

## ACADEMIC ADVISING SESSION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS AND ADVISORS

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**Abstract :** *This research aimed to explore the perspective of students and academic advisors on their advising session that had been going so far. The method applied descriptive analysis since it was intended to set out the perspective of the research participants. Questionnaire was distributed to 103 university students of a study program. Afterwards, interview was conducted to five students and academic advisors for further clarification. The findings of this research revealed that both students and academic advisors admitted that the advising session was not yet as effective as what they had hoped for. They mentioned overlapping schedules and lacking of students' motivation as parts of the reasons the advising session was not yet effective. For the future, the students and academic advisors both agreed that they need to create more communication and closer connection to have a better advising session.*

**Keyword:** *Academic Advising Session, Academic Advisor, Students*

**Abstrak :** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif mahasiswa dan penasehat akademik terkait sesi pertemuan akademik yang telah mereka jalankan. Metode yang digunakan merupakan analisis deskriptif mengingat penelitian ini akan menjabarkan perspektif para responden. Angket didistribusikan kepada 103 mahasiswa dari sebuah program studi. Setelah itu, wawancara dilakukan kepada lima mahasiswa dan penasehat akademik untuk klarifikasi yang lebih jauh. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa dan penasehat akademik mengakui bahwa sesi pertemuan akademik belum seefektif yang mereka harapkan. Mereka menyebutkan bahwa kesamaan ketidaksesuaian jadwal dan kurangnya motivasi mahasiswa sebagai bagian alasan sesi pertemuan akademik belum efektif sesuai dengan harapan. Untuk ke depannya, mahasiswa dan pembimbing akademik sepakat bahwa mereka harus menciptakan lebih banyak komunikasi dan hubungan yang lebih dekat agar terciptanya sesi pertemuan akademik yang lebih baik.*

**Kata kunci:** *Sesi Pertemuan Akademik, Penasehat Akademik, Mahasiswa*

### INTRODUCTION

The transition of high school environment to the university life can be somewhat intriguing. Some students may need time to adapt on the new learning system which is quite different from what they have experienced for years in school. Being a university student requires an individual to be more independent and self-initiative. There are plenty choices to make that will affect the students' future achievements or possible career paths. For

instance, the university offers various subjects of learning, numerous co-curricular activities, lists of internship information, etc. These fruitful resources might be overwhelming or confusing for students to choose or achieve them all. Therefore, even though the university students are insisted to have higher level of independency compared to when they were in high school, they are still provided with guidance in order to get the best on their university learning experience.

At the time the students registered as freshmen, they are assigned to an academic advisor. The academic advisor plays role as a guidance for the students during their study in the university. Notwithstanding advisor's role is clearly mentioned to be restrained on academic issues, yet in practice, it can expand to several aspects of students' lives as long as they have indication of affecting students' academic achievements. Nonetheless, the effective interaction between students and the academic advisors seems to not be implemented well as generally expected. As Crookston (2009) highlighted that too often both parties launch into a relationship assuming both have the same idea of what the role of each is to be in the advisor-student relationship, so the result is often counterproductive, if not total disaster. That fact causes plenty of students are still wandering on their own in shaping their academic records and solving issued they have encountered during their study in the university.

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of academic advisors on the characters development of students. Partawibawa, Fathudin, and Wibowo (2014) have found that students' characters development can be affected positively by their academic supervisors in the aspect of education and teaching, research, and community service. The students agree that the role of their academic supervisor have positive impact in their characters development. The study further explored that the roles of academic supervisors are affected by several factors, such as, (a) the different levels of the students' maturity; it can be solved by improving the students' mind set, (b) psychological, socio emotional, and cultural differences.

Looking on how significant the academic advisors role for students'

development during their study, the well-established communication between them should be highlighted. The more a student and his or her advisor discussed personal and school-related issues, career options, college policies, academic deadlines, and study skills and tips, the more likely it was that the student positively and had higher level of satisfaction with college (Pargett, 2011). Hence, an academic advisor should be willing to lend an ear to their students to find out the most related advice to give to the students. A good advisor should listen to the student and give them all the available options because students will appreciate the value of useful advice and are therefore likely to return for more advice, which in turn will help increase student enrollment, engagement and graduation rates (Khali & Williamson, 2014).

