Factors Associated with Academic Advisors' Burnout

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This study examined whether there are statistically significant relationships between academic advisors' demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, institutional variables, organizational context variables, and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. We used a national sample of academic advisors' survey data collected from February to March 2023 ($n = 821$). The results suggest 40.8% of academic advisors feel burned out from their work at least once a week to every day. The demographic characteristics and institutional variables did not explain a significant amount of variance in advisors' burnout; however, advising caseload and organizational context variables (i.e., workload, reward, community, and values) were consistently and significantly ($p < .05$) associated with advisors' emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

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The societal context of the COVID-19 pandemic spawned significant upheaval in the higher education labor market. More than half of college employees report they are likely to leave their jobs in the next year and the situation may be worse in student support services (Bichsel et al., 2022; Stebleton & Buford, 2021). Higher education employees are leaving at such high rates that some have referred to it as a "mass exodus" (Ellis, 2021a, para. 19). Many higher education employees who left their positions in the past 3 years during the Great Resignation have cited high burnout as a principal factor in their decisions to seek new employment (McClure, 2021; Winfield & Paris, 2022).

Although higher education employees are the second highest group of burned-out employees in the U.S. (Marken & Agrawal, 2022)—suggesting that academic advisors are likely experiencing burnout at high levels as well—at present, there are few large, contemporary studies examining academic advisors' burnout. Murray (1987) hypothesized that academic advisors may experience high rates of burnout because the profession cultivates "seeds for discontent" (p. 50): traditionally low wages, excessive caseloads, high job intensity, and lack of promotion opportunities. More recently, Gregerson et al. (2022) suggested that administrator demands, compassion fatigue, emotional labor, the high work volume, and lack of institutional support and resources may also contribute to academic advisors' burnout. Because of the potential for academic advisors to experience burnout, the strong associations between burnout and employees' attrition (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), and the potential negative ramifications of academic advisors' burnout and attrition on advisors, students, and institutions, this study examines which variables may be associated with elevations in advisors' burnout.

Literature Review

Burnout is a psychological syndrome that manifests after prolonged exposure to chronic stressors in the workplace (Maslach et al., 2001). The topic of burnout originated in psychology in the 1970s as a means of describing individuals' loss of motivation, emotional exhaustion, reduced feelings of professional competence, and loss of concern or care for those served (Maslach, 1976). Initially, burnout was studied among employees in helping professions such as social work, health care, human services, and psychotherapy (Schaufeli et al., 2009), so the concept applies to academic advisors who also serve in a helping profession (Grites et al., 2016). To assess individuals' levels of burnout, Maslach and colleagues (Maslach &

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Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2008) developed a psychometrically sound instrument (the Maslach Burnout Inventory; Maslach et al., 1996) that measures burnout in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment or professional inefficacy. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by fatigue, loss of energy, or feelings of depletion related to employment. Depersonalization or cynicism is described as negative attitudes toward the individuals served (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Reduced personal accomplishment or professional inefficacy occurs when individuals have low morale or a reduction in their workplace productivity (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Research related to burnout has expanded to different professions worldwide and burnout is now widely recognized as an important component of employees' overall well-being, employees' turnover intentions, and organizations' effectiveness (Kwon, 2015; Schaufeli et al., 2009). At present, there are few empirical, peer-reviewed studies about academic advisors' burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic. The limited research about academic advisors' burnout has either focused on advisors who work with specific college students or has not explored the variables associated with advisors' burnout. Gellock (2019) examined the demographic and workplace variables associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among academic support professionals who advise college student-athletes. Age was negatively associated with student-athlete advisors' and learning specialists' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Years in the profession were positively associated with their depersonalization. Academic support professionals who had more autonomy in their positions, received professional recognition for their contributions, and had enough resources to perform their work had less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, However, Gellock did not examine advisors' or learning specialists' personal accomplishment, the third element of burnout.

Rubin and Moreno-Pardo (2018) initiated a qualitative study of student-athlete professionals (e.g., athletic advisors) and discovered that high workload and work demands, lower satisfaction with salary and compensation, and lack of recognition for their contributions were common themes for student-athlete professionals who experienced high rates of stress and potential burnout. Brewer and Clippard (2002) surveyed 166 employees working in TRIO Student Support Services programs and found that their emotional exhaustion was negatively associated with total job satisfaction and their perception of personal accomplishment—feeling as though they made positive contributions in the workplace—was positively associated with their job satisfaction. However, Brewer and Clippard did not examine variables associated with employees' burnout and their sample was limited to a specific type of higher education professional, limiting generalizability to other advisors.

Mullen et al. (2018) used a larger sample (n = 789) and discovered that student affairs professionals' burnout was positively associated with their job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The authors did not explore the variables associated with student affairs professionals' burnout. Winfield and Paris (2022) used a sample of 1,080 higher education professionals from 830 higher education institutions. Higher education professionals' burnout was associated with increased intentions to leave their current profession. Increased job demands and workloads that were not accompanied by additional resources also contributed to burnout. While Winfield and Paris discovered that burnout was associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes among higher education professionals, they did not holistically examine whether demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, institutional variables, and organizational context variables were associated with burnout. A gap in the literature exists related to those items.

