The role of academic advisors in assisting sociology students Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau

Achmad Hidir*, **Yusuf Krisman Gea**, **Puput Rusmawati, Azzahra Handhika G. Fajri, Siti Wahyu Vitamagistra, Mardatillah**

FISIP Universitas Riau, Kampus Bina Widya KM. 12,5, Simpang Baru, Kec. Tampan, Kota Pekanbaru, Riau 28293 Indonesia
e-mail: achmad.hidir@lecturer.unri.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role and interpretation of Sociology students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) of Riau University regarding the role of academic advisors (PA). Paradigmatically, Parsons' structural functionalism theory is often identified with a quantitative approach. However, this study consciously employs Parsons' Role Theory as the theoretical framework for qualitative research, as it focuses on the concepts of "role" and "role expectations," which are relevant for an in-depth exploration from the students' perspective. The method used is a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 2023 sociology students selected purposively. Data analysis used Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing. The results show that students have diverse interpretations of the role of PA lecturers, which are often adapted to their personal needs and experiences. The main findings reveal a gap between students' role expectations and the role performance they perceive from academic advisors. This study concludes that the implementation of the academic advising system at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, has not been fully effective in meeting students' expectations, and further evaluation is needed to bridge this gap between the two.

Keywords: Students, Academic Advisor, Lecturer

priviet *lab.*
RESEARCH & PUBLISHING

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of academic advisors (PA) is a crucial element in higher education systems, designed to support students' holistic success in both academic and non-academic aspects. According to the literature, effective interaction with PA is one of the key factors influencing student retention and success in higher education (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). By providing appropriate guidance, PA helps students navigate the complexities of the curriculum, make important decisions regarding their studies, and prepare themselves for future challenges.

Conceptually, the role of PA should not be limited to administrative functions, such as validating Study Plan Cards (KRS) or managing student transcripts. Moreover, an effective approach positions PA as a supporter of students' personal and social development (Habley, 1995). In this ideal role, PA serve as mentors, counselors, and bridges between students and university resources. However, reality often shows a gap between this ideal function and actual practice in the field, where interactions tend to be limited to bureaucratic matters and lack personal guidance.

This gap can hinder students' adaptation and development, especially for those facing academic or social difficulties. Various studies have shown that suboptimal guidance can negatively impact students' motivation and retention rates (Reason et al., 2006). This phenomenon is global and has been identified in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Research in Indonesia has also found that students' perceptions of the role of student counselors are often suboptimal, with interactions that are still formal and superficial (Hasanah & Jannah, 2019; Santoso & Wulandari, 2022).

To analyze this gap in depth, this study uses the Role Theory framework (Biddle, 1986). This theory allows us to examine the various expectations inherent in the role of an academic advisor from the perspectives of the institution, students, and the advisor themselves. Using Role Theory, we can identify whether there is role conflict or a mismatch between expectations and actual role performance. This approach is relevant for understanding how the dynamics of the interaction between academic advisors and students are established and how these roles are interpreted by students.

Paradigmatically, Parsons' structural functionalism theory is often identified with a quantitative approach (Hidir and Malik, 2024). However, this study consciously uses Parsons' role theory as a theoretical framework for qualitative research. This decision is based on a different analytical focus, where the concepts of "role" and "role expectations" are micro-sociological concepts that are highly relevant for in-depth exploration. The qualitative approach with in-depth interviews allows researchers to describe the content and meaning of these expectations in detail from the students' perspective. Thus, the use of Parsons' theory in qualitative methods does not aim to test cause-and-effect relationships or measure variables but rather to provide a structured analytical framework for interpreting students' subjective experiences within the context of the university's social system.

Based on this background, this study focuses on answering the question: "How do Sociology students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, interpret and utilize the role of their academic advisors?" This comprehensive understanding is expected to provide a factual picture of the effectiveness of the implementation of the academic advising system in that environment.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of academic advisor utilization from the perspective and experience of sociology students. The primary focus was to explore the meaning, process, and perceptions of the subjects regarding the role and benefits they perceived. Descriptive research is relevant for presenting a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the interactions as they occur in the field (Hidir, A., Malik, R., & Widiarti, D. 2024). This study is designed as a context-bound case study, specifically within the Department of Sociology, FISIP, University of Riau, with the aim of obtaining an in-depth and intensive understanding of a single unit of analysis.

