

## QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF ACADEMIC ADVISING PERCEPTIONS: SOME STUDENTS SATISFIED AND NEED IT, SOME DON'T

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### ABSTRACT

*The research presented experiences in seeking academic advising patterns that produce satisfaction, urgency, and students' academic and personal development at a university in Bandung, Indonesia. Data were collected using the story circle method. Four questions, including the meaning of advising, memorable experiences, perception of the process and advisors, and student expectations, were asked to answer the two main research questions. The two main questions involved the meaning and benefits of advising and satisfaction. A total of 57 respondents divided into seven groups of story circles were selected as participants using a purposive sampling method. Data were analyzed using a hierarchical Cresswell approach, starting from transcription, coding, categorizing, and developing themes. The results show that some students are satisfied with academic advising, but others feel dissatisfied even though it is important. The results also show that most advisors have created meaningful and memorable stories supporting student academic achievement. However, the relationship between lecturers and undergraduates determines the satisfaction level. The managers suggest from the research that it is necessary to hold coaching and counseling, training for advisors, and set a minimum procedural standard, including equating online communication channels because it minimizes the inequality of students' satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** academic advising, student perception, story circle

### INTRODUCTION

Academic advising is not just an administrative activity but a meaningful educational one for great achievement in a university (Junita et al., 2020). Therefore, the faculty and study programs need to intensively participate in designing the system that will develop the students intellectually (Sherlywati et al., 2021). The research of Donaldson et al. (2016) has shown that guardian lecturers help to shape students' culture using information and features to formulate academic plans, demonstrate decision-making, familiarize undergraduates with campus policies and procedures, as well as allow them to achieve their future careers. Effective academic advisory services have been found to bring positive benefits to educational institutions to increase student retention

and graduation rates (Ismail et al., 2021). Academic advising must be emancipatory to be critical (Winham, 2020). It requires the active participation of advisors and students. Harris (2018) has defined that academic advising has been shown to be a major factor in the successful transition of first-year students and also become one of the caring environments advisors create as one of the important factors for retaining students in the first year.

However, academic advising plays an important role in achieving undergraduate success in a university. The research of Ryzin (2010) has examined academic differences based on the lecturer's attachment to his undergraduates. Therefore, this research shows that advisors with influential figures and strong emotional connections are more involved in the learning process to positively change students' academic achievement

(Ryzin, 2010). Academic advising help to advise, direct, and guide undergraduates while looking for direction in learning (McGill, Ali, & Barton, 2020). The newest research has stated that the ultimate goal of an academic advising program is to engage students as scholars (McGill, 2021). Advisors work with students to enable them to be confident and assertive in their own abilities to learn, generate, and apply new knowledge to empower them (McGill, 2021). Furthermore, nowadays, being an academic advisor has become a professional job (McGill, Duslak, & Puroway, 2020).

Several studies have explained that academic advising is divided into categories, including developmental and prescriptive styles (Saba' Ayon, 2015; Tobi-David, Adekeye, & Odukoya, 2018). Prescriptive enables the advisor to provide the information needed and monitor students' academic development (Tobi-David, Adekeye, & Odukoya, 2018). The guardian lecturer's role and responsibility are to advise the undergraduates. According to Pargett (2011), the prescriptive style is regarded as a hierarchical relationship and one-way flow of information as well as ideas. Meanwhile, the developmental style helps to find interests and develop skills, attitudes, and life values related to college and future career goals (Pargett, 2011). Each advisor and student has a unique way of communicating and different academic alertness supported by emotional developments (Chemishanova, 2018). Cheung, Siu, and Shek (2017) have shown that students acknowledge that academic advising helps them to understand their study plans. Student responses may reflect their conceptual understanding of academic advice rather than their actual experience. Therefore, the researchers suggest conducting a qualitative study to explore the students' views of expectations and preferences (Cheung, Siu, & Shek, 2017).

This research is performed in three stages; where the first assesses academic advising at a university in Indonesia. The results show that students perceive academic advising as a form of developmental style rather than a prescriptive (Junita et al., 2020). Students believe that the guardian lecturer not only focuses on academic performance but also on holistic development. The second stage shows that there are differences based on gender, regional origin, age, class, advising time intensity, and frequency (Sherlywati et al., 2021). This helps the university design the academic advising process for mature students with a high enough class. The third stage is about the more profound meaning and benefits of academic advising through an in-depth exploration. Therefore, this research is expected to find academic advising patterns to improve the advisors in assisting students.