Burnout poses significant risks to academic advisors' overall health and well-being; it is associated with increased headaches, gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, memory impairment, back and neck pain, and respiratory infections (Kim et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2008; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018; Winfield & Paris, 2022). Burnout also presents a genuine threat to the longevity of academic advisors' employment: Academic advisors and advising-adjacent higher education professionals (e.g., career counselors) who experience burnout have higher intentions of leaving their positions (Ellis, 2021b; Gellock, 2019; Morales, 2022; Mullen et al., 2018; Winfield & Paris, 2022). Academic advisors play a critical role in college students' success because they help students navigate the culture of higher education, direct students to important resources and services, and foster students' sense of belonging (Soria, 2012; Strayhorn, 2015). Moreover, academic advisors promote positive student outcomes, including academic achievement, retention, learning

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outcomes, academic and career planning, self-efficacy, and overall success in higher education (Drake, 2011; Kot, 2014; Soria, 2012). Therefore, attrition and turnover in academic advising positions may significantly disrupt college students' outcomes and trajectories.

Higher attrition and turnover can be tumultuous to academic advisors and costly for colleges and universities. The average costs to replace a full-time professional employee are estimated to be as high as 150% of the employee's annual compensation package (Pitts et al., 2011). Training new academic advisors to use technology and learn institutional policies can also consume significant institutional resources (Givans Voller, 2012). The overall success of academic advising requires long-term investment to develop advisors' institutional knowledge, help advisors build sustaining relationships with campus stakeholders, and expand advisors' leadership contributions (Thomas & McFarlane, 2018). Consistent turnover among academic advisors undermines the overall effectiveness of academic advising.

The literature suggests that academic advisors have the potential to experience a high rate of burnout, that burnout may be associated with advisors' attrition rates, and that academic advisors' burnout may negatively impact advisors, students, and institutions. Yet, significant gaps remain in the extant literature related to burnout among a broad range of academic advisors, including specific variables that may be associated with elevations in academic advisors' burnout. The research question guiding this study is: Are there statistically significant relationships between academic advisors' demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, institutional variables, organizational context variables, and level of burnout?

Conceptual Framework

We used Maslach and colleagues' conceptualization of burnout and propositions about the organizational factors that are associated with burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 2008). Maslach and colleagues introduced six organizational factors associated with burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. When the workload is too high, the overload depletes individuals' capacities to meet the demands of their employment position. When individuals have control or agency over their work, they are less likely to experience burnout because they can influence decisions that affect their work, exercise professional autonomy, and access the resources necessary to complete their work effectively. Reward refers to material rewards (e.g., financial, institutional) and opportunities for intrinsic satisfaction. Community captures advisors' social support and the relationships employees have with colleagues. When relationships are unsupportive or untrustworthy, employees are more likely to experience burnout. Fairness refers to equity and justice. Finally, values are the ideals and motivations that connect workers and workplaces. The absence of a values-based connection leads to increased burnout.

Researchers have used Maslach et al.'s (2008) conceptual framework in scholarship about higher education professionals' burnout (Brewer & Clippard, 2002; Gellock, 2019; Mullen et al., 2018; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018; Winfield & Paris, 2022). This exploratory study extends Maslach et al.'s well-known conceptual framework on employees' burnout to a broader range of academic advisors while incorporating variables that have rarely or never been incorporated into studies about higher education employees' burnout: demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, and institutional variables.

Methodology

Instrumentation

In February 2023, we administered a survey to 8,122 individuals listed as academic advisors (or had advising-adjacent job titles, such as student success advisors) on more than 1,300 two-year and four-year institutional websites. We received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this study. We collected the names, job titles, and email addresses of the advisors via web scraping techniques and we merged the institutional identifiers with additional information from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System to capture institutional control, size, type, and setting. We included abbreviated measures of the three dimensions of burnout, demographic questions, questions related to academic advisors' positions, and six organizational context factors.

Participants

There were 2,566 advisors (31.6%) from 737 unique two-year and four-year institutions representing all 50 U.S. states who consented to participate in the survey. We randomly selected one-third of the 2,566 advisors ($n = 855$) to respond to items related to their organizational contexts to shorten

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	n	*%*
Genderqueer, nonbinary, or transgender	17	2.0
Man	176	21.3
Woman	621	75.2
Gender identity not listed or did not respond to the item	12	1.4
Asexual	11	1.3
Bisexual	52	6.3
Gay or lesbian	45	5.4
Heterosexual or straight	623	75.4
Pansexual	18	2.2
Queer or questioning	26	3.1
Sexual orientation not listed or did not respond to the item	51	6.2
American Indian, Native American, or Alaska Native	10	1.2
Asian	28	3.4
Black or African American	46	5.6
Hispanic or Latinx	59	7.2
Multiracial	28	3.4
White	608	73.6
Race/ethnicity not listed or did not respond to the item	46	5.5
Does not have a disability	746	90.3
Has a disability	80	9.7
Associate's degree or less	3	0.3
Bachelor's degree	140	16.9
Master's degree	596	72.2
Doctorate or professional degree	87	10.5

the time it would take to complete the survey, increasing the potential response rates, and reducing survey fatigue. Of the 855 advisors who were assigned and consented, 821 advisors responded to the survey items and they were retained in the final analysis. Table 1 includes the demographic characteristics, Table 2 includes the advising-related variables, and Table 3 includes the institutional variables for the respondents. All respondents were professional staff advisors (not faculty advisors) and the majority (90.2%) were employed at four-year institutions. Most respondents identified as cisgender women (75.2%) and were White (73.6%). Additionally, 72.2% of the respondents had a master's degree and the average age was 39.96 (SD = 10.52).