To get more connected to their students, and at the same time fulfilling their duty, an academic advisor should recognize the functions of academic advising session. Smith and Allen (2006) convey the list of academic advising functions as: Overall connect, Major connect, General education connect, Degree connect, and Out-of-class connect (advising on all aspects of students' life, academic or non-academic which is assumed to affect the students' academic achievements), Referral academic and Referral nonacademic (finding the sources to accommodate or help students' needs or problems), How things work and Accurate information (Giving information and assisting students with understanding how things work at the university), Skills abilities interests and Know as individual (Knowing the students as an individual and taking into account their all abilities), and Shared responsibility (Encouraging students to assume responsibility for their education by helping them develop planning,

problem-solving, and decision-making skills). In a report investigating students' satisfaction on Laporan Survei Kepuasan Layanan (2017), it breaks down the investigated items into more specific, yet similar to the previously mentioned functions of academic advisor, which in general highlighting on whether the academic advisor is accessible, informative, and attentive.

In order to gain the advantages of the academic advising session, both the academic advisor and student need to communicate well and work it together, but it is not an easy task. The academic advisor indicates that students are often shy about sharing their concerns with the faculty members because they may feel intimidated or are concerned that their grade may be affected if they express themselves openly (Khali and Williamson, 2014). The other reason is the student often must go to the advisor to get his sanction or approval. Hence, from the student's view, the advisor controls the relationship as well as any resulting decisions, in spite of the advisor's conscientious efforts to advise and to place the responsibility for decisions on the student. (Crookston, 2009).

Therefore, it is essential for the academic advisor and the students to indicate the desirable academic advising circumstances and find out the challenges they encounter during the process, based on both parties' perspectives. This attempt will help to overcome the obstacles that degrade the effectiveness of academic advising session by understanding the opinion of all related personnel included in the academic advising process.

The research question composed in this research; how was the implementation of academic advising session in a study program in a university in West Sulawesi based on the perspective of both students and academic advisors?

Most previous research tended to get insight for one side of the row, either only the students, or only the academic advising session. This research tried to explore the perspectives from both sides and analyze them to find the common grounds and/or any different poin of views. It is expected that the findings of this research will enrich the comprehension and the expectation from both students and the academic advisors on the role of academic advisor in the university, so that the students can get the most advice and guidance of what they can achieve during their study.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

To find the general perspective of students and lecturers on the implementation of academic advising session, this research applied descriptive analysis. Questionnaires were distributed to 103 respondents who were in the third semester of the study program. The respondents were all of the third semester students in that program. The questionnaire was composed by adapting the indicators from Smith and Allen (2006) and the Young (2010) to be adjusted to the context of this research's participants. The indicators applied during the development of the questionnaire were: belief, frequency, accessibility, response (Young, 2010), know as individual, how things work, overall connect, major connect, general ed connect, referral academic, referral non-academic, accurate information, out-of-class connect, and shared responsibility (Smith and Allen, 2006). The final output of the questionnaire consists of 19 questions that had been examined for their validity and reliability. Two initial questions were intended to be the introductory questions, followed by 17 more specific question related to the academic advising session. Afterwards, the interview also applied to five of students

respondents to get deeper understanding on their perspective reflected through the questionnaires. Interviews were also applied to collect data on academic advisors' opinion towards the implementation of academic advising session in the study program. The questionnaires were presented in Bahasa Indonesia, which was the native language of the participants. It was also applied

during the interview sessions in order to create better understanding between the researcher and the participants.

**FINDINGS AN DISCUSSION**

The first data collected was from the very initial question about the importance of advising session with the academic advisor. The result displayed a very convincing majority answer.

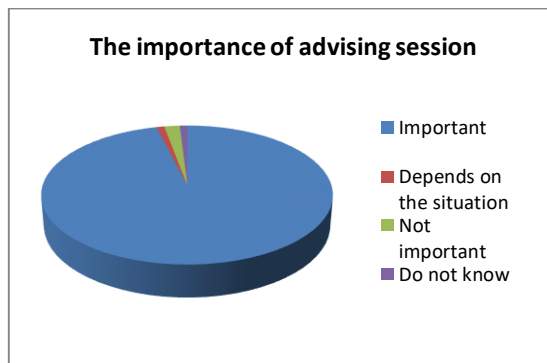


Chart 1. The Importance of Advising Session

The percentage of students who agreed that advising session was important was 96.12%. It revealed that almost all of them have positive attitude towards the activity. Meanwhile only 0.97%, 1.94%, and 0.97% answered it depends on the situation, not important, and do not know, respectively.