Walker et al. (2017) and Ellis (2014) have shown an in-depth research question about how guardians lecturers provide academic advice in the first semester. Meaningful narrative data are collected through a series of interviews. The results show that the quality of academic advising is meaningful

because it becomes one of the strengths of attracting prospective students (Ellis, 2014). Walker et al. (2017) have developed an academic advising model by exploring the student's difficulties while moving from high school to university. This model is developed because undergraduates have good communication with guardian lecturers (Walker et al., 2017). There is a relationship between academic advising and student success in a learning community. The research questions lead to the benefits and improvement of academic advising and explore whether the system contributes to students' intellectual (Donaldson et al., 2016). Hart-Balldridge (2020) has stated that reliability and empathy play important roles in the success of academic advising. It can be assumed that students perceive reliability and empathy as critical service factors on which academic advisors should focus more (Hart-Balldridge, 2020). Although, from other perspectives, some types of students' learning styles might correlate with the effect of academic advising. Simangunsong (2020) has defined that students with an autonomous learning style are more likely to perform well in current online learning. Autonomous students are regularly thought of as self-observers, generally tending to work alone on their assignments (Simangunsong, 2020). It is important to investigate whether there is a correlation between the level of student independence and the need for academic advising.

The research examines the meaning, benefits, and satisfaction of academic advising in the learning process. Also, it aims to find the system patterns that produce deep meaning for the development of students academically and personally. These advising patterns id input for advisors in performing their roles. The main research questions are as follows:

QR1: What are the meaning and benefits of academic advising in the learning process at university?

QR2: Are the students satisfied with the academic advising process performed?

## METHODS

The research hears students' experiences in seeking academic advising patterns using qualitative methods. Data are collected using story circle techniques that allow participants to listen to each other's experiences. Several stories, feelings, and emotions show the student's satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the academic advising process. Walker et al. (2017) have indicated that undergraduates also share their experiences through expectations and the results achieved during the advising process. According to Walker et al. (2017), a story circle encourages participants to listen to others' narratives and act as analytical partners in identifying a problem. This technique is used to collect descriptions of individual experiences and perceptions while discussing and analyzing. Four questions are raised in the story circle, where each participant is given time

to share experiences related to academic advising for a maximum of three minutes. The questions include (1) what is the meaning of academic advising, and its role in your academic life, (2) describe the memorable incident/case that students have experienced related to academic advising, communication, discussion, and the extent to which the academic advisor recognized and involved in determining your study/career, (3) what is your perspective on the advisor and the academic advising process, and (4) what are your expectations of the current and future advisor and academic advising process. These story circle questions are adopted and modified from the study of Walker et al. (2017) and Donaldson et al. (2016). The first and second are used to answer the first research question, while the third and fourth answer the second research question.

A total of 57 students and 28 out of the 48 academic advisors in a study program at a private university in Bandung are selected as participants using a purposive sampling technique. This is in line with Creswell, Hinch, and Cage's (2019) research that 30 respondents are the minimum number of focus group discussions. The participants are divided into seven groups, consisting of 8-9, that discuss the four questions raised in this research.

Data are analyzed using the hierarchical approach compiled by Creswell (Creswell, Hinch, & Cage, 2019). The transcript reviewed provides a general meaning about the participants' responses to each question (Creswell, Hinch, & Cage, 2019). Furthermore, the research team encodes the transcript results to categorize the existing story circle. The research compares the categories and develops themes that support the findings using thematic analysis. The themes present multiple perspectives, support statements citations, and provide specific evidence (Creswell, Hinch, & Cage, 2019). Furthermore, data stages start from compiling transcripts to analyzing thematically from interviews and story circles.

The certainty of reliability and validity levels is in line with the qualitative research method (Creswell, Hinch, & Cage, 2019). However, the transcript is carefully checked several times to avoid errors and personal assumptions. The transcript is read by an independent team to ensure accuracy in categorizing results and thematic development. Meanwhile, the validity level is performed by allowing the participants to listen to each other's stories, review the theme, and provide relevant comments. The respondents are free to provide positive or negative experiences because there is no limit to the story. This validity is in line with the research of Creswell, Hinch, and Cage (2019) using a triangulation technique and data collected from participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 57 students consisting of 56% females with 19 to 25 years old, and class from 2016 to 2019 are selected as participants in the research. The

respondents participating in the academic advising story circle represent 48 out of 52 advisors.