Measures

Criteria Variables

We used an abbreviated scale of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 2001; Riley et al., 2018) to measure three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Table 4). Nine items measured emotional exhaustion (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work"), depersonalization (e.g., "I don't really care what happens to some students"), and personal accomplishment (e.g., "I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students"). All items were measured on the same scale: 0 = never to 6 = every day. Riley et al. (2018) provided evidence for the sound psychometric properties of the shortened burnout scale (e.g., strong construct and predictive validity). The three subscales of the shortened burnout scale were α = .79 to .85, suggesting high internal consistency. Additionally, the shortened scale had adequate goodness-of-fit (GFI = .96, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .07), strong correlations with the full burnout inventory subscales (r = .93 to .94), and good sensitivity (86.67%–99.04%) and specificity (79.35%–97.42%), indicating that the shortened version discriminates burned-out individuals nearly as accurately as the full burnout inventory.

Predictor Variables

Organizational Factors. We used an abbreviated version of Leiter and Maslach's (2003) Areas of Worklife Survey—the Areas of Worklife Short Scale (Masluk et al., 2018)—to measure six organizational factors (Table 4). Each factor included three items

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Table 2. Advising-Related Variables for the Sample

	n	%
Employed as an academic advisor for less than 5 years	351	42.5
Employed as an academic advisor for more than 5 years	475	57.5
Primarily advises:		
Undergraduate students	750	90.8
Graduate students	96	11.6
Student-athletes	219	26.5
Students with disabilities	269	32.6
Students taking developmental (precollege) coursework	154	18.6
Students in undeclared majors	278	33.7
Students in STEM majors	310	37.5
Students in health care degrees	165	20.0
Students in honors programs	215	26.0
First-generation students	472	57.1
Students in prehealth, prelaw, or preprofessional programs	239	28.9
First-year students	466	56.4
Students on academic probation	12	1.5
International students	15	1.8
Business students	12	1.5
Online, adult learners, or nontraditional students	32	3.9
Transfer students	26	3.1
Advising position is located in:		
Central advising center	231	28.0
College advising center	275	33.3
Department advising center	134	16.2
Major-specific advising center	135	16.3
Retention-specific advising center	54	6.5

measured on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Examples include "I do not have time to do the work that must be done" (workload), "I have control over how I do my work" (control), "my work is appreciated" (reward), "I am a member of a supportive work group" (community), "resources are allocated fairly here" (fairness), and "my values and the college's or university's values are alike" (values). Masluk et al. provided evidence for the sound psychometric properties of the shortened work-life scale. The six subscales were between α = .70 to .82, suggesting high internal consistency. Additionally, the shortened scale had an improved overall goodness-of-fit compared to three prior tested models with more items (CFI = .911, RMSEA = .046).

Table 3. Institutional Information for the Sample

	n	%
Public institution	667	80.8
Private nonprofit institution	155	18.8
Private for-profit institution	4	0.5
Two-year institution	73	10.0
Four-year institution	743	90.2
Land-grant institution	180	21.8
Not a land-grant institution	646	78.2
Highest degree: associate's	85	10.3
Highest degree: bachelor's	39	4.7
Highest degree: master's	84	10.2
Highest degree: doctorate	618	74.9
City setting	550	66.6
Suburb setting	134	16.2
Town setting	108	13.1
Rural setting	34	4.1

Demographic Variables. We also included demographic variables related to gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age, disability, and level of education, as some of those demographic variables are associated with employees' burnout (Brewer & Clippard, 2002; Gabbe et al., 2002; Gellock, 2019; Table 1).

Advising-Related Variables. Advising-related variables included the number of students the advisors advise per academic year (M = 382.93,

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Table 4. Burnout and Organizational Variables

	M	*SD*	α	Ω
Emotional exhaustion	2.964	1.567	0.871	0.877
Depersonalization/cynicism	1.046	0.667	0.741	0.777
Personal accomplishment	4.933	0.955	0.705	0.725
Workload	3.349	1.079	0.828	0.844
Control	3.608	0.921	0.810	0.820
Reward	3.368	0.922	0.775	0.782
Community	3.931	0.860	0.873	0.877
Fairness	2.420	0.762	0.709	0.731
Values	3.278	0.727	0.707	0.735

SD = 426.13, range = 3-5,197), length of time in advising position, type(s) of students primarily advised, and location of advising position (Table 2). Some of those variables are associated with advisors' effectiveness or have been used in similar studies related to higher education employees' burnout (Brewer & Clippard, 2002; Gabbe et al., 2002; Gellock, 2019; Mullen et al., 2018).

Salary Satisfaction. We also asked advisors to rate their level of satisfaction with their salary, benefits, and overall compensation package on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied (Table 5). We utilized that variable because salary satisfaction is often associated with burnout among individuals in helping professions (Martin & Schinke, 2008).

Institutional Variables. The institutional variables included institutional type (e.g., two-year), total undergraduate and graduate enrollment (M = 26,344.56, SD = 20,015.44, range = 409-159,215), highest degree offered, and setting (Table 3). There is limited evidence for whether institutional variables may be associated with higher education employees' burnout.

We converted the demographic, advising-related, and institutional variables using effect coding (Ro & Bergom, 2020) except in the case of variables with dichotomous categories. In effect coding, the coefficients or odds ratios are interpreted relative to the average of the full sample and all groups can be included in analyses (Ro & Bergom, 2020). With the dichotomous variables, each coefficient or odds ratio can be interpreted compared to the other level.

