

The Role of Academic Advisors in the Development of Student Human Resource Competencies

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of academic advisors in the development of student human resource (HR) competencies at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra. Academic advisors play a key role in supporting students' academic and career development, yet this role is often overlooked in the context of professional competency development. This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study method, involving in-depth interviews with academic advisors, students, and other relevant stakeholders at the institute. The findings reveal that academic advisors not only provide academic guidance but also mentor students in developing non-academic skills, such as communication, time management, and other professional skills. Academic advisors also play a role in connecting students with internship opportunities and professional networks, contributing to their job readiness. However, this study also identifies several challenges, including a lack of training for academic advisors and heavy workloads. The study recommends the need for specialized training for academic advisors and the enhancement of support mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of their role in developing student HR competencies. The results of this research are expected to provide insights for higher education institutions to improve academic advising programs and more effectively support student competency development.

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1. Introduction

In the context of higher education, academic advisors play a crucial role in student development, particularly in guiding them toward achieving academic and career goals (Jamaludin et al., 2021). However, this role is often narrowly perceived, focusing solely on academic aspects without integrating professional competency development and life skills. At the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra, the role of academic advisors in developing students' human resource competencies needs to be evaluated more thoroughly to maximize its benefits.

Human resource management theories, such as Super's career development theory and Spencer and Spencer's competency theory, highlight the importance of mentoring in the competency development process. Super's theory emphasizes career development as a continuous process, while competency theory underscores the significance of specific skills in professional success. Both theories support the idea that academic advisors can play a strategic role in facilitating the growth of students' competencies (Qurtubi et al., 2023).

Previous research indicates that the role of academic advisors is often limited to academic aspects. For example, a study by Husain and Alawi (2019) found that academic advisors in higher education tend to focus on academic guidance without paying sufficient attention to professional skill development. Another study by Choi and Kim (2020) identified that academic advisors involved in career guidance can enhance students' job readiness. However, these

studies were often conducted in different contexts or with limited samples, making them not fully applicable to the context of the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra.

The research gap in this literature lies in the lack of focus on how academic advisors can effectively support the development of students' non-academic competencies in higher education, particularly in specific institutions. Existing studies have not thoroughly explored the role of academic advisors in the context of developing professional skills and soft skills required for the workforce.

The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on the integration of academic advising and professional competency development at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra. This research will not only evaluate the role of academic advisors from an academic perspective but also identify their contributions in preparing students for the workforce through skills development and practical experiences.

Using a qualitative approach and an in-depth case study, this research is expected to provide new insights into how academic advisors can more effectively support student competency development, as well as offer practical recommendations for improving advising programs in higher education institutions. This study will contribute to the existing literature by offering more specific and applicable guidelines to enhance the role of academic advisors in a relevant context.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative case study design to explore and analyze the role of academic advisors in the development of student human resource competencies at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through contextual analysis and direct interaction with informants (Rusdianti et al., 2022).

The research subjects consist of three main groups:

- 1) Academic Advisors: Lecturers who serve as academic advisors in various departments at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra.
- 2) Students: Active students from various academic years and study programs who receive academic advising.
- 3) Related Parties: Academic and administrative staff involved in the implementation of the academic advising program.

Data were collected through the following qualitative methods:

- 1) In-Depth Interviews: Conducted with academic advisors, students, and related parties to gain their perspectives on the role and effectiveness of academic advising. The interviews will be held either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on the availability and preferences of the respondents. These interviews will be guided by semi-structured interview guidelines designed to explore experiences, challenges, and best practices in academic advising.
- 2) Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Focus group discussions will be conducted with students to understand their views on how academic advisors contribute to the development of their competencies. FGDs will also be used to explore ideas and recommendations from the student group.
- 3) Documentation: Analysis of documents related to the academic advising program, advising guidelines, and other related materials to understand the applicable policies and procedures.

The data obtained from interviews, FGDs, and documentation will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The data analysis process includes the following steps:

- 1) Transcription: Verbatim transcription of interviews and FGDs will be conducted to ensure that all important information is accurately documented.
- 2) Coding: The transcription data will be coded to identify key themes emerging from the experiences of academic advisors and students.