2.1 Informants and Research Location

The informants in this study are active students of the Department of Sociology, FISIP, Riau University, specifically Sociology students from the 2023 cohort who have interacted with their academic advisors.

Informants were selected purposively (*purposive sampling*) to obtain rich data because, at the time of this study in December 2024, they had entered the end of their fourth semester and had diverse experiences interacting with academic advisors. The number of informants was not determined rigidly at the outset but continued to be added until data saturation was achieved (*data saturation*).

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

The primary data collection technique used was in-depth (*semi-structured*) interviews conducted informally. The interview guidelines were developed based on the dimensions of Parsons' "Role Theory," with a focus on exploring students' expectations of the role of academic advisors, their perceived role performance, and the possibility of role mismatches. In addition to interviews, secondary data collection techniques included a documentary study of the academic guidebook of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, as well as academic transcripts (KHS) and course registration forms (KRS). This documentary data serves as a triangulation source to verify and enrich the interview findings. During the interview process, the researcher also used supporting instruments in the form of voice recorders and field notes to record the context and the participants' non-verbal expressions.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study adopted Miles and Huberman's interactive qualitative analysis model, which consists of three simultaneous activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification. The data reduction stage was carried out by verbatim transcription of the interview results, which were then selected and focused on based on the Role Theory framework. The data presentation stage (*data display*) was carried out by presenting the reduced data in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrixes. The researcher will code the interview transcripts to identify key themes. This coding process is a combination of deductive (based on Role Theory categories) and inductive (finding new themes from the field) methods. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification. To maintain the credibility of the findings, the researcher uses source triangulation by comparing data from different informants and method triangulation by comparing interview data with documentation data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Expectations and Realization of the Role of Academic Advisors

Based on qualitative analysis, it was found that the role expectation**s** of Sociology students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, towards academic advisors (PA) tend to be narrow, focusing on administrative functions. This perspective is shaped by the dominant interactions that occur during the filling out of the Study Plan Form (KRS) or other academic validation processes, which are part of the campus's procedural social system. Consequently, students view the role of academic advisors as purely transactional obligations rather than a mentorship relationship focused on personal development. One informant revealed: "*Dosen PA saya hanya bisa ditemui saat mengurus KRS. Di luar jadwal itu, beliau terlihat sangat sibuk sehingga saya merasa sungkan untuk sekadar berkonsultasi* (I can only meet my PA lecturer when I am filling out my KRS. Outside of that schedule, he seems very busy, so I feel uncomfortable just asking for advice.") (Student A, interview, December, 2024).

Informant B conveyed something else, stating the following: "*Dosen PA saya sangat sulit ditemui, beliau datang hanya ketika mengajar dan menguji saja, sangat sulit untuk ditemui, ditelpon dan di WA pun jarang sekali*

membalasnya. Akibatnya saya berkonsultasi dengan Ketua atau Sekretaris Jurusan untuk hal pengisian KRS (My PA lecturer is very difficult to meet. He only comes when he is teaching and conducting the exams. It is very difficult to meet him or call him, and he rarely responds to WhatsApp messages. As a result, I consult with the Head or Secretary of the Department regarding filling out the KRS. .") (Student B, interview, December, 2024).

This limited perspective aligns with the findings of other studies that have identified similar perceptions within the Indonesian academic environment. As noted by Hasanah and Jannah (2019), "the majority of students view the role of academic advisors as limited to administrative tasks related to course registration, resulting in transactional and minimal interactions" (p. 128). This indicates that students' perceptions of the role of academic advisors are not fully aligned with the ideal functions of this role in the higher education system.

The realization of roles (role performance) observed in the field shows a role incongruity between students' expectations and the practices carried out by academic advisors. Most academic advisors display role performance that only meets minimal expectations, namely, as administrators. This fragmented role performance shows that the role of academic advisors as multidimensional supporters is not yet fully implemented in daily practice. However, on the other hand, a small number of proactive informants reported much more profound experiences, where PA lecturers successfully exceeded formal expectations by providing substantial guidance. This phenomenon confirms that role performance varies significantly and is often not fully realized in accordance with broader normative demands, thereby creating inconsistent guidance experiences for students.