Descriptive Measure of Burnout

We asked advisors to respond to the question, "Please rate the frequency with which you feel burned out from your work," scaled 0 = never, 1 = a few times a year or less, 2 = once a month or less, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = a few times a week, and 6 = every day

Table 5. Advisors' General Burnout and Salary Satisfaction

		n	%
Please rate the frequency with which you feel burned out from your work.	Never	32	3.9
	A few times a year or less	190	23.1
	Once a month or less	109	13.3
	A few times a month	155	18.9
	Once a week	87	10.6
	A few times a week	145	17.7
	Every day	103	12.5
How satisfied are you with your salary, benefits, and overall compensation package?	Very dissatisfied	130	15.9
	Dissatisfied	266	32.3
	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	133	16.2
	Satisfied	260	31.6
	Very satisfied	32	4.0

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(Table 5). The measure provides descriptive information about advisors' general burnout, but we did not use the measure in our models.

Data Analyses

First, we used the "lavaan" package in R (Rosseel, 2012) for a confirmatory factor analysis on the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, workload, control items, reward, community, fairness, and values items. The factorial model had an acceptable fit (CFI = .930, TLI = .914, RMSEA = .054, SRMR = .052; Kline, 2015). All factors had acceptable to good internal consistency (Table 4).

Next, we used three separate hierarchical linear regressions with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment as dependent measures. We entered the independent variables in four blocks: advisors' demographic variables (block one), advising-related variables (block two), institutional variables (block three), and organizational context variables (block four). The hierarchical linear regressions assess the independent contributions of the four blocks of variables to the overall variance in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, thus providing information about the potential importance of each group of variables in academic advisors' burnout.

In Table 6, we present the results of the final step, which includes all four blocks of variables. The table includes the coefficients, which represent the relationship between the independent and dependent variables; the 95% confidence intervals for the coefficients, which represent the range where the coefficients might fall for the population given the sample data, and the probability values (p-values), which represent the likelihood of obtaining coefficients as extreme or more extreme than we observed if the null hypothesis (coefficients = .0) is true in the population (Soria, 2022).

After running the models, we examined assumptions of multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, linearity, and independent/normal errors. We found multicollinearity assumptions were not violated (variance inflation factors = 1.02 to 2.27). In testing homoscedasticity, we found random scatter and variability in scatterplots of standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values. In producing histograms of standardized residuals and normal probability plots comparing the distribution of standardized residuals to a normal distribution, we found evidence for normality. Our examinations of matrix scatterplots suggested the relationships between the independent and dependent variables were relatively linear. We also discovered the residual errors were independent across the regression models (the Durbin-Watson values were 1.978, 1.959, and 1.966, respectively).

Results

We reviewed the descriptive statistics and observed that the academic advisors in our sample had a higher unstandardized mean value for personal accomplishment compared to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization or cynicism (Table 4). Academic advisors also had a higher unstandardized mean value for community and control, followed by reward, workload, values, and fairness (Table 4). Additionally, 40.8% of advisors feel burned out from work once a week, a few times a week, or every day. Slightly under one-third of academic advisors (32.2%) feel burned out a few times a month or once a month or less, 23.1% feel burned out a few times a year or less, and very few advisors never feel burned out (3.9%; Table 5). Most of the advisors (48.2%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salary, benefits, and overall compensation package, 16.2% were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, and 35.6% were satisfied or very satisfied (Table 5).

Emotional Exhaustion

In the first regression model, we entered demographic variables in the first block and the variables did not explain a significant amount of variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = .033$, $p > .05$). Genderqueer, nonbinary, or transgender advisors had significantly higher rates of emotional exhaustion compared to all other advisors. Cisgender men had significantly lower rates of emotional exhaustion compared to all other advisors (Table 6). Additionally, age was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion.

We entered advising-specific variables into the second block and the variables accounted for unique variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = .268$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .235$, $p < .001$). A higher caseload of advisees was positively associated with emotional exhaustion while salary/compensation satisfaction was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion. Those employed as academic advisors for less than 5 years had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion compared to those who were

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Table 6. Results of the Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses (Final Step with All Four Blocks of Variables)

