Serving on the Frontlines of Higher Education: An Examination of the Coping Behaviors Utilized by Academic Advisors During the Pandemic

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Introduction

COVID-19 posed many challenges to U.S. colleges and their students. Colleges became concerned with financial viability, reduced student enrollment and retention (Mordecai, 2020; Whitford, 2020). Students experienced mental health issues, financial uncertainties, aversions to online learning, and other barriers towards continuing their college education (American Council of Education, 2020; Blankstein et al., 2020; Goldberg, 2021; Smalley, 2020). Caught between the competing needs of the institution and students are academic advisors, a group of professionals tasked with helping the institution achieve its goals of student retention, progression, and completion (RPC). Advisors work directly with students to advance their educational development and guide them towards degree completion (Kuh et al., 2005; NACADA, 2003; Nutt, 2003; Tinto, 1975). Advising students towards graduation requires a variety of approaches depending on the student's needs, and the type of approach employed often helps or hinders student success. This notion is supported by Lipsky 's (2010) Street-Level Bureaucracy theory that suggests public service workers with direct client contact have the potential to influence policy outcomes in the way they implement policy. He asserts that examining how front-line workers approach their work is essential to an understanding of policy outcomes. This study is a first step in understanding how advisors approached their work and implemented policy during a time of unprecedented organizational change.

During the pandemic, college students reported an increased need for academic advising services (Blankstien, 2020). The higher demand from students for advising, alongside the new and expanded ways in which students could contact their advisors during the pandemic (with practices shifting from in-person appointments to virtual, email, and phone formats) likely also increased the frequency of student-advisor interactions. Additionally, working conditions during the pandemic were characterized by organizational budget cuts, hiring freezes, furloughs, and ambiguities around rapidly changing organizational policies and procedures. This increase in demand for advising

services, coupled with the reduced organizational resources challenged academic advisors with stressful conditions of increased work demands, resource deficiencies and high client needs. Using Lipsky's (2010) theory, this study examines advisors use of 'coping' as a means to adapt to work stress during a pandemic.

Coping is defined here as the behavioral effort advisors employ when interacting with students, in order to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands they face in their daily work (Tummers et al., 2012, 2015). The research questions addressed here are:

R1: How do academic advisors as Street-Level Bureaucrats cope with stress when interacting with their clients (students)?

R1a: How does access to resources and supervisor support impact the type of coping academic advisors utilize?

The next section provides the context within which academic advising took place during the pandemic and makes a case for why academic advisors should be studied as street level bureaucrats within public institutions of higher education. The literature review that informs the conceptual model for this study is then discussed, followed by sections on the methodology and findings. Lastly, the paper concludes by highlighting the limitations of the study, practical implications for campus administrators, and suggests directions for future scholarly research.

Advising During the Pandemic

At the beginning of the pandemic as instruction moved online, so did academic advising. Advising was among the first higher education services to embrace technology as a way to supplement its work (Borthwick-Wong, 2020; White, 2020). However, the challenge presented to academic advisors was formidable.

Uncertainties around the pandemic changed the nature of student needs in extraordinary ways. Studies conducted earlier in the pandemic showed students were reporting higher levels of

mental health and personal well-being needs (Wang et al., 2020). Student learning was impacted by the quick shift to online learning, changing institutional policies, and increased costs of tuition. Students became anxious about their job prospects and career choices with a looming recession, and it became increasingly necessary for students to be in contact with their advisors.

Fears about reduced enrollment and funding from state allotments and endowments led institutions to enact hiring freezes, furloughs, cut spending for professional development, maintenance, and reduce operating costs (Lopez et al., 2020; Smalley, 2020) hampering the institution's ability to provide the training and staffing needed for advisors to better adapt to the increased work demands placed on advisors .

Academic Advisors as Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs)

Academic advisors are not typically thought of as Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) in the literature. However, advisors exhibit many of the traits of SLBs. As defined by Lipsky (2010), public service employees considered to be SLBs are workers that:

"...interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work. Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers, and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officials and many other public officials who grant access to government programs and provide services." (Lipsky, 2010, p. 3)

Due to the relational nature of SLB work, their roles typically require a degree of discretion and latitude in implementing policy. Discretion is the degree of freedom SLBs have to choose from possible courses of behavior to implement policy (Thomann et al., 2018). In their daily work with clients, they must make judgment calls and choose from a range of possible actions to provide appropriate services or responses to individual clients. Due to the potential impact of these decisions to help or harm clients, SLBs are guided by their professional norms, and view themselves as accountable to both their organizations and their clients (Hill and Hupe, 2007; Lipsky, 2010;

Maynard-Moody & Musheno's, 2003).