Secondly, they were asked to mention how many times they met their academic advisor for advising session during the last semester. However, contradictive findings were displayed on their answer on the frequency of their advising session.

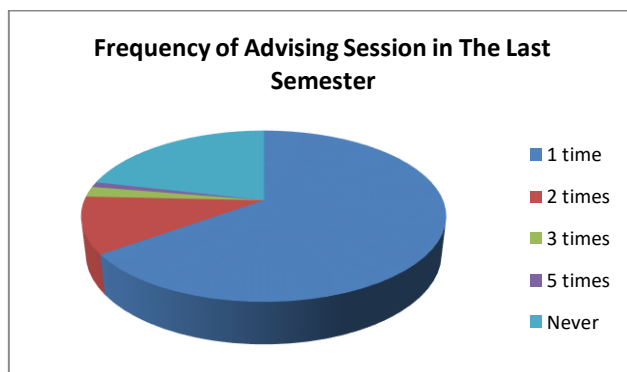


Chart 2. Frequency of Advising Session in The Last Semester

Up to 65,05% of the participants met their academic advisor only once during the last semester and 21,35% never even met their academic advisor the whole semester for an advising session. Only 10.68% of the participants did it twice, 1,94% met their advisor three times, and 0,97% met their advisor five times during the last semester. The positive attitude

towards the academic advising session evidently was not reflected on the students' practice in their real life.

The participants later were given 17 questions about their perception on the advising session process with the academic advisor (AA) that they have been experienced so far. Below are the descriptive statistics results:

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics Results

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The AA is easy to contact (phone, chat, email, etc).	103	2.00	5.00	4.0097	.69303
2. The AA is easy to meet.	103	2.00	5.00	3.6796	.85421
3. The AA knows everything related to the study program academic guidance.	103	2.00	5.00	3.7379	.72708
4. The AA comprehends the study program curriculum.	103	2.00	5.00	3.6990	.77756
5. Through the AA, I can understand the requirements and what subjects do I need to get my undergraduate diploma.	103	1.00	5.00	3.5437	.77683
6. The AA is attentive to my concerns and treats me well during the advising session.	103	1.00	5.00	3.7864	.85921
7. The AA answers each of my question related to my education in general.	103	2.00	5.00	3.6796	.78232
8. If the AA does not find the solution for my concern, she/he will refer me to other related party, who can address my concern.	103	1.00	5.00	3.3204	.78232
9. The AA explains all the requirements for my study at the study program when I was a freshman.	103	1.00	5.00	3.2427	.94419
10. The AA encourages me to participate actively in campus activity, internship, or other learning opportunities out of the class.	103	2.00	5.00	3.5146	1.01811
11. The AA care about me as an individual.	103	1.00	5.00	3.0097	.79822
12. The AA helps me with my learning difficulties.	103	1.00	5.00	3.3010	.84986
13. The AA is very helpful in giving me advice on every problem that I have encountered.	103	1.00	5.00	3.3010	.76485

14. The AA gives me the information about field teaching program, organizational activity, and other activities in my study program.	103	1.00	4.00	2.8544	.63258
15. The AA explains her/his expectation to me and I explain my expectation to the AA.	103	1.00	5.00	2.9903	.85744
16. The AA helps me during my earliest time in transition from high school to the university.	103	1.00	5.00	2.5825	.91313
17. Overall, the AA accommodates my academic needs in this study program.	103	1.00	5.00	2.9515	.86748
Total	103	35.00	74.00	57.2039	7.75528
Valid N (listwise)	103				

The range of mean score of the 17 positive statements on the questionnaire mostly lay between “3” to “2”. It reflects that students mostly held their opinion between “in doubt” and “disagree” regarding their perspective towards the process of their academic advising session. It means that during the last semester, their experience on the academic advising session did not meet the level of their expectations. Their perspective towards the effectiveness of the academic advising session was at the average to low level.

Interview session was conducted to confront and to get the clarification on the questionnaire findings. To get more justified data on this topic, interview was conducted to both parties of students and the lecturers. As intended, the interview results revealed some more comprehensible underlying reason represented by the questionnaire’s outcome.

The interview focused on the issue of accessibility, advising session topic, and students’ expectation. On the accessibility issue, the interviewee mostly agreed that their academic advisors were accessible to contact, represented by their response:

A : “Yah.... *Gampang*,”

B: “*Gampang*,”

The interviewees’ responses emphasized that there was no problem in

contacting their academic advisor so far. They mentioned that contacting their advisor was not difficult and their advisor was welcome during their encounter.