3.2 Performance Dimensions of Academic Advisors

The results indicate that the performance of academic advisors tends to be lacking in all the expected dimensions. The most frequently identified performance dimension is informational support. This role is consistently manifested in providing guidance related to filling out the KRS, selecting courses, and explaining the curriculum structure. This dimension aligns with the university's formal expectations and is considered a mandatory and measurable task. However, role performance in more affective dimensions, such as emotional support and appreciation, was less frequent.

This dimension is very important for students' psychological stability, but the majority of informants felt that this dimension was minimal or even non-existent. One student said: "*Apabila saya memiliki masalah di luar akademik, saya tidak merasa nyaman untuk menceritakannya kepada dosen PA. Interaksi kami selama ini hanya bersifat formal dan sebatas kepentingan administrasi."* (If I have problems outside of academics, I do not feel comfortable telling my academic advisor. Our interactions have only been formal and limited to administrative matters." (Student C, interview, December 2024)

Another informant made a different statement, clearly saying that: "*Saya sebagai perempuan, malu bila menyampaikan sesuatu dengan dosen PA yang masih muda dan kebetulan ia laki-laki dosen muda di Jurusan Sosiologi. Apalagi harus menyampaikannya secara berduaan. Bila saya lakukan melalui telpon atau WA, rasanya kurang pantas. Tetapi untuk hal yang sangat penting, saya juga terkadang menyampaikannya melalui WA. Sayangnya diskusi melalui WA sangat terbatas.* As a woman, I feel embarrassed to talk to a young PA lecturer, especially because he is a young male lecturer in the Sociology Department. It is even more embarrassing to talk to him one-on-one. I feel that it is inappropriate to talk to him on the phone or via WhatsApp. However, for very important matters, I sometimes communicate with him via WhatsApp Messenger. Unfortunately, discussions via WhatsApp are very limited in this regard. (Student D, interview, December 2024)

As stated by Santoso and Wulandari (2022), "there is a significant gap between the ideal function of academic guidance and its implementation in the field, which is caused by a lack of effective communication between lecturers and students" (p. 95). This finding indicates an imbalance in the performance of the academic advisors. They tend to focus more on the instrumental-informational dimension, which is transactional in nature, rather than the relational-affective dimension, which is more holistic and essential for student development.

3.3 Impact of Role Fit on Student Welfare

Students who feel that there is a role fit, where the performance of PA lecturers meets or exceeds normative expectations, have a significant impact. The effective use of informational support has a direct impact on improving academic performance and strategic study planning, which ultimately increases student confidence. Conversely, role mismatch experienced by the majority of students, where PA role performance is limited, has a negative impact on their psychological well-being. The absence of role performance in the affective dimension makes students feel isolated and less motivated when under pressure. One informant described his feelings: "*Saya pernah mengalami masa sulit secara emosional, namun merasa bingung untuk mencari bantuan. Meskipun dosen PA seharusnya bisa menjadi tempat bercerita, interaksi yang terbatas membuat saya merasa ragu* " I went through an emotionally diffic ult period, but I felt confused about where to seek help. Although PA lecturers are supposed to be someone we can talk to, limited interaction made me feel hesitant." (Student E, interview, December 2024).

These findings confirm that the alignment between PA lecturers' role performance and students' expectations not only influences academic success but also serves as a key variable in maintaining students' mental health and satisfaction during higher-education.

3.4 Factors Affecting Role Performance

There are two categories of factors that influence the role performance of PA lecturers. First, internal factors from students, where student initiative and proactivity are the main supporting factors. Informants who actively seek guidance outside of administrative obligations report more meaningful and supportive relationships. However, the dominant inhibiting factor is students' narrow perception of the role of PA, which indirectly shapes low role expectations. A culture of shyness and fear of disturbing others is a significant psychological barrier, as expressed by one student: "*Sebenarnya saya memiliki banyak pertanyaan, tetapi rasa sungkan untuk mengganggu waktu beliau sangat besar. Akhirnya, saya memilih untuk memendam pertanyaan tersebut."* (Actually, I have many questions, but I feel very shy about disturbing him. In the end, I choose to keep my questions to myself.") (Student F, interview, December 2024)