	Emotional Exhaustion			
	Coef.	95% CI (Coef.)		*p*
Demographic Variables				
Genderqueer, non-binary, or transgender	0.380	0.134	0.626	<0.001
Man	−0.283	−0.549	−0.017	0.037
Woman	−0.003	−0.217	0.211	0.976
Gender identity not listed or did not respond to the item	−0.494	−0.006	0.019	0.059
Asexual	−0.140	−0.652	0.371	0.590
Bisexual	−0.011	−0.290	0.268	0.938
Gay or lesbian	0.055	−0.239	0.348	0.714
Heterosexual or straight	−0.017	−0.196	0.162	0.852
Pansexual	−0.314	−0.739	0.110	0.146
Queer or questioning	−0.116	−0.562	0.331	0.610
Sexual orientation not listed or did not respond to the item	0.438	−0.041	0.917	0.205
American Indian, Native American, or Alaska Native	0.129	−0.244	0.502	0.498
Asian	0.198	−0.314	0.711	0.448
Black or African American	−0.279	−0.606	0.048	0.094
Hispanic or Latinx	−0.035	−0.303	0.234	0.800
Multiracial	0.052	−0.188	0.291	0.673
White	0.033	−0.288	0.354	0.842
Race/ethnicity not listed or did not respond to the item	0.109	−0.045	0.263	0.164
Does not have a disability	−0.084	−0.458	0.290	0.659
Has a disability	−0.067	−0.304	0.171	0.582
Associate's degree or less	−0.376	−0.007	0.383	0.353
Bachelor's degree	0.003	−0.295	0.300	0.986
Master's degree	0.132	−0.147	0.411	0.354
Doctorate or professional degree	0.238	−0.072	0.548	0.132
Age	−0.018	−0.025	−0.011	<0.001
Advising Variables				
Number of advisees	0.130	0.049	0.200	<0.001
Salary satisfaction	−0.072	−0.133	−0.010	<0.001
Employed as an academic advisor for less than 5 years	−0.268	−0.423	−0.113	<0.001
Primarily advises:				
Undergraduate students	0.081	−0.208	0.369	0.584
Graduate students	0.046	−0.192	0.284	0.705
Student-athletes	−0.105	−0.289	0.079	0.265
Students with disabilities	−0.007	−0.199	0.186	0.946
Students taking developmental (precollege) coursework	−0.038	−0.249	0.172	0.720
Students in undeclared majors	0.037	−0.141	0.215	0.682
Students in STEM majors	−0.013	−0.166	0.141	0.872
Students in health care degrees	0.095	−0.099	0.290	0.336
Students in honors programs	−0.186	−0.363	−0.010	0.039
First-generation students	0.103	−0.085	0.292	0.282
Students in prehealth, prelaw, or preprofessional programs	0.018	−0.162	0.198	0.841
First-year students	−0.009	−0.197	0.180	0.928
Students on academic probation	0.226	0.053	0.418	0.045
International students	0.400	−0.089	0.889	0.108
Business students	0.365	−0.201	0.930	0.206
Online, adult learners, or nontraditional students	−0.060	−0.396	0.277	0.727
Transfer students	0.316	−0.054	0.686	0.094
Advising position is located in:				
Central advising center	0.048	−0.137	0.232	0.613
College advising center	0.118	−0.042	0.279	0.148
Department advising center	0.096	−0.094	0.286	0.322
Major-specific advising center	−0.004	−0.187	0.179	0.967
Retention-specific advising center	0.022	−0.246	0.290	0.872
Institutional Variables				
Number of students enrolled	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.977
Public institution	0.078	−0.247	0.402	0.639
Private for-profit institution	0.051	−0.284	0.385	0.671
Private nonprofit institution	−0.137	−0.769	0.495	0.765
Four-year institution	0.144	−0.132	0.420	0.307
Land-grant institution	−0.073	−0.248	0.102	0.411
Highest degree: bachelor's	−0.030	−0.247	0.187	0.785
Highest degree: master's	0.051	−0.124	0.226	0.567
Highest degree: doctorate	−0.021	−0.183	0.124	0.778
City setting	0.007	−0.127	0.142	0.924
Suburb setting	−0.072	−0.052	0.080	0.355
Town setting	0.080	−0.142	0.247	0.344
Rural setting	−0.013	−0.491	0.251	0.925
Organizational Context Variables				
Workload	0.319	0.243	0.394	<0.001
Control	−0.171	−0.246	−0.096	<0.001
Reward	−0.132	−0.213	−0.050	<0.001
Community	−0.137	−0.208	−0.055	<0.001
Fairness	0.013	−0.065	0.090	0.752
Values	−0.123	−0.199	−0.048	<0.001
Intercept	−0.497	−0.578	−0.398	<0.001