This means that more than 92% of guardian lecturers are represented by 57 students. The respondents are distributed based on gender (Figure 1), age (Figure 2), and class year (Figure 3). The students are expected to provide an overview of the differences in academic advising perceptions and experiences.

Gender of Respondents

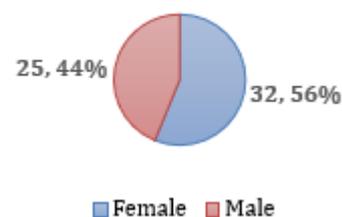


Figure 1 Gender of Respondents

Age Profile of Respondents

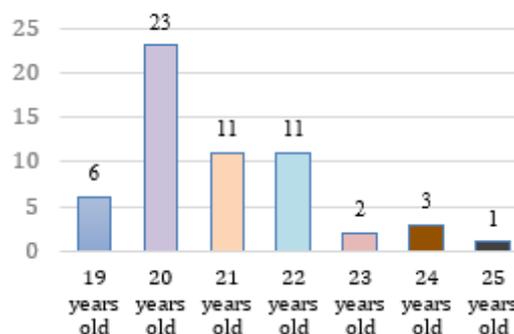


Figure 2 Age Profile of Respondents

Class Year Profile of Respondents

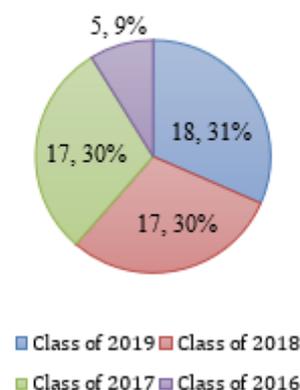


Figure 3 Class Year Profile of Respondents

The story circle results show that academic advising is categorized into two styles, including developmental and prescriptive. These categories are referred to by several studies and the ground theory of academic advising (Saba' Ayon, 2015; Tobi-David,

Adekeye, & Odukoya, 2018). Furthermore, Junita et al. (2020) have shown that there is a developmental and prescriptive style with an average of 77,45 and 38,01 respectively. This indicates that some students still view the academic advising process as a prescriptive and not only developmental style.

The participants interpret academic advising as a means and media for complaining, a bridge to finding information, and a continuous process of providing advice. Also, students regard the guardian lecturer as a substitute for parents because they help to provide direction about lectures. Academic advising jointly finds solutions to anxieties and problems faced by students. Therefore, the perceived and experienced academic advising is regarded as a developmental style because it is not only an administrative activity but also a meaningful process in finding the deepest essence by discussing and providing a solution to a situation and problem. One participant explained in the story circle, RDS, has said:

“In my opinion, academic advising is like a parent's role to children and vice versa. We are like ordinary people that do not know anything about education but guardianship functions as a guide in becoming undergraduates and introducing the lecture system and all its details.”

Academic advising serves as a place for character building during the lecture process because it makes students achieve academic goals. The undergraduates believe academic advising serves as a valuable activity by providing the character needed for future capital. One participant in the story circle, ADB, explains the importance of character building in the academic advising process.

“In my opinion, academic advising is very important to inform new students that the lecture environment is much different from senior high school because they need to be guided. The guardian lecturer directs us to have a strong character and not only as someone with a bachelor's degree. Also, the advisor helps in lectures because student's character and personality are honed to become strong and responsible individuals.”

Meanwhile, academic advising as a prescriptive style is interpreted by the participants as merely an academic process. For instance, advising is the interaction that helps in determining study plans and the process students need to follow because their lectures are not hampered by the administrative stages. One participant has explained that academic advising only plays a role in taking courses, but students' interaction with advisors is required while planning a study to make them more mature. This is emphasized by MDA.

“In my opinion, guardianship is part of the

administrative process to make course-taking activities run smoothly on time, and without missing any administrative stages. The lectures are performed by mature students because they need to be independent in dealing with problems.”

Saba'Ayon (2015) has explained that academic advising significantly affects self-efficacy and students that interact and integrate more with guardian lecturers for academic achievements. Therefore, the developmental style supports a more in-depth advising process than just a prescriptive style. The meaning and role of academic advising are in line with Saba'Ayon's (2015) research.