Academic advisors are accountable to their institutions and responsible for implementing institutional policies. At most institutions, students are assigned to an advisor based on the student's declared major(s) and the advisor's areas of expertise. The student-advisor relationship begins with orientation and continues through regular meetings over the course of the student's academic career. Many institutions require students to meet with their advisor at least once every semester, and oftentimes an advisor is the one staff member on campus that a student will regularly meet throughout their college career. Research supports that advisors play a key role in achieving the retention, progression, and completion (RPC) goals of the institutions (Harrill et al., 2015; Nutt, 2003; NACADA,2006).

Advisors as policy implementers

Academic counseling is designed to connect students with appropriate resources to advance students' academic careers and address obstacles to the successful completion of their degrees. However, considering the vast differences between colleges, majors, and individual students, *advisors have to exercise discretion* to respond to each unique student's needs in an individualized way (Howard, 2017). This is commonly observed in how advisors approach making course recommendations for students. Advisors could utilize a static, checklist-type approach to course planning for their students, or the advisor can inquire about the student's interests, strengths, life circumstances and make specific course recommendations that better align with the students' ability to perform well in their courses, while also keeping them on track for graduation.

The discretionary recommendation made by the advisor may potentially help or hinder the student's pursuit of degree completion, making it essential for the advisor to rely on their professional memberships and norms in guiding their work (NACADA, 2006). For example, depending on the type of student – first generation college students will require more direction and guidance about resources and procedures in their early years in comparison to students with

parents that are college graduates. Based on the professional norms set by the institution and their professional memberships, it is the advisor that determines the depth of counseling provided to each type of student. Therefore, institutions entrust academic advisors to utilize their own judgment and implement their best practices to meet the needs of their students.

Historically, there are two contrasting and dominant approaches to advising, prescriptive and developmental advising (Harris, 2018; Kirk-Kuwaye & Libarios, 2003). Prescriptive advising involves restricting advising sessions to just academic matters, while neglecting students' personal development and needs (Drake, 2011). As the least complex form of practice, prescriptive advising applies a 'check-list' approach to advising sessions and the advisor implements institutional policies without much consideration for individual student needs (Howard, 2017). For example, some institutions employ policies that require all incoming freshmen to be administratively enrolled into a sequence of general education courses for their first semester. When this policy is applied prescriptively, advisors will create a schedule without student input on coursework or preference. This could potentially hinder a student's ability to succeed in classes, if the planned schedule does not work for the student, or they are placed in classes in which they have no interest, or are in classes that are too challenging for the student to take during their first semester.

In contrast, developmental advising is a theory based, comprehensive approach to promote the development of the 'whole' student. Kramer (1999) suggests that a development advising session generally includes the advisor building an on-going relationship with the student, with one advising session building on another to help students articulate their academic and personal goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and monitor student progress in meeting set goals. In implementing institutional policy, an advisor that uses development approaches will implement policies in relation to the specific needs of students. In the case of the above example, an advisor using developmental advising will inquire about a student's academic interests and strengths prior to finalizing their course schedule for the student's first semester at the institution.

The discretion and latitude in how advisors approach their work and implement policy presents a case for why advisors should be viewed as SLBs and can be studied using the SLB theory.

The Notion of Coping During Public Service Delivery

Implementation scholars within the field of public administration are concerned with understanding the differences between policy as created and policy as implemented. Early research largely ignored the work of frontline staff at public agencies (Zang, 2016). Lipsky's (2010) theory of street-level workers shifted the paradigm in the study of bureaucracy and policy implementation. He argued that policies are abstractions that only fully materialize when they are delivered to citizens, and in order to understand the effectiveness of policy outcomes, it is important to examine the behaviors of the front-line workers responsible for delivering the policy to its citizens (Tummers et al., 2012; Hull and Hjern, 1987 as cited in Winter, 2003).