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Table 6
Extended

Depersonalization				Personal Accomplishment			
Coef.	95% CI (Coef.)		*p*	Coef.	95% CI (Coef.)		*p*
0.135	−0.741	0.470	0.661	−0.135	−0.741	0.470	0.226
−0.207	−0.509	0.095	0.999	0.165	−0.115	0.446	0.477
−0.088	−0.330	0.154	0.247	0.000	−0.225	0.225	0.784
−0.149	−0.731	0.432	0.613	−0.139	−0.679	0.401	0.750
0.100	−0.480	0.681	0.310	0.100	−0.480	0.681	0.169
−0.176	−0.493	0.141	0.576	0.084	−0.210	0.378	0.514
0.233	−0.099	0.565	0.678	0.065	−0.243	0.373	0.143
−0.069	−0.272	0.133	0.531	0.060	−0.128	0.248	0.075
−0.351	−0.832	0.131	0.629	0.110	−0.337	0.557	0.191
−0.457	−0.963	0.050	0.591	0.129	−0.342	0.599	0.461
0.520	−0.251	0.291	0.217	−0.173	−0.251	0.597	0.617
0.173	−0.251	0.597	0.471	−0.145	−0.538	0.249	0.474
0.166	−0.416	0.748	0.098	−0.455	−0.995	0.085	0.398
0.031	−0.341	0.402	0.776	−0.050	−0.394	0.295	0.172
−0.126	−0.431	0.178	0.295	0.151	−0.132	0.433	0.156
−0.099	−0.370	0.172	0.429	−0.102	−0.353	0.150	0.124
0.253	−0.111	0.618	0.694	0.068	−0.270	0.406	0.299
0.132	−0.043	0.306	0.929	−0.007	−0.169	0.155	0.992
−0.352	−0.776	0.073	0.056	0.384	−0.010	0.778	0.651
0.113	−0.156	0.382	0.323	−0.126	−0.376	0.124	0.752
−0.009	−0.911	0.893	0.830	−0.092	−0.929	0.745	0.100
−0.078	−0.414	0.259	0.698	0.062	−0.251	0.374	0.326
0.059	−0.257	0.376	0.973	0.005	−0.289	0.299	0.226
0.029	−0.323	0.380	0.844	0.033	−0.294	0.359	0.477
−0.007	−0.015	0.010	0.100	0.007	−0.010	0.015	0.105
0.175	0.101	0.249	<0.001	0.120	0.046	0.194	<0.001
−0.068	−0.108	−0.032	<0.001	0.015	−0.050	0.080	0.261
−0.237	−0.413	−0.061	<0.001	0.086	−0.077	0.250	0.312
0.108	−0.219	0.436	0.833	0.282	−0.022	0.586	0.055
0.287	0.017	0.557	0.011	−0.325	−0.576	−0.075	0.048
0.143	−0.066	0.352	0.271	−0.021	−0.215	0.173	0.745
−0.109	−0.328	0.109	0.975	0.055	−0.148	0.258	0.586
−0.105	−0.344	0.134	0.728	0.238	0.016	0.460	0.045
0.035	−0.168	0.237	0.651	0.048	−0.139	0.236	0.593
0.009	−0.165	0.184	0.902	−0.070	−0.232	0.092	0.338
0.083	−0.138	0.303	0.422	−0.173	−0.378	0.032	0.134
−0.103	−0.336	−0.015	0.034	0.124	−0.062	0.310	0.179
−0.097	−0.311	0.117	0.334	0.091	−0.107	0.290	0.333
0.127	−0.077	0.331	0.867	0.067	−0.123	0.256	0.503
0.074	−0.140	0.288	0.888	−0.068	−0.267	0.130	0.498
0.274	0.018	0.530	0.043	−0.370	−0.296	−0.074	0.010
0.427	−0.128	0.983	0.099	−0.127	−0.642	0.388	0.606
0.164	−0.478	0.806	0.209	0.115	−0.480	0.711	0.547
−0.053	−0.435	0.329	0.757	0.069	−0.285	0.424	0.726
0.105	−0.315	0.526	0.100	0.007	−0.383	0.397	0.944
0.146	−0.064	0.355	0.541	0.068	−0.126	0.263	0.517
0.236	0.053	0.418	<0.001	−0.012	−0.182	0.157	0.912
0.199	−0.017	0.415	0.319	−0.018	−0.218	0.182	0.813
0.225	0.017	0.433	<0.001	−0.110	−0.303	0.083	0.312
0.330	0.025	0.635	<0.001	−0.041	−0.323	0.242	0.908
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.876	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.217
−0.003	−0.370	0.365	0.622	0.263	−0.079	0.604	0.124
0.017	−0.362	0.395	0.765	0.193	−0.158	0.545	0.280
−0.017	−0.735	0.700	0.286	0.018	−0.284	0.385	0.869
−0.052	−0.365	0.261	0.567	0.028	−0.263	0.318	0.835
−0.067	−0.266	0.132	0.761	−0.186	−0.370	−0.002	0.033
−0.011	−0.258	0.235	0.511	0.009	−0.219	0.238	0.133
0.030	−0.169	0.228	0.852	0.020	−0.164	0.203	0.770
−0.019	−0.183	0.145	0.355	−0.031	−0.183	0.121	0.855
0.026	−0.127	0.179	0.920	0.105	−0.037	0.248	0.535
0.120	−0.052	0.292	0.876	−0.108	−0.268	0.051	0.713
0.047	−0.142	0.237	0.622	0.001	−0.174	0.177	0.171
−0.193	−0.491	0.106	0.765	0.003	−0.274	0.280	0.202
0.085	0.025	0.171	<0.001	−0.153	−0.279	−0.027	<0.001
−0.081	−0.165	−0.014	<0.001	0.129	0.097	0.208	<0.001
−0.083	−0.176	−0.009	0.004	0.168	0.083	0.254	<0.001
−0.093	−0.181	−0.014	0.002	0.139	0.095	0.213	<0.001
0.050	−0.039	0.138	0.202	−0.084	−0.164	0.020	0.075
−0.233	−0.319	−0.147	<0.001	0.176	0.096	0.255	<0.001
−0.329	−0.491	−0.167	<0.001	0.126	0.036	0.216	<0.001

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employed longer. Advisors in honors programs had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion compared to those who did not advise honors students. Advisors for students on academic probation had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to advisors who did not advise students on academic probation.

We entered institutional variables into the third block and they did not explain a significant level of variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = .274$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .006$, $p > .05$). No institutional variables were significantly associated with emotional exhaustion in the model. Finally, we entered organizational context variables in the fourth block and they explained a significant amount of variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = .448$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .174$, $p < .001$). While workload was positively associated with emotional exhaustion, control, reward, community, and values were negatively associated with emotional exhaustion. Fairness was not significantly associated with emotional exhaustion in this model.

Depersonalization

In the second regression model, we entered demographic variables in the first block and they did not explain a significant level of variance in depersonalization ($R^2 = .022$, $p > .05$). No demographic variables were significantly associated with depersonalization.

We next entered advising-specific variables into the second block and they accounted for unique variance in depersonalization ($R^2 = .272$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .250$, $p < .001$). A higher caseload of advisees was positively associated with depersonalization and advisors' satisfaction with salary and compensation was negatively associated with depersonalization. Advisors employed for less than 5 years had significantly lower levels of depersonalization compared to those employed longer. Those who advised graduate students and students on academic probation had significantly higher levels of depersonalization compared to advisors who did not advise graduate students or students on academic probation. Advisors located in college advising centers, major-specific advising centers, and retention-specific advising centers had significantly higher levels of depersonalization compared to advisors located in other advising areas. Advisors in honors programs had significantly lower levels of depersonalization compared to those who did not advise honors students.