Other inhibiting factors include structural constraints, such as the absence of standardized guidance mechanisms and high lecturer workload. Consequently, the quality of guidance depends heavily on the commitment of individual lecturers rather than on a solid system that can guarantee stability and consistency in the performance of the PA role. Another student said: "*Saya menyadari bahwa dosen PA saya sangat sibuk. Setiap kali saya mencoba untuk berdiskusi serius, beliau selalu terburu-buru. Hal ini membuat kami memahami bahwa waktu beliau memang terbatas.*" (I realize that my PA lecturer is very busy. Every time I try to have a serious discussion, he is always in a hurry. This makes us understand that his time is indeed limited.") .") (Student G, interview, December 2024).

From several interview excerpts, when confirmed with two academic advisors of different genders, the following responses were obtained: "*Mahasiswa sekarang bila menghubungi dosen tidak tahu waktu dan agak kurang sopan, mereka bertanya tentang hal-hal terkait akademis melalui WA, namun bila sudaha dibuat janji untuk bertemu dengan jadwal yang sudah disepakati. Mereka seringkali tidak tepat waktu dan sering beralasan dengan berbagai hal untuk alasan keterlambatannya. Sehingga dosen yang harus menunggu mereka. Kalau seperti ini saya tinggal saja* ("Students nowadays contact lecturers at inappropriate times and are somewhat rude. They ask questions about academic matters via WhatsApp, even though appointments have been made to meet at agreed-upon times. They often arrive late and frequently provide excuses for their tardiness. As a result, the faculty members must wait for them. If this continues, I will leave. (Interview with a senior lecturer in the Sociology Department, initials N, December 2024).

This was also confirmed by another lecturer who explained that: "*Mahasiswa seringkali mau berdiskusi, namun mereka datang berbondong-bondong dan mereka hanya sekedar untuk menandatangani KRS yang mereka miliki. Seringkali saya tanya apa kesulitan dalam perkuliahan, mereka menjawab "tidak ada", mereka mau berdiskusi bila menjelang mereka akan menyelesaikan tugas akhirnya saja*" (Students often want to discuss, but they come in droves and they only come to sign their KRS (study plan cards). I often ask them what difficulties they encounter in lectures, and they answer 'none.' They want to discuss when they are about to complete their

final assignments' (Interview with a senior lecturer in the Sociology Department, initials H, December 2024).

The interview results indicate that communication between students and academic advisors (PA) is not going well due to poor communication between them.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on Talcott Parsons' role theory framework, which views "a role as a patterned series of learned expectations that guide the behavior of an individual within a social system," this study concludes that there is a role mismatch between the expectations of Sociology students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, towards their academic advisors (PA) and the realization of their roles in the field (Parsons, 1951). Students' role expectations tend to be narrow, viewing PAs solely as administrators. As a result, the most frequently accessed role performance of academic advisors is in the informational dimension, while the affective dimension, which is crucial for student welfare, has not been optimally realized. As also stated by Setiawan and Purnomo (2021), "the role of academic advisors is indeed underutilized in all expected dimensions, resulting in suboptimal effectiveness in enhancing student motivation and discipline".

This gap implies a lack of vital emotional support for mitigating academic stress. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that proactive student initiatives are a key factor that can encourage lecturers to perform their roles more comprehensively. Therefore, optimizing the role of academic advisors requires interventions aimed at aligning expectations and role performance and shifting from transactional-administrative relationships toward holistic and sustainable mentoring relationships. This change is crucial for ensuring the stability of the university's social system in supporting student development.

Ethical Approval
This study does not require special ethics, but the names of informants have been disguised because they are active students. In addition, this research was conducted by the FISIP sociology department team; therefore, the names of students and lecturers were not listed as PAs.

Informed Consent Statement
Previously, all selected informants were aware of the purpose of this study, and they agreed to be informants for evaluation purposes without mentioning their names.