It has been widely acknowledged in the public administration literature that SLBs experience stressful working conditions of limited resources and high workloads. In order to deal with this stress, they must adopt ways to cope (Evan 2013; Gofen, 2013; Hill and Hupe, 2007; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Tummers et al., 2012, 2015; Vedung, 2015; Winter, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, coping is defined here as the behavioral effort advisors employ when interacting with students, in order to master, tolerate, or reduce the work demands placed on them (Tummers et al., 2012). According to Lipsky, "*the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they use to cope with uncertainties and work pressure, effectively become the public policies they carry out*" (2010, xiii).

This broad definition of coping can include a range of behaviors from positive thinking, talking to others about work problems, resigning from the position etc. In this study, we focus on coping during the delivery of public service. That is, we concentrate on coping behaviors that occur

when SLBs interact with their clients. This is guided by how public administration studies frontline work and how SLBs implement policy through their interactions with citizens (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012; 2003; Hill & Hupe, 2009; Lipsky, 2010).

Forms of Coping During Public Service Delivery

Since Lipsky (1989) first addressed coping, the concept has been widely acknowledged in the literature as an important response to the challenges of frontline work (Winter, 2002). However, Tummers et al., (2015) argued that SLB literature lacked a comprehensive view of coping. In their systematic review of the literature they found that studies from 1984- 2014 used different terms to define and operationalize coping, and developed a system to classify coping as a construct that can be operationalized across a range of professions and contexts. According to their classifications, there are three broader forms of coping during public service delivery: 'moving towards clients', 'moving against clients' and 'moving away from clients'.

Moving towards clients refers to pragmatically adjusting to client's needs, and is a form of coping toward the client's benefit. The latter two families are seen as coping in the worker's benefit. Moving away from clients categorizes behavior in which frontline workers avoid meaningful interactions with clients, whilst 'moving against clients' analyzes confrontations with clients.

Within the context of advising, 'moving towards clients' refers to advisors adjusting to a student's needs and utilizing personal resources and energy to benefit their student. 'Moving away from clients' refers to the routinizing or rationing of services, describing behaviors in which academic advisors try to simplify their job, limit demand for services, make themselves unavailable to students, or subject students to long wait times for services. Lastly, 'moving against clients' refers to situations in which advisors engage in direct confrontations with students.

Considering the professionalization, relational and service-oriented nature of SLB work, past literature supports SLBs are unlikely to use hostile behaviors in interacting with their clients (

NACADA,2006; Tummers & Rocco, 2015; Vedung, 2015). Furthermore, due to social desirability bias and the tendency for advisors to underreport on behaviors related to 'moving away from clients', coping by 'moving against clients' is not included in this study.

The forms of advisor coping included in the study are discussed below:

Moving Towards Clients (Students): literature supports that SLBs have high levels of professionalism, closeness with the clients they serve, and heavy reliance on professional norms to guide their work in challenging times (Vedung, 2015). Also, public service motivation studies support that SLBs typically choose public service careers because they want to provide meaningful services and mobilize personal resources to help their clients (Bakker, 2015). In a similar vein, Tummers & Rocco (2015) examined the role of front-line workers in the successful implementation of e-government services under the Affordable Care Act. They found that despite the high technical demands on agencies and citizens in an environment of budget austerity and political polarization, front-line workers coped with stress by moving towards clients - working overtime to help solve problems for clients.

This study examines coping in this family as 'using personal resources' and applies to advisors who invest time and energy – beyond that specified in their job descriptions – to help their students. Using personal resources covers working overtime and giving up on time on personal days to address the needs of their students. This is especially relevant when frontline workers are confronted with students with high needs. Therefore, it is theorized here, in conditions of high work stress and demand, academic advisors are likely to cope by moving toward their students, utilizing personal resources of time and energy to help meet the needs of their students.

Moving Away from Clients (Students): other scholars suggest that when dealing with work stress frontline workers will cope by moving away from clients. Gronbjerg (2014) in their study of nonprofit workers working under conditions of a small workforce, amateurism, and limited budgets, often cope by moving away from their clients, despite their strong motivations

towards serving their clients best interest. Research suggests that two ways in which SLBs cope by moving away from clients are observed when SLBs 'routinize' or 'rationing' services (Tummers et al., 2015).