Yet, even though the interviewees admitted that contacting their advisors was not a problem, but meeting the advisors in person was not as easy.

A: “*Biasanya pas mau ketemu bilang ada urusan, ada meeting begitu bu...*”

“...tapi kemarin itu banyak teman yang sudah kumpul mau bertemu PA tapi PA-nya tidak bisa. Tapi saat PA-nya kayak free, tapi mahasiswa lagi yang (tidak bisa...)”

B: “*Kalau sebagai PA jarang sekali ketemu,*”

“*Mungkin karna kesibukan.*”

C : “*Tidak. Never. Karna kesibukannya jadi tidak pernah menemui kami.*”

D : “*Gampang (ketemu).*”

E : “*Selama ini baik. Setiap kali datang selalu melayani kita dengan baik,*”

Three out of five interviewees admitted that it was quite challenging to meet their advisor in person. They assumed the advisor might be busy, but they also admitted that sometimes when the advisor was available for advising session, the interviewee was not. Yet, two of the interviewees mentioned that they had no problem in scheduling to meet their academic advisors in person.

A follow up question was posed particularly to those who rarely met their academic advisor. The question focused on which party was lacking initiative to hold the advising session.

A: *"Kayaknya dua-duanya, Bu..."*

B: *"Dua-duanya,"*

C: *"Dua-duanya. Karna kita juga memiliki kesibukan masing-masing,"*

E: *"Saya kira siapa yang perlu dia menghubungi..."*

*"Untuk selama ini kita (mahasiswa) selalu biasanya perlu,"*

Three of the interviewees assumed that both parties were lacking initiative to hold the advising session. They mentioned about having their own scheduled activity might be the reason of the issue, meanwhile one interviewee emphasized that students, who most of the time in need for the session, should be the one to have the initiative.

Regarding the advising session topic, the interview data revealed the most frequent topic the interviewees and their advisor discussed during the academic advising session.

A: *"Kalo saya cuma urusan KRS,"*

*"Cuma mata kuliah,"*

B: *"Tidak (di luar topik KRS),"*

C: *"Tidak pernah (di luar topik KRS). Tanda tangan...pulang..."*

D: *"...membahas tentang nilai, tentang mata kuliah yang ideal untuk diprogram juga dibahas, dan juga membahas beasiswa."*

E: *"...masalah apa itu, nilai yang tidak cukup, jadi agak-agak mempertimbangkan. Harus melaporkan ke ini dulu, bagaimana pendapatnya, apa bisa diselesaikan masalah nilai yang kurang ini."*

Three of the interviewees mentioned that their advising session was only about the study plan for the next semester which was also part of a document that needed to be signed by the advisor in

each semester. Meanwhile two of them admitted that their advising session not only discussing about the study plan for the next semester, but also about their grades and scholarship. Finally, the interviewees were asked about the expectation towards their advisors for the coming future.

A: *"...harapanku sama PA, ya lebih dekat lah sama mahasiswa bu..."*

B: *"...lebih ditingkatkan lagi perhatiannya kepada mahasiswa yang diberi, yang dibimbing..."*

C: *"Lebih aktif dalam urusan mahasiswa yang dibimbing."*

D: *"...harapannya, PA-nya lebih komunikatif..."*

E: *"...PA ini bisa apa namanya, sering berkomunikasi sama mahasiswanya yang dibimbing..."*

All of the interviewees answered similarly towards the question regarding their expectation on their academic advisors. Their answers insisted on more communication and closer connection between academic advisors and the students. This data exposed a room for better development in relation to the relationship between advisors and their students since it was revealed to be the most prevalent issue among the students.

To have more justified data, the interview was also conducted with the academic advisors. Getting the perspective from both involved parties in this topic would bring more clarity in the findings. Furthermore, it would discover whether both students and academic advisors were at the same boat on this topic.

There were four academic advisors as the interviewees for this research. After analyzing the transcript of the interviews, the findings of the academic advisor interviews fell onto several particular parts:

Firstly, all of the advisors agreed that their role was bigger than just signing the study plan documents, but most of the

students did not take advantage on the benefits to have the academic advisors. Mostly the students came to see them only for the study plan document, and some even contacted them on the day or at the night before the study plan document submission deadline.