Academic advising is an element of the higher education system that helps students succeed in achieving their professional careers (Saba'Ayon, 2015). Therefore, it is important to make an academic advising system to create a memorable experience to make undergraduate involvement valuable. The question related to academic advising is categorized into two groups where the first is memorable, and the second is no memorable stories related to academic advising.

In the category of memorable stories, meaningful experiences emerge because they are supported by several factors, including openness and flexible communication, students' desire to share their situation, and advisors' desire to personally know and provide motivation as well as new perspectives. ADS explains that the guardian's role becomes a meaningful impression of performing academic advising.

“In my opinion, the most memorable incident or case related to academic advising was the very valuable motivation. Initially, I was doubting, dizzy and shocked because the lectures received were much different from senior high school, but my advisor gave a lot of motivation that I had never heard before. The communication between me and my guardian lecturer was very good that he knew what I need and do during a lecture like this. The advisor calms down and provides room to study if notice that the students need time to be alone.”

Also, KIY is another participant who gets new things from each advising because he is motivated in a different way which turns out to be a memorable experience. Also, the challenge given by the advisor is an effective motivation for achieving academic performance.

“I have a memorable experience regarding academic advising because While taking the credit plan for last semester, my GPA was sufficient but I did not intend to take 24 credits because I thought it won't be possible. However, my guardian lecturer motivated me and gave me the challenge to graduate quickly. Finally,

the advisor help me believe there is no harm in taking 24 credits which turned out not to be too difficult for me. Therefore, my guardian lecturer motivation provides a very positive challenge.”

The involvement of advisors tends to determine students’ sustainability in completing lectures to the end. Based on story circles, many students have other plans and want to leave their studies uncompleted but wish to survive and complete undergraduate programs. For example, ANS wants to quit college because he wants to focus on running a business but later continues his studies as the guardian lecturer.

“I informed my advisor that I was planning to leave campus because I wanted to continue my business. However, he asked me to stay put and continue my studies that the business could be performed later. My advisor properly treats and allows me to have a lot of input about leadership. Also, the guardian lecturer memorized my wishes and then gives suggestions because he is comfortable being used as a place to tell stories.”

The cycle shows advising experiences that do not have a memorable story because some students believe bad experiences occur due to the unprofessionalism of the advisor. As experienced by FFD, there is no memorable experience because the guardian lecturer does not have much time to personally accept undergraduates’ complaints.

“I have no memorable incidents or cases in the advising process because my lecturer only attends to four-five children simultaneously. There is no one-on-one conversation on a more personal or deep topic because there is just limited time for us. Therefore, the lecturer does not know us deeply, and the topic is only what needs to be discussed.”

The advising process is too formal, and the communication between the advisor and student is not personally established. For instance, the story of CI and FRD shows that they experience the same thing where there is no good communication, and the academic advising process is too rigid.

“I will share about a bad experience because my advisor fails to me guide and does not know the advising schedule. Furthermore, students usually find it difficult to find him for the counseling process because we disrespect him. Unlike other people’s experiences, we have no advising because the advisor does not memorize his students and even forgets our names. Therefore, we are finally independent in determining study plans and other things.”

“I will share a little bad impression with my

advisor. I feel like I cannot get close to my guardian lecturer and tell what I feel because he is too formal. In every advising process, I always consult with my friends and other advisors to provide useful input for me.”

Research by Chemishanova (2018) has aimed to seek input from students about the academic advising process. Several factors are indicated based on the story circles about the undergraduate’s memorable experiences. Academic advising is not only a retention tool but also supports the achievement of students’ professional careers.

Based on the story circle, students’ perceptions of the academic process and advisors are categorized into positive and negative. Meanwhile, the positive shows that the advisors’ role is ideal because he acts like a parent to increase academic achievement, improve personal character, and prepare undergraduates for a professional careers in the future. Also, the positive perception includes communication flexibility while advisors provide special schedules for storytelling, consult on non-academic matters, and hang out with students like friends. However, Covid-19 negatively affects this because online lectures reduce the intensity of academic advising. This is represented by the stories from RDS and KIY.

“My perception is very good because the advisor serves the role of a parent and friend in college. He also taught me to have a leadership character by making me the chairman of his academic advising group.”

“In my opinion, the advisor is very good because communication is flexible, not formal and rigid. However, it becomes difficult to meet face-to-face, the guardian lecturer still cares about pursuing his students for online advising through msTeams.”