We entered institutional variables into the third block and they did not explain a significant level of variance in depersonalization ($R^2 = .275$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .003$, $p > .05$). No institutional variables were significantly associated with depersonalization in the model. Finally, we entered organizational context variables in the fourth block and they explained a significant amount of variance in depersonalization ($R^2 = .340$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .065$, $p < .001$). Workload was positively associated with depersonalization. Control, reward, community, and values were negatively associated with depersonalization. Fairness was not significantly associated with depersonalization in this model.

Personal Accomplishment

In the third regression model, we entered demographic variables in the first block and they did not explain a significant level of variance in personal accomplishment ($R^2 = .029$, $p > .05$). No demographic variables were significantly associated with personal accomplishment.

We entered advising-specific variables into the second block and they accounted for unique variance in personal accomplishment ($R^2 = .302$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .273$, $p < .001$). A higher caseload of advisees was positively associated with personal accomplishment. Those advising graduate students and students on academic probation had significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment compared to those who did not advise graduate students or students on academic probation. Advisors who advised students enrolled in developmental coursework had significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment compared to advisors who did not.

We entered institutional variables into the third block and they did not explain a significant level of variance in depersonalization ($R^2 = .316$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .014$, $p > .05$). Advisors working at land-grant institutions had a significantly lower level of personal accomplishment compared to advisors who did not work at land-grant institutions. We entered organizational context variables in the fourth block and they explained a significant amount of variance in personal accomplishment ($R^2 = .406$, $p < .001$; $R^2\Delta = .090$, $p < .001$). While workload was negatively associated with personal accomplishment, control, reward, community, and values were positively associated with personal accomplishment. Fairness was not significantly associated with personal accomplishment in this model.

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Discussion and Recommendations

This study provides insights into the factors most likely associated with academic advisors' burnout; therefore, college and university leaders can use the information to intervene, reduce academic advisors' burnout, and retain academic advisors. We found that approximately two-fifths (40.8%; Table 5) of academic advisors feel burned out from work at least once a week or more frequently, a rate that is higher than the 33%–35% of college or university employees who reported experiencing burnout in 2021–2022 (Marken & Agrawal, 2022; Mazurek Melnyk et al., 2021). Congruent with research about individuals in helping professions who tend to have higher rates of personal accomplishment, advisors had higher unstandardized mean values for personal accomplishment compared to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization/cynicism (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Table 4). Therefore, while academic advisors are experiencing high rates of burnout, they concomitantly feel high levels of personal accomplishment—feeling connected to students and exhilarated about work, working effectively to resolve students' concerns, and accomplishing things that are worthwhile in their positions.

Furthermore, we found that demographic and institutional variables were not uniformly correlated with the three dimensions of burnout. Genderqueer, nonbinary, or transgender advisors had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Cisgender men had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Age was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion, a finding that mirrors Gellock's (2019) results. The only institutional variable significant in the models was land-grant institution status: Advisors working at land-grant institutions tend to have lower levels of feeling as though they are effectively contributing to their workplace compared to advisors who work elsewhere. When seeking to identify advisors who may be at risk for higher levels of burnout, it is potentially best for college and university leaders to examine specific aspects of academic advisors' positions or workplace conditions.

Advisors who had worked in their positions for 5 years or more experienced significantly higher rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization compared to advisors who worked for less than 5 years in their positions. Gellock (2019) similarly found that student-athlete advisors and learning specialists who had worked longer in the profession had higher rates of depersonalization. To counter the high rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization advisors may experience after they have worked in their profession for several years, Rubin and Moreno-Pardo (2018) recommended increasing the number of professional advancement and promotion opportunities available to advisors and offering new professional development or role responsibilities to advisors to provide them with a change in professional responsibilities.

We also found that advisors who support graduate students have significantly ($p < .05$) higher rates of depersonalization and lower rates of personal accomplishment. Those results may be attributable to the nature of advising graduate students, who more closely work with faculty mentors or faculty advisors (Knox et al., 2006). Advisors who support students on academic probation had significantly lower personal accomplishment and higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Advisors in college-specific or retention-specific advising centers had significantly higher rates of depersonalization. Advisors in those contexts may be experiencing a lack of recognition for their efforts supporting students or even compassion fatigue, which is a secondary reaction to the stress, trauma, or concerning events experienced by students (Morrison, 2013). We recommend that college and university leaders validate advisors' contributions to students while developing resources to assess and respond to compassion fatigue or secondary trauma among advisors (Lynch, 2022).

Academic advisors' caseload should be revisited because it was consistently a statistically significant variable associated with the three dimensions of advisors' burnout. The mean advising load was more than 380 students per advisor, which is slightly higher than the mean observed in a national study of advising caseloads, 261–292 depending upon institutional type (Shaw et al., 2021). Academic advisors consistently indicate that high advising caseloads impede their ability to improve advising services, higher advising loads are barriers to advisors' ability to support students, and higher advising loads are negatively associated with students' retention rates (Shaw et al., 2021). While it is difficult to prescribe a specific ratio for advisors to advisees given unique institutional conditions and advising models (Robbins, 2013), the American School Counselor Association (2023) has recommended a ratio of student-to-counselor 250:1 since 1965, which might be a useful place to start.