Authors' Contributions
AH contributed to the conceptualization, research design, supervision, and served as the corresponding author during the manuscript submission process. YKG contributed to the development of the theoretical framework and the literature review. PR and AHGF were responsible for data collection and transcription of the interviews. SWV contributed to data analysis and interpretation. M assisted with manuscript preparation and editing for publication.

Disclosure Statement
No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

Data Availability Statement
The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author for privacy reasons.

The research was conducted by the curriculum team and quality assurance group of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Notes on Contributors

Achmad Hidir
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9761-8776
Achmad Hidir is a Sociology lecturer and member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Yusuf Krisman Gea
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0012-8218
Yusuf Krisman Gea is a lecturer and member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Puput Rusmawati
Puput Rusmawati is a member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Azzahra Handhika G. Fajri
Azzahra Handhika G. Fajri is a member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Siti Wahyu Vitamagistra
Siti Wahyu Vitamagistra is a member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau.

Mardatillah
Mardatillah is a member of the Quality Assurance Team of the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, at the University of Riau.

REFERENCES

Biddle, B. J. (1986). "Recent developments in role theory." *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, 67-92. https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435

Habley, W. R. (1995). "Developmental advising: What's it all about?" In G. L. Kramer (Ed.), *Fostering student success in college: A guide for effective institutional practice* (pp. 50-62). Jossey-Bass.

Hasanah, U., & Jannah, M. (2019). "Persepsi Mahasiswa terhadap Peran Dosen Pembimbing Akademik di Perguruan Tinggi." *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora, 8*(2), 123-135. https://journal.upgripnk.ac.id/index.php/edukasi/article/view/362

Hidir, A., & Malik, R. (2024). *Teori sosiologi modern*. Yayasan Tri Edukasi Ilmiah. https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=cS4TEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Hidir,+A.,+%26+Malik,+R.+(2024).+Teori+sosiologi+modern.+Yayasan+Tri+Edukasi+Ilmiah.&ots=jGFRoQ-g3C&sig=4SK3_lV85CT00JMiZUK9VXvQF8w

Hidir, A., Malik, R., & Widiarti, D. (2024). Pengantar Sosiologi. *Tri Edukasi Ilmiah, Bukittinggi*.

Hidir, A., Malik, R., Bekata, H. M., Waruwu, Y., & Syarofa, N. (2023). Use of Social Media as a Learning Media in 21st Century Learning. *Al-Hijr: Journal of Adulearn World*, *2*(4), 295-312. https://ejournal.staialhikmahpariangan.ac.id/Journal/index.php/alhijr/article/view/547

Malik, R., Habibi, A., Jasmine, H., Putri, K. K., & Hondro, S. R. (2025). Zoom Meeting and Dromology: Manifestations of the Folded World in the Lecture Process of University of Sumatera Utara Students. *Tradition and Modernity of Humanity*, *5*(2), 53-56. https://talenta.usu.ac.id/tmh/article/view/18897

Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System.* The Free Press.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research.* Jossey-Bass. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED498537

Reason, R. D., Cox, B. E., & Scales, T. M. (2006). "The impact of a college experience on student retention: A three-year study." *Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 789-813.

Rimawati, Y., Sarsono, S., & DPW, I. A. (2025). EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEWED FROM LEADERSHIP STYLE, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, WORK MOTIVATION AND WORK DISCIPLINE AT THE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT OF KLATEN REGENCY. *Fokus Ekonomi: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi, 20*(1), 41-48. https://www.ejournal.stiepena.ac.id/index.php/fe/article/view/1253

Santoso, H. B., & Wulandari, S. (2022). "Analisis Efektivitas Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Akademik oleh Dosen di Fakultas Ilmu Sosial." *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan, 11*(3), 88-100.

Setiawan, B., & Purnomo, A. (2021). "Peran Dosen Penasihat Akademik dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan dan Motivasi Belajar Mahasiswa." *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, 12*(1), 45-60. http://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/nuansa/article/view/698

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition.* University of Chicago Press.

Yazid, M. A., & Hidir, A. (2024). The Influence of Leadership Style on the Performance Productivity of Members in Campus Organizations (Study at the University of Riau Student Executive Institution). *SAKOLA: Journal of Sains Cooperative Learning and Law, 1*(2), 148-157.