitative research on the dual and developmental advising models. This qualitative study provides the academic community with thick, rich data that could provide preliminary information on doctoral students' experiences with the dual advising system. The findings can support the existing literature on *identifying task outcomes* in the dual advising systems with a deeper understanding of doctoral student attrition concerns, which affect the student, the department, and the university (Gupta et al., 2020).

Further, the findings can inform university administrators' decisions as they restructure the responsibilities of advisors to improve relationships with students.

The study clearly explains doctoral students' experiences with the dual advising system (Sugrue et al., 2018; Sverdlik et al., 2018). Professional academic advisors and faculty mentors liaise between students and the university (Michael & Kirk, 2018; Kohlfeld et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). The study outlines how they serve separately in clear and distinct roles, but work to ensure sound doctoral students' retention and success.

Moreover, the study's findings can benefit the advising provided by higher institutions looking for successful advising practices. The study provides a detailed document on practical advising approaches such as maintaining positive and close relationships, identifying values, and keeping students on the right path. Also, the findings revealed approaches that include influencing and broadening students' academic interests, constant reassessment, and encouraging students to persevere. Higher education institutions can implement these approaches, which will potentially lead to positive student satisfaction and the completion of degrees.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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