Routinizing refers to dealing with clients in a standard way; making it a matter of routine. In routinizing services, SLBs are attempting to deliver the same standard of service to a large number of clients within a short amount of time. This compromises on the customization of service needed in SLB work and therefore, potentially impacting the quality of service. When demand for advising is high—such as during registration periods, advisors adopt a practice of 'walk-in advising'. Walk-in advising restricts advising meetings to a pre-set criterion of issues (course planning for next semester). Should the student have more complex concerns to discuss, advisors refer students to wait till a full advising appointment becomes available (Groth, 1990).

Rationing services refers to the actions taken to lower service availability, attractiveness, or client expectations about service delivery. (Tummers et al., 2015; Vedung, 2015). During COVID-19 advising received an increased number of student inquiries via email. An approach advisor utilized in response to this high influx of emails was to generate email templates to respond to commonly asked questions, saving advisors' time and streamlining advising processors. However, by simplifying this process, students did not receive the personalized academic counseling that may have been required. An illustrative example is that of a student emailing their advisor wanting to discuss a course in which they are struggling. The advisor response template may outline resources such as tutoring, and withdrawal policies. However, this specific student may suffer financial aid implications from dropping a class, and ideally this should be discussed with a student prior to advising them on withdrawal policies.

Factors Influencing Coping Behaviors of Advisors

Drawing from the literature (Gofen 2014; Lipsky, 2010; Meyers & Vosanger 2003; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Tummers & Bekkers 2014; Tummers et al., 2012, 2015), this study

identified the following organizational factors common to SLB work settings that can help explain variances in the extent to which academic advisors coped by moving toward and away from their students:

(1) **The problem of resources**: SLB work takes place under conditions of limited resources. The two most common ways in which organizations provide fewer resources than is necessary for workers to their jobs is seen in the ratio of workers to clients and time constraints (Lipsky, 2010). Several studies have identified resource constraints as a key influence on the extent and direction of frontline discretion, and the problem of resources is best described as the gap between the demands placed on workers and the resources available such as time, staffing, training, and materials to meet the demands (Riccucci et al. 2004; Tummers et al.,2015).

As described in an earlier section, Covid-19 related furloughs, hiring freezes, budgetary constraints, and increased student -advisor interactions, advisors likely experienced reduced levels of resources and increased demand placed on them at work.

In response to fewer resources to do increased amounts of work, coping literature suggests that SLBs will tend to respond in two ways. First, guided by professional norms and public service motivations to provide meaningful services to their students, advisors will cope by moving towards students; they will work overtime and use personal resources to help their students (Bakker, 2015; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Tummers & Rocco, 2015). Second, in response to high demands, they may need to cope by moving away from students by rationing their time with students and routinizing their services to make the workload more manageable. Therefore, we can hypothesize that the fewer resources available to advisors, the more likely they will utilize coping by moving towards students and moving away from students.

H1: There is a negative association between resources available to advisors and the extent to which they cope by moving towards students

H2: There is a negative association between resources available to advisors and the extent to

which they cope by moving away from students

(2) Supervisor support: refers to advisors' ability to obtain support from one's supervisor when needed (Burr et al., 2019). The concept of supervisor support is well documented in SLB and organizational psychology literature. Lipsky (2010) highlighted that frontline public employees' behavior and intentions are shaped by their supervisors, which results in fundamental changes to policy implementation and the decisions made by bureaucrats. Supportive leadership is crucial to workers in maintaining positive attitudes towards clients, their work, self-efficacy, and their own well-being (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2020; Rafferty and Griffin, 2006). The primary function of supervisors is not to merely control or monitor SLBs but also to educate, persuade, and coordinate worker decisions to ensure quality service to the public (Hassan et al., 2021). Academic advisors received limited in-person interaction with their supervisor during COVID-19's stay at home orders; this may have resulted in advisors experiencing leadership that is out of touch with their needs. Under supportive leadership, it can be expected that advisors are likely to ask for help or guidance on how to approach problems of high demands, therefore, reducing their need to cope at work. Therefore, it is hypothesized that in the absence of supportive leadership, advisors can experience uncertainty and stress about their work and what is expected of them. To deal with this uncertainty and stress, they may cope by moving towards students (putting in extra time to make sure they are getting all of their work done) or move away from their students (by routinizing their work to simplify job tasks).

