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## EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM (SSP) ADVISERS IN PROVIDING ADVISING AND COUNSELING SERVICES TO PHINMA UNIVERSITY OF ILOILO STUDENTS: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the experiences of Student Success Program (SSP) advisers at PHINMA University of Iloilo in providing advising and counseling services. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, twelve advisers were interviewed to capture their narratives. Results revealed that advisers find fulfillment in supporting students' academic and personal growth, yet face challenges such as heavy workloads, emotional labor, and limited counseling training. To cope, they employ strategies like collegial support, reflective practice, and adaptive time management. The findings highlight the crucial role of SSP advisers in fostering motivation, resilience, and belonging, aligned with PHINMA Education's guiding mindsets of "I want," "I can," and "I belong." Insights from this study inform enhancement strategies to strengthen institutional support, training, and workload management, ensuring advisers are empowered to advance PHINMA UI's mission of making lives better through education.

**Keywords:** *Student Success Program, academic advising, counseling services, adviser experiences, emotional labor, coping strategies*

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are responsible not only for developing students' intellectual capacities but also for supporting their personal and emotional growth. Modern universities are expected to offer more than classroom instruction; they must provide services that address students' holistic needs—helping them cope with academic demands, manage stress, and cultivate motivation to achieve their goals. As Nguyen et al. (2020) note, effective advising and counseling programs are essential to keeping students engaged, supported, and progressing toward degree completion.

In the Philippines, advising and counseling have become vital components of student support systems. Many Filipino students, especially those from low-income families, encounter obstacles that hinder academic performance, including financial limitations, family obligations, and emotional distress. According to Bernardo (2021), Filipino college students often experience stress and burnout, underscoring the need for guidance from trained and empathetic advisers. Thus, advisers and counselors contribute not only to students' academic success but also to their mental well-being and personal development.

At PHINMA University of Iloilo (PHINMA UI), student development aligns with its goal of "*making lives better through education.*" The university aims to produce graduates who are competent, compassionate, and community-oriented. To achieve this mission, PHINMA Education established the Student Success Program (SSP)—a comprehensive support system designed to promote academic persistence and a complete approach to helping students succeed (PHINMA Education, 2023).

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# INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

February 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



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The SSP has three core mindsets — “I want,” “I can,” and “I belong.” These mindsets foster motivation, confidence, and students feeling that they belong (PHINMA Education, 2024). The “I want” mindset encourages goal-setting and aspiration; “I can” builds belief in one’s ability; and “I belong” strengthens social connection and inclusiveness. Together, these principles embody PHINMA Education’s holistic approach to student success.

Student Success Program Advisers (SSP advisers) are at the forefront of this initiative. Usually, faculty or staff members serve as mentors and counselors, guiding students in both academic and personal aspects. Their tasks include monitoring academic progress, providing emotional support, and helping students develop resilience and a sense of purpose. Cabansag and Castroverde (2023) emphasize that advisers and mentors play a key role in promoting engagement, persistence, and effective coping strategies among learners.

However, despite their vital contribution, advisers often face challenges such as excessive workload, limited counseling training, and emotional exhaustion (Bernardo, 2021; Cabansag & Castroverde, 2023). These challenges can affect the quality of support they provide.

SSP advisers share their experiences to provide deeper insight into how advising and counselling are practised at PHINMA UI. It reveals the challenges they encounter, the strategies they use to resolve them, and the personal meanings they attach to their work. As Nguyen et al. (2020) suggest, examining advisers’ perspectives can guide institutions in crafting more effective, student-centered advising systems.

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The findings will provide valuable input to enhance PHINMA UI’s Student Success Program—helping ensure that advisers are fully equipped, supported, and empowered to advance the university’s mission of delivering transformative education that truly improves lives.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology utilized in this study. It describes the research method, research design, participants, sampling design, research instrument, validity of the research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis approach.

### Research Method

The research method utilized in this study was a descriptive, qualitative approach using in-depth interviews.

The descriptive research method is a systematic approach to observing and documenting the variables and conditions that affect a particular phenomenon without manipulating them. Its primary goal is to provide a detailed account of the characteristics, trends, and correlations within a specific population or situation (Singh, 2023).

The interviewer and the interviewee were allowed to sit at a distance and think through a series of questions on a specific issue. The aim is to capture the main or necessary views of participants on a given issue in a social context through their responses to the questions.

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## Research Design

The study utilized a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology can be considered a philosophical approach to undertaking qualitative research. The goal of phenomenology is to understand how others view the world, and how this view may vary from commonly held views, by focusing on a person’s subjective interpretations of what she experiences.

Phenomenology focuses on the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective. The central aim of phenomenology is to investigate and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without resorting to causal theories or to unexamined preconceptions (Biemel and Spiegelberg, 2024).