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Beyond 299 students, it is more challenging for advisors to engage in proactive efforts to support struggling students (Shaw et al., 2021).

Additionally, nearly half of the advisors in our sample (48.2%) were dissatisfied with their compensation. Advisors who were more dissatisfied with their compensation had a statistically significant higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which mirrors related trends about compensation satisfaction and burnout (Morales, 2022). Our results also reflect prior research suggesting that advisors' low compensation is a meaningful contributor to their burnout (Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018). As a larger financial investment that validates and prioritizes the inherently valuable role of academic advisors on campuses, college and university leaders should commit more resources to increasing advisors' salary and compensation packages as a means of decreasing advisors' risk for burnout.

The organizational factors—workload, control, reward, community, and values—were consistently associated with advisors' burnout and explained a significant proportion of the variance in advisors' burnout, which partially supports Maslach et al.'s (2001) and Maslach and Leiter's (2016) conceptual model of burnout. Although fairness had the lowest mean of the organizational factors, it was not a significant variable for the three dimensions of burnout. We discovered that advisors with higher workloads—those who have so much work that it takes them away from their personal interests, work intensely for prolonged periods, and do not have enough time to complete necessary work (all items from the workload scale)—were significantly more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and significantly less likely to feel a sense of personal accomplishment. Increased workloads cause individuals to reevaluate their commitments to their institutions (Ellis, 2021a). To manage workload and avoid burnout and turnover, institutional leaders should assess both the advising model and the duties required of advisors to develop adequate workloads for advisors (Robbins, 2013; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).

Advisors who experience control—professional autonomy over their responsibilities—had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment. Professional autonomy stimulates innovative behavior and job effectiveness (Spreitzer, 1995), so showing advisors trust and allowing them to work independently may increase personal levels of accomplishment, efficiency, and overall job satisfaction. To move toward a culture of autonomy, institutions should clarify advisors' job expectations, delegate authority, encourage creativity, and recognize and reward healthy autonomous work behaviors (Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).

Further, advisors who received recognition for their work and felt appreciated had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Recognition can come in many forms: recognition from colleagues, respect from faculty and leaders, career ladders and promotions, financial incentives, professional development opportunities, material awards (e.g., plaques or certificates), and overall institutional appreciation for their contributions to students' success (Donnelly, 2009; McClellan, 2016; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).

Additionally, the results of our study suggest that advisors who had a strong work community featuring cooperative teams, open communication, and support had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Community and belonging are fundamental human needs that extend to the workplace (Filstad et al., 2019). Advising administrators can foster community among advisors by increasing opportunities for interaction, creating a sense of common purpose, promoting diversity and inclusivity, and supporting advisors' ability to strengthen their social resources by creating a community via advising groups that support the free range of ideas and positive interactions, all of which can reduce advisors' burnout (Huebner, 2011; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).

Relatedly, social support can affirm advisors' membership in groups or institutions that have a shared sense of values (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). Employees seek employment that is congruent with their values (Leiter & Maslach, 2003) and the results suggest that advisors who align with their institution's values had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. It is important for leaders to articulate their institution's values for new employees because cognitive dissonance with expectations is often the greatest at the beginning of employment positions (Leiter & Maslach, 2003; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018). Further, it is important for advising administrators

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to value and prioritize the well-being of academic advisors, honor advisors' orientation for service, and demonstrate their values for advisors' well-being to reduce their burnout risk (Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018).

Several limitations should be considered when evaluating the results. We did not include job satisfaction in the models, although it is a predictor of burnout (Harry et al., 2023; Samadi et al., 2023). Ninety percent of the respondents worked at four-year institutions, which is an overrepresentation of advisors from four-year institutions when compared to Shaw et al.'s (2021) national survey of 2,894 academic advisors from 1,300 institutions. In that study, 18% of the respondents worked at two-year institutions while 82% worked at four-year institutions, which the authors described as representative of the national sample. Given the predominance of four-year college or university academic advisors in the sample, the results are therefore not as likely to be as generalizable to advisors working at other institutions.

A general rule of thumb for sample size is to have at least 10 cases per predictor variable (Riley et al., 2019); however, we did not always achieve that minimum threshold (Tables 1, 3), which means that our ability to estimate the magnitude of the variables' effects via the coefficients (power) is limited. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic might have influenced advisors' burnout levels (Winfield & Paris, 2022). Finally, we administered the survey during late February and March 2023 and the timing of the survey may have lowered responses because the late spring semester is a busy advising time.

Conclusion

Academic advisors are experiencing high rates of burnout—and this concerning, urgent issue should be prioritized on campuses. To increase advisors' excitement and enthusiasm for their work, expand their capacity to develop meaningful connections with individual students, and amplify their feelings of efficacy in the workplace, we have identified several areas where institutional leaders can focus their time and efforts to reduce advisors' burnout. In an age of increasing austerity measures in higher education, we recognize the challenges institutional leaders face in reducing advisors' caseload/workload and increasing advisors' compensation packages and agency. However, creative and fiscally responsible opportunities to expand advisors' professional advancement or development, enhance reward and recognition programs, and increase opportunities for advisors to engage in advising communities are achievable. We encourage higher education leaders to recognize the severity of academic advisors' burnout; validate the contributions of academic advisors; understand the significant implications of advisors' burnout on advisors, students, and institutions; and prioritize academic advisors' well-being.

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