H1a: Advisors that receive supervisor support use lower levels of coping by moving towards students

H2a Advisors that receive supervisor support use lower levels of coping by moving away from students

Methods

Participants

This study implements a cross-sectional survey research design, sampling a population of academic advising professionals employed at a 4-year large public university with a decentralized structure of academic advising, that serves a diverse population of students (MSI, HSI, and AANAPISI status). The study was restricted to full-time employees (N=71), working in a professional academic advising role, where primary job duties include direct student advising. The sample does not include advising administrators or direct supervisors[1].Recruitment messages were designed to reach all academic advisors employed at the institution at the time of the study and generated a response rate of 48% (n=34).

Materials

Participants were asked to complete an online survey with items to measure academic advisor working conditions during the pandemic and self-report on the coping behaviors they used when interacting with students. All questions explicitly mentioned responses ought to consider the work period of March 2020- July 2021, when the institution was operating under COVID-19 restrictions. Questions were generated from past literature (Burr et al., 2019; Langford,2009; Tummers et al., 2015) with established and validated scales to measure all the variables of interest. However, considering the novelty of the context, many items were reworded and adapted to better fit within the context of academic advising and the pandemic. All responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale.

Variables and Measures

Independent variables in this study included:

[1] Following IRB approval, advisors were contacted for their voluntary participation via email communication from the Office of Undergraduate Advising.

(1) **Resources** is defined as the aspects of work that are functional in employees' achievement of their job objectives including: assigned caseloads, time to conduct work, staffing, professional development, career advancement, and technological needs (Demerouti et al., 2001; Lipsky, 2010). This was measured using seven items from the Voice Climate Survey (Langford,2009). Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to explore the underlying factor structure of the 7-item resources scale. Inspection of the component matrix, indicated that two items had values less than .55; the criteria considered acceptable (Comrey &Lee, 1992). The items, "I had access to the technology (i.e., stable internet connection, software, laptops, printers) to do my job well," and "I had access to an appropriate workspace" measured the technology and space needed by advisors to conduct their work. However, due to remote work during the pandemic, conditions of 'home offices' may have varied widely among individual advisors with little organizational control over these factors. Therefore, these items were dropped from further analysis. The five items retained on the resource scale measured advisor perceptions about their caseload, time to conduct work, professional development, and career advancement opportunities. Crobach's alpha (α =0.84) for the five items indicated good internal consistency. Mean scores for individual responses to the five-items were obtained, forming a resource variable measured from 1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Higher scores indicated higher levels of resources provided to advisors.

(2) **Supervisor Support** refers to the employee's perception of the possibility to obtain support from their supervisor when needed (Burr et al., 2019). This variable was measured using one-item from the Third Version of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Burr et al., 2019). "When needed, I could count on my supervisor for support". Responses were coded as a binary variable, where 1 denotes "Yes", and 0 denotes "No".

Dependent Variables

Coping is defined as the behavior used by advisors to master, tolerate, or reduce the

demands they face at work. Using items from the coping scale developed by Tummers et al., (2015) (the term 'client' was replaced with 'student'). It is necessary to note here that the coping families are not mutually exclusive, and workers can cope in more than one way. For example, advisors may choose to respond to student emails outside of business hours (coping by moving towards students), and at the same time limit the amount of time they spend with students during appointments (coping by moving away from students). A principal components analysis with varimax rotation conducted on all items of the coping scale produced two factors (see Appendix A). These two factors are used to measure the type of coping academic advisors used:

(1) Moving towards students: the first factor exhibited the highest loadings on four items with behaviors such as working overtime (uncompensated) or taking time away from personal activities to help their students; this component was labeled 'Moving towards students'. Items included: "I started work early and / or finished late to be able to respond to my students in a timely manner", "I limited my breaks or interrupted my break to keep up with student requests", "I responded to student emails on my days off", and "I skipped on personal activities to keep up with my student requests". The alpha coefficient for the four items is .86, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

(2) Moving away from students: The second factor loaded on seven items of advisors decreasing their service availability or expectations of work to students (rationing) and dealing with students in a standard way (routinizing); this component was labeled 'Moving away from students'. Items "I had to ration my time with students", "I had to spend less time with students than would be optimal for them", "I was unable to give students the attention they needed", "I had to tell students that I have a limited amount of time to meet with them", "I was unable to help students to the fullest extent I wanted to or the extent I felt they needed", "I get impatient when students need

repeated reminders on matters related to their academic success (i.e. course registration, due dates)" and "I was unable to serve my students in a way that exceeded their expectations or requirements". The alpha coefficient for the seven items is .91, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Because of standardization, the coping behaviors of moving towards students and moving away will have a mean of zero and standard deviation of 1. Participant scores above zero on each of the coping scale indicated that the advisor identified with the form of coping more frequently than the group's mean use of that particular form of coping.