Meanwhile, the negative perceptions are derived from several factors, including the advising process, advisors, and administration of academic advising. Some students feel the guardian lecturers are not optimal because they only perform their role. Also, the advisors fail to explore more deeply personal and have formal as well as rigid communication styles. Some guardian lecturers create a communication group on certain social media, but others do not because students find it difficult to consult. The differences in the advising process are felt as a procedural imbalance due to the minimum procedures performed. Lastly, the administration is expected to provide complete information for the preparation of student study plans. This is explicitly explained by SDS and SOB.

“In my opinion, I don’t have a good relationship with the guardian lecturer because he only contacts me while there is something that needs to be discussed. All students did not know each

other and the conditions because the advisor contacted them via personal chat. Therefore, I lack a good relationship with my guardian lecturer during this time.”

“I want that while the advisor asks for a study plan because the administrative form and all the information needed are ready.” However, sometimes the guardian lecturer is still not ready. For instance, I asked questions “Ma’am, what courses are open for this semester.” She replied, “try to find it yourself” or “try asking your friend because I am still confused.”

Furthermore, a positive perception is a valuable experience that shows whether undergraduates are satisfied with performing the advising process and feel it is necessary. Student satisfaction in academic advising is indicated through positive perceptions that ultimately affect academic success and retention. The factors that affect positive perception include satisfaction with the advisors’ accessibility, communication flexibility, and their role as parents and friends. This is in line with the research of Walker et al. (2017) that the personal relationships built throughout the advising process are the key to student satisfaction, academic success, and retention in university (Walker et al., 2017).

The story circle indicates that all participants agree to get benefits from academic advising with different degrees. However, some students are dissatisfied with this process but still have the benefits of achieving an academic career. This is in line with Donaldson et al. (2016) that undergraduates need to benefit from different degrees. The story circle questions about the advisors’ expectations show the factors that need to be improved to produce student satisfaction and a greater impact on universities. Some of the expectations conveyed in the story circle revolve around the advising process and the guardian lecturer.

The participants expect that there will be an equalized advising procedure, including the establishment of a shared online communication room through Whatsapp groups or others. Furthermore, it is necessary to have regular advising schedules on certain days and hours to help students easily find their advisors. The story circle group with a negative perception is expected to improve communication that is more flexible and less formal because the advising process is deeply performed. Moreover, the main factors of this process include flexibility and short time, as well as space for communication. A lot of the story circle participants expect more intense online, face-to-face consultations.

The results show that most advisors have created meaningful and memorable stories supporting student academic achievement. However, the relationship between guardian lecturers and undergraduates determines the satisfaction level. The advising process becomes meaningful if the existing relationship is like a parent and child or friendship. Therefore, the story circle about perceptions and expectations shows

that most students need academic advising and feel satisfied with the process being undertaken, but a few of them feel dissatisfied.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research presents students’ experiences in performing academic advising with class year patterns spreading from the beginning to the end of the semester. The research results have answered two research questions; firstly, the meaning and benefits of academic guidance play an important role in the study’s success and increase student retention rates. Secondly, the results show that students are satisfied with the academic process and supervisor.

The research shows the factors that support the success and satisfaction of academic advising. The results indicate that satisfaction greatly depends on the ease of accessing advisors, the type of relationship that exists, flexible and informal communication, the communication channels in online media, and the content of conversations that are not related to academics. The guardian’s response in exploring stories and listening to students is the main key to academic advising. Advisors interested and knowledgeable about how to perform counseling and consultation show their excellence in carrying out this act. Therefore, how the guardian responds to student self-development leads to a meaningful advising process.

The limitation of the research is that the respondents only come from one department at a private university. If the respondents come from various departments, the research can be a recommendation for improving the academic advising system in the university. Also, the results of the research have implications for the current academic advising policy. The supervisors’ freedom in interacting with the students is completely the key to the success of academic advising. Some procedures that are too rigid and administratively need to be considered more flexible and can answer the needs of the students.

The managers suggest that it is necessary to hold training to improve coaching and counseling skills for advisors in assisting students. Furthermore, a minimum procedural standard, including equating of online communication channels, is needed because it minimizes the inequality of students’ satisfaction. Further research is suggested to assess the process and impact of academic advising from the perspective of guardians and university officials. Also, for future research, researchers can compare an academic advising system between private universities and differences in academic advising systems between private and public universities.

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