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## Participants of the Study

For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select twelve (12) SSP advisers from PHINMA University of Iloilo. They chose these participants because of their direct involvement and experience in providing advising and counseling services under the Student Success Program.

## Sampling Design

The study employed a purposive sampling approach, a non-probability sampling method in which participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling ensures that individuals chosen for the study possess qualities that make them suitable sources of information.

Also known as judgmental sampling, this technique relies on the researcher's judgment to identify participants or cases that can provide the most meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation. It is commonly used in qualitative studies when the goal is to focus on information-rich cases rather than achieving statistical representation. Because of its subjective nature, this approach may introduce researcher bias, but researchers must minimize it through transparency and consistent data validation procedures.

## Research Instrument

The main instrument utilized for data collection in this study was an interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide contained open-ended questions intended to gather

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in-depth insights into the participants' experiences, the challenges they encountered, and the coping mechanisms they employed in their roles as SSP advisers.

For documentation purposes, a voice or video recorder was used during interviews—with participants' consent—to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data.

### Validity of the Research Instrument

Before assessing the validity of the researcher-developed interview schedule, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of research experts reviewed it. These experts evaluated each question and recommended necessary revisions and improvements.

Validity refers to the accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of the inferences drawn from the research instrument. To establish content-related validity, the researchers examined the interview schedule's content and format to ensure alignment with the defined variables and the study's objectives. This process also helped confirm that the questionnaire items were appropriate and effective in gathering relevant data.

### Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher obtained the necessary permissions from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the PHINMA University of Iloilo management, and the individual participants before conducting the study.

To ensure participants' comfort, the researcher personally traveled to locations convenient for them to conduct the interviews. Prior to the interviews, participants were encouraged to sign a waiver or consent form to participate in the study.

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The researcher collected data through in-depth interviews and, when permitted, used a voice and video recorder to document participants' responses accurately. After completing the interviews, the researcher compiled and organized all the gathered data for further analysis.

### Data Analyses

The data collected from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher employed a qualitative approach to identify common patterns and themes in participants' responses. The researcher transcribed all interview recordings verbatim. The researcher carefully read and reviewed the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data. The researcher coded meaningful statements related to the research questions and grouped similar codes. She then organized these groups into themes that reflected participants' shared experiences and perspectives.

The researcher reviewed and refined the identified themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. She used selected excerpts from the interviews to support each theme. Finally, she interpreted the themes in relation to the study's objectives and relevant literature to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Mason & Francis, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the experiences of Student Success Program (SSP) advisers in providing advising and counseling services to PHINMA University of Iloilo students, serving as

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a basis for proposing strategies to strengthen the SSP. It aims to describe how SSP advisers perform their responsibilities, the challenges they encounter, and the coping strategies they employ to support students' academic and personal success.

The research method used in the study was qualitative, employing in-depth interviews. The research design was phenomenological using thematic analysis.

The participants of the study were twelve (12) purposively selected SSP advisers from PHINMA University of Iloilo, each with at least one year of experience handling SSP students.

The researcher conducted the in-depth interviews individually with the participants. With participants' permission, the researchers used a voice recorder and notes to gather data and document photos.

The researcher consolidated all the collected data after a series of interviews. The narratives were gathered, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted using a thematic approach.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based on the results of the in-depth interview with participants, the experiences of Student Success Program (SSP) Advisers in providing advising and counseling services include fulfillment through student support and relational engagement, challenges and emotional labor in advising roles, and growth and self-awareness in advising.

The SSP advisers face challenges in their advising and counseling roles, including time constraints and workload management, complexities in addressing sensitive and complex student issues, and difficulty building trust and student engagement, as revealed during the in-depth interviews with participants.

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The coping strategies employed by SSP advisers, based on the results of the in-depth interview, were professional collaboration and seeking guidance; self-care and emotional boundary management; building trust and creating safe spaces; and reflective and structured practices.

## CONCLUSION

The following insights were drawn, in accordance with the findings:

The study's findings reveal that the role of SSP advisers is multifaceted, requiring a balance of professional skills, emotional labor, and personal growth. Advisers experience fulfillment through meaningful engagement with students, which highlights the relational aspect of advising as central to supporting student development. At the same time, the findings indicate that advisers face significant challenges, including managing limited time and workload, addressing sensitive and complex student issues, and building trust with students. These challenges underscore the demanding nature of advising, constantly testing advisers' emotional resilience and professional judgment.

The coping strategies employed by advisers, such as seeking guidance from colleagues, maintaining self-care and emotional boundaries, creating safe spaces, and engaging in reflective and structured practices, demonstrate proactive strategies to sustain both adviser well-being and effectiveness. These insights suggest that successful advising is not only about providing guidance but also about continuous professional development, emotional management, and cultivating trusting relationships. Overall, the study highlights

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the importance of institutional support, structured training, and reflective practices to enhance  
the quality of advising and to ensure that both students and advisers thrive in the academic  
environment.



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