Control Variable

Past studies have found experience to influence response to work stress (Demerouti et al., 2001). Therefore, years of advising experience at the institution was the control variable considered in the study. Years of experience was coded as a dummy variable. 1 denotes "Over 5 years of advising experience at the institution", and 0 denotes "All else".

Analysis

Data was first screened for missing values and accuracy; in cases where data was missing for the variables of interest, a listwise deletion method was employed (n=30). Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the effect of resources and supervisor support on the two dependent variables of coping by moving toward students (Model 1) and coping by moving away from students (Model 2).

Results

Descriptive statistics of means, standard deviations, and correlations among each of the variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Table

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5
Moving Toward Students (1)	0	.089	1	1				
Moving Away from Students (2)	0	-.280	1	0.00	1			
Resources (3)	2.68	.290	1.02	-.393*	-.632**	1		
Supervisory Support (proportion Yes) (4)	.80	1	0.40	-.168	-.539**	.283	1	
Yrs of Experience (Proportion > 5 years of experience) (5)	.43	0	.504	.111	.0868	.295	-.235	1

* p < .05; ** p < .01 (two-tailed)
n= 30

Frequencies table (see Appendix B) revealed that advisors coped with stressors by utilizing both forms of coping mechanisms of moving towards and moving away from students. However, they leaned more on coping behaviors that moved them towards students than away, with fifty-four percent of advisors reporting above the mean in their use of one's own time or energy to benefit their students.

On the other hand, results indicated that sixty-three percent of advisors were below the mean in their use of coping behaviors that moved them away from students. Meaning, only thirty seven percent of the advisors included in the study indicated using moving away coping behaviors above the group's mean.

Factors influencing coping by moving toward students

The first regression model run to examine coping behaviors of moving toward students as a function of resources and supervisor support was not found to be statistically significant. This indicated that resources and supervisor support had no effect on the extent to which advisors coped by moving toward students. Therefore, advisors coping behaviors are not determined by the level of resources or presence of supervisor support rejecting hypothesis *H1 andH1a.*

The second regression model using resources and supervisor support as predictors of the extent to which advisors coped by moving away from students was statistically significant

(adjusted R2 = [.481], F(3,26) = [F=9.97], p<.001). This model explained 48.1% of the variance in advisor behaviors of moving away from their students. Findings suggested that for every 1 unit increase in resources, advisors will likely be .533 below the group's mean in their use of coping by moved away from students (p< .001); and when work conditions shift from receiving no supervisor support to receiving supervisor support, advisor's coping by moving away from students is .878 below the group's average (p<.05). Therefore, an increase in resources and presence of supervisor support is likely to reduce the level of coping by moving away from students that advisors will utilize, supporting *H2 and H2a*.

The results of the regression analysis for both models are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients for Coping Behaviors

Variable	**Moving towards Students (Model 1)**		**Moving Away from Students (Model 2)**	
	B	SE B	B	SE B
(Constant)	1.180 (2.026)	.583	2.140 (4.939)	.433
Resources	-.360 (-1.820)	.198	**-.533**** **(-3.629)**	.147
Supervisory Support	-.165 (-.337)	.492	-**.878*** **(-2.403)**	.366
Yrs of Experience	.034 (.932)	.398	.218 (.735)	.296
R^2	0.159		0.535**	
Adjusted R^2	0.062		0.481**	

Note: B and SE B is used to represent unstandardized coefficients and standard error, respectively.
* p <0.05; ** p <0.01 (two-tailed)
Model 1: dependent variable is 'moving toward students' coping behaviors
Model 2: dependent variable is 'moving away from students' coping behaviors

Discussion

The first goal of this study was to examine how advisors as SLBs coped when interacting with students in stressful work conditions. The second goal was to determine the extent to which advisors coped as a function of the resources and supervisor support that was available to them during COVID-19.