Secondly, all of the academic advisers that were interviewed admitted that the academic advising session so far was not as effective as they had hoped to be. Students' ignorance could be one of the causes. Even though they had been introduced to their academic advisors during their freshman year, and the role of advisors had been explained to them, most of them were still confused and reluctant to ask for further clarification. In consequence, they lost the advantage of advisors' guidance during their study. The advisors also observed that their students might still in doubt or feeling anxious whether they would seem to cross the line when reaching out to their advisors. Another main factor mentioned by the advisors was lacking of motivation. Most of their students were not aware of how important their time at the university in terms of shaping their future. The advisors expected the students to have plans about their study at that time, about the activities they could join to expand their competences and the plans for their future, so the students could be motivated to meet the advisors for some advice related to the topics. Yet, that idea rarely happened.

Next the advisors were asked about what efforts they had done to boost students' interest to meet them. The advisors explained that they did encourage the students to have more advising session in some ways, such as creating a chat group, announcing the schedule for in person meeting, and doing individual approach. These strategies did affect a number of students to come for advising

session, but still not to the level that the advisors aimed for.

Finally, the advisors were asked to deliver their expectation for future advising session with their students. To this question, the answers from the advisors were quite similar to the students' answers. They advisors hoped to create more productive connection with their students in the coming future, so they would be able to support the students in achieving their academic success. In addition, the advisors emphasized about the importance to have an academic advising guideline book that could help the advisors and students to track their discussion progress during the students' study at the university.

Looking at the findings at this research, it displayed that most students did not have frequent meetings with their academic advisors. The biggest number of them only had meeting once during a semester, even a number of students never met their academic advisors for the whole semester. Mostly the students and their advisors only talked about the study plan document for the coming semester. This frequency fact can be described as bad if the effectiveness of advising session merely based on the frequency. Yet, that belief can lead to a misleading conclusion since students' needs are different. There is a possibility that some students do not need frequent meetings with their academic advisors. Some students who already got the vision on what they want to do possibly do not need much help for the advisors. The ones that should get more concerned about are the students who do not figure out what they want to do and do not know where to seek for advice (Khalil & Williamson, 2014).

One of the common grounds found during the interview with the students and advisors was that the advising session was not yet as effective as what they had



expected yet. The lack of initiative to hold the meeting was agreed as one of the causing factors. Both parties agreed that overlapping schedules made it difficult to hold a frequent advising session. (Aydin, Güneri, Eret, and Yildirim (2019) highlighted the main reasons for –advisors-not seeing the advisee more often might be the lack of time, workload, and the high number of advisees. Meanwhile in this research it revealed that not only the advisors, but also the students had their fair share in halting the advising session due to schedule conflict.

Furthermore, the advisors delivered their perspective on what other cause contributed to the ineffectiveness of the advising session, which is lack of motivation. The advisors believed that students' did not have high motivation to inquire an advising session due to lack of understanding on what advisors' role, the feeling that their advisors' was unapproachable, and lack sense of responsibility to their own study and their future in general. Therefore, (Aydin, Güneri, Eret, and Yildirim (2019) proposed that developmental model should be embedded into the advising system in the institution, such as assessing the students' own need, require them to take responsibility for their academic progress, take interest on their daily social interaction, and having a meeting to discuss all related issues such as their goals and future plan.

Another similar perspective from students and advisors was regarding their expectation towards the advising session process in the future. All of them were hopeful for a closer connection and more frequent communication between students and their advisors. The students particularly insisted that advisors should take more initiative to encourage them for having academic advising session. As Drake

(2011) agreed that being academic advisors is about building relationships with the students. The advisors should actively play they role to provide support and help for students, and one of students' difficulties is maybe being reluctant to meet their advisors for various reasons. Advisors are supposed to brand themselves to be approachable to their students. When students regarded their advisors more approachable, their satisfaction increased Aydin, Güneri, Eret, and Yildirim (2019). It will lead them to be more open to the advising session.

## CONCLUSION

The participants in this research admitted that the advising session they had so far was not yet as effective as what they wanted. Most of the students only met their academic advisor once during the previous semester and the most frequent topic discussed during their meeting only about the study plan document for the coming semester. Overlapping schedule and lacking of students' motivation were indicated as parts of the causes that students did not frequently meet their academic advisors. For a more effective advising session in the future, the students and advisors were similarly insisting on better relationship for a good advising session. They expected that both parties would create closer connection and more communication.

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