Barriers to Academic Advising

A Shameful Perception

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Picture This...
Why Examine Barriers?

- Most studies within advising look only at client populations.
- This does nothing to show the barriers experienced by those not accessing advising services.
- Without knowledge of these barriers we can’t create effective interventions for the broader student body.
The Literature

- I analysed literature in the following areas:
  - academic advising
  - academic help-seeking
  - career advising
- Most studies were from the academic help-seeking field
- There are five common factors impacting students’ decisions to access academic advising services
Institutional Factors

- These components at learning institutions may affect help-seeking behaviour
  - Leadership
  - Policies
  - Attitudes
Institutional Factors

- Promotion of mastery over performance or competition promotes effective help-seeking
- Conversely, prioritizing competition causes an increase in help-seeking avoidance
Institutional Factors

- When both the institutional culture and standard teaching approach promote competition over mastery, help-seeking avoidance *will* increase.
## Motivation Level and Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsic Motivation</th>
<th>Intrinsic Motivation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Motivation</td>
<td>High Motivation</td>
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Motivation Level and Types

- Extrinsically motivated students find help-seeking threatening.
- Extrinsically motivated students can view engaging with advising services as not worth the effort.
- Existing extrinsic motivation (i.e. passing the course) is not enough to motivate these students to access advising.
Motivation Level and Types

- Intrinsically motivated students are more likely to carry through on help-seeking intentions.
- This means they both recognize their need for help and act on it.
Motivation Level and Types

- Both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students avoid help-seeking

It is evident that multiple factors are working together to prevent students from accessing help when needed
Self-Concealment and Avoidance

- Students who do not engage with academic advising may be:
  - avoiding help-seeking
  - concealing their need for assistance
Self-Concealment and Avoidance

- Students with reactive or avoidant coping styles are less likely to seek help from available services.
- Reactive and avoidant coping styles appear to be linked to more frequent reports of psychological distress.
Some research has shown that individuals with higher self-concealment tendencies are more likely to seek help.

This is likely because these individuals experience more negative social events and higher levels of distress.
Self-Concealment and Avoidance

- What about students who aren’t aware they need help?
  - Reflective - self-awareness of own deficiencies
  - Approach - engage with experts to identify deficiencies
  - Thus, these students are most likely engaging in avoidant problem solving strategies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are born with a certain ability level and that is all we can achieve</td>
<td>A belief that intelligence is malleable and can be developed</td>
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</table>
Success or Failure Attributed to Ability

- Students who repeatedly fail at tasks can develop a fixed mindset.
- When these students are exposed to performance focused classrooms they are less likely to use help focusing on understanding.
Success or Failure Attributed to Ability

- Students with a fixed mindset view help-seeking as threatening
- Continued failure after receiving help is an example of their low ability
- Students protect their self-worth by avoiding certain types of help-seeking
Stigma and Shame

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stigma</th>
<th>Shame</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribute or behaviour stereotyped as negative</td>
<td>Individual’s feelings of humiliation in reaction to perceived stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society discriminates against this behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Stigma and shame are strongly connected: both play a role in the decision to seek help
Stigma and Shame

- Most students who identify stigma as an access barrier do so without evidence of anyone being stigmatised.
- Students devalue services as they internalise stigmatised beliefs about them.
Stigma and Shame

- Individuals who are highly prone to shame are more likely to blame failure on low ability.

‘Shame has been suggested to lie at the core of students’ fear of failure and to be associated with what have been called performance-avoidance achievement goals’

Johnson, 2012
Stigma and Shame

Students who choose to engage despite these feelings ultimately find the advantages of receiving help outweigh any fears.
How does this all connect?

Stigma and shame represent the overarching barrier facing students deciding to access advising

- Students are making the decision to avoid advising to protect their status
- This self-preservation results in the other behaviours and barriers
How does this all connect?
Institutional Factors

Institutional factors represent practices increasing or decreasing stigma within an institution.
How does this all connect?

Motivation

Extrinsically motivated students stigmatise help-seeking as evidence of unworthiness for the reward of their education.
How does this all connect?
Self-Concealment and Avoidance

Self-concealment is keeping something perceived as negative away from others in order to protect one’s ego.
How does this all connect?
Belief in Low Ability

For students with a fixed mindset, help-seeking represents evidence of inability visible to faculty, staff, and peers.
Breakout Groups

- Brainstorm solutions to the identified barriers
  - Example: More presence at orientation, drop in on first year classes, approach advising with more sympathy

- Some things to consider:
  - Who is it a solution for?
  - Think micro, not macro
    - What can YOU do?

- Groups will present their top solutions
Suggested Interventions and Future Research

- Outreach initiatives
  - Education programs, advertising campaigns, orientation programs
- Faculty and staff training
- Problem solving skills training
- Intrusive/Proactive advising
Importance of Action

- This is your chance to reflect and apply these solutions to your own practice
  - What might you try considering what you’ve learned

What will you do?
Final Thoughts
Questions


References