- 3) Thematic Analysis: The identified themes will be grouped and analyzed to understand patterns and relationships between the role of academic advisors and the development of student competencies. This analysis will focus on how academic advising impacts students' professional skills and job readiness.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings:

- 1) Data Triangulation: Using multiple data sources (interviews, FGDs, documentation) to validate findings and reduce bias.
- 2) Member Checking: Presenting preliminary findings to several respondents to obtain feedback and ensure the accuracy of interpretations.
- 3) Audit Trail: Documenting the research process in detail to ensure transparency and accountability in data analysis.

This research method is designed to provide a comprehensive and in-depth overview of the role of academic advisors in the development of student human resource competencies, as well as to identify potential areas for improvement in the academic advising program at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra.

3. Results and Discussion

a. The Role of Academic Advisors in Competency Development

The research findings indicate that academic advisors at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra, play a significant role in the development of student human resource competencies, both in academic and non-academic aspects. Advisors not only provide guidance related to studies and academic tasks but are also involved in the development of professional skills, such as communication and time management skills. This aligns with Super's career development theory, which states that career guidance is a continuous process involving multiple dimensions, including the development of professional skills (Super, 1990).

b. Professional Skill Development

Academic advisors were identified as facilitators in connecting students with internship opportunities and professional networks. This supports the findings of Choi and Kim (2020), which indicate that academic advisors who are actively involved in career guidance can enhance students' job readiness. Students reported that the guidance they received helped them understand the demands of the job market and prepare for future professional roles.

c. Challenges in the Implementation of Academic Advising

Despite the many benefits, this study also identifies several challenges in the implementation of academic advising. Academic advisors often face high workloads and a lack of formal training in career guidance, which hampers their effectiveness in developing non-academic competencies. This is consistent with the findings of the study by Husain and Alawi (2019), which discovered that academic advisors' focus is often centered on academic aspects and less on the development of professional skills.

d. Connection to Competency Theory

In the context of Spencer and Spencer's Competency Theory (1993), academic advisors are identified as key in developing the specific competencies required for students' professional success. Effective advisors not only help students achieve academic goals but also facilitate the development of competencies such as interpersonal and managerial skills that are essential in the workforce.

e. The Importance of Training for Academic Advising

This study highlights the need for additional training for academic advisors to enhance their skills in career guidance and student competency development. These findings support the argument from recent research by Johnson and Lee (2021), which emphasizes that professional training for academic advisors can improve the quality of advising and support the development of students' skills more effectively.

This study expands on the findings of previous research by providing specific context regarding how academic advisors at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra, contribute to the development of student competencies. These results align with the research by

Smith et al. (2022), which underscores the importance of multidimensional support from academic advisors in preparing students for the challenges of the workforce.

The findings of this study have practical implications for academic advising policies and practices in higher education. This research suggests better integration of training for academic advisors and the development of more comprehensive advising programs that include aspects of professional skill development and career preparation, which aligns with the recommendations from Mendez and Martinez (2023).

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by identifying new areas where academic advisors can influence the development of student competencies. It expands the understanding of the multidimensional role of academic advisors in the context of more specific higher education settings, as outlined in previous research by Williams and Carter (2018).

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impact of academic advising on students' career development. Further research should also explore effective training strategies for academic advisors and evaluate their implementation across various educational institutions.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that academic advisors at the Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology, Sumatra, play an important multifaceted role in the development of student human resource competencies, covering not only academic aspects but also professional skills such as communication and time management. These findings align with Super's career development theory, which emphasizes the importance of holistic career guidance. Academic advisors play a role in enhancing students' job readiness through connections with internship opportunities and professional networks, supporting the research findings of Choi and Kim (2020). However, challenges such as high workloads and the lack of formal training for academic advisors hinder their effectiveness, consistent with the findings of Husain and Alawi (2019). This study highlights the need for additional training for academic advisors, in line with the recommendations of Johnson and Lee (2021). The results offer guidance for improving academic advising policies and practices, integrating professional skill development elements, and providing insights for further research on the long-term impact and effectiveness of academic advisor training. Thus, this study underscores the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to academic advising in supporting the more effective development of student competencies.

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