Past research studying coping during public service delivery (Brodkin, 1997; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Oberfield, 2010; Tummers & Rocco, 2015) conceptualized SLB coping as behaviors that include using personal resources to help clients (moving toward clients), and by rationing and routinizing their services (moving away from clients) to make their work more manageable. The results of this study found that advisors, similar to SLBs also coped by using behaviors of moving toward and moving away from their students.

Overall, even under conditions of high stress and work demands, advisors lean towards utilizing coping behaviors to benefit their students and are less likely to reply on coping behaviors that moved them away from their students. Over half the advisors included in this study coped by utilizing personal resources and energy to help their students (moving towards students) at a level above the group's mean. On the other hand, only thirty-seven percent of the advisors indicated using coping behaviors above the group's mean. This supports the notion that advisors are more likely to cope with stress at work by working overtime, using personal time, and taking fewer breaks to meet student demand, and less likely to ration or routinize their services provided to students. This finding is connected to the findings of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003). Advisors, like other SLB professions rely on professional norms and employ student friendly approaches to advising even through the stressful conditions of the pandemic.

When considering what factors influence the type of coping an advisor uses, two theoretical models were constructed linking resources and supervisor support as determinants of coping by moving toward and moving away from students. The models were tested using multiple linear regression, and two of the four hypotheses were supported in the findings. Contrary to what was expected, resources and supervisor was found to be not significant in predicting coping behaviors that move advisors towards students (working overtime or using personal resources to benefit the student). As suggested in the literature (Bakker, 2015; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, Tummers & Rocco, 2015), SLBs lean on their professional norms and desires to help their clients

and use personal resources to meet the demand regardless of the resources or supervise support provided by their institution.

However, during times of high stress and demands, to avoid burnout and keep workloads manageable, advisors relied on moving away coping behaviors such as limiting their time with individual students and routinizing their services. Resources and supervisor support was found to have statistically significant effects on the use of moving away coping behaviors. Meaning, when advisors face depleting resources and do not have supportive supervisors, they are likely to reply on behaviors that move them away from their students to make their work more manageable.

While only one of the regressions model was able to explain the variance in coping behaviors used by advisors when dealing with stress at work, this study's approach worked satisfactorily and made contributions to the literature by analyzing coping behaviors and examining the impact of resources and supervisor support on the type of coping advisors will use during their interactions with students. This ultimately impacting the quality of academic advising that students receive.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

A clear limitation of this study is that the findings are only generalizable to advising populations at higher education institutions with characteristics similar to those outlined earlier (4-year public research university; high minority student population and decentralized advising structures). Additionally, the findings in this study may be biased against finding instances of moving away from students. In survey research it is not uncommon that respondents are prone to social desirability bias, for instance, noting that they move toward students, when in fact they often do not. Although attempts were made to reduce social desirability by stressing confidentiality, the potential for bias cannot be eliminated. Future studies ought to analyze the coping behavior of advisors by asking others (students, supervisors, and colleagues) about the coping behaviors advisors used in their interactions with students during times of high stress.

The central argument underpinning this study is that the type of coping behavior an advisor uses has important implications for policy outcomes. In using personal resources and energy to meet their students' needs, an advisor is more likely to use developmental advising approaches. Conversely, when restricting their time with students they are more likely to use prescriptive advising approaches. Each approach has implications on the advisor's ability to contribute to the institution's goals of student retention, progression, and completion. This serves as a model to inform administrators on the resources and support needed to strengthen the daily practices of advising centers on college campuses. In conditions of high student caseloads and depleting organizational resources, advisors seek out ways to ration time between students and standardize their approach to advising resulting in using prescriptive advising, an approach considered to require less effort and provides a 'check-list' advising experience to students, rather than developmental approaches, which are considered to be more comprehensive and student-centered practices. Research supports that retention outcomes are more likely to occur from developmental advising interactions than through prescriptive advising(Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Drake, 2011;Harris, 2018; Vianden & Barlow, 2015), and points to the extent to which advisor discretion influences policy implementation and outcomes.

Lastly, while this study is limited in its generalizability, comparative studies using this theoretical model can be adapted to test the relationships between the predictor variables and coping behaviors across larger groups of advising professionals working within a wider range of institutional settings, including advisors at 2-year and 4-year public institutions with decentralized and centralized forms of advising. It can also be further extended to understanding the coping behaviors adopted by other front-line professionals with direct student contact such as financial aid staff in instances of conducting public service work during a crisis.

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