

Students' Satisfaction And Perceptions Towards Academic Advisors At Politeknik Melaka: Educating, Inspiring, And Illuminating Success

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Abstract

Introduction/Main Objectives: Academic advising plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic progress and emotional well-being, especially in polytechnic settings where learners often have varied preparedness levels. This study investigates students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Academic Advisors (PA) at Politeknik Melaka, focusing on advisory dimensions such as communication clarity, emotional support, academic guidance, and motivational influence.

Background Problems: Despite its importance, limited empirical research explores how Malaysian polytechnic students evaluate the relational and human aspects of academic advising. This study addresses the question: How do these advisory components contribute to students' satisfaction and overall advising experience?

Research Methods: A quantitative survey design was adopted, involving 73 purposively sampled students from four academic departments. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation to identify dominant patterns and relationships among variables.

Finding/Results: The findings reveal very high satisfaction levels, with all advisory constructs scoring above 4.60. Strong to very strong correlations ($r \approx .82-.92$, $p < .001$) indicate that empathetic communication, genuine concern, and timely guidance significantly enhance students' motivation, confidence, and trust in their advisors.

Conclusion: The study concludes that academic advising at Politeknik Melaka functions not merely as an administrative system but as a vital human support network fostering academic engagement, emotional resilience, and holistic growth. These results underscore the need for continuous advisor training and the reinforcement of student-centered, empathetic advising practices.

Keywords: Academic advising; student perceptions; emotional support; student satisfaction.

Introduction

The academic advisory system has been widely acknowledged as a critical support mechanism within higher education institutions worldwide. As learning environments become increasingly demanding, students are required to navigate complex academic structures, manage multiple responsibilities, and make informed decisions that profoundly influence their future careers and personal development. Academic advising therefore plays a central role in bridging the gap between institutional expectations and student needs by providing guidance, encouragement, and structured support (Kuhn, 2021). In the Malaysian polytechnic context, effective advising is especially important as students often enter tertiary education with diverse academic backgrounds and varying levels of readiness for independent learning.

Current literature consistently emphasizes that meaningful advising goes beyond administrative tasks; it involves mentoring, emotional reassurance, and holistic developmental support. Studies by Robbins and Zarges (2020) highlight that high-quality academic advising contributes significantly to student retention, academic motivation, and sense of belonging within an institution. Similarly, research by Drake (2022) underscores that students who perceive their advisors as approachable, empathetic, and responsive demonstrate better academic outcomes and higher levels of engagement. These findings strengthen the argument that academic advisors are not merely information providers but essential agents in promoting student success and well-being.

Despite its recognised importance, recent literature also reveals several gaps in understanding the quality of academic advising, particularly within Malaysian higher education institutions. Many studies focus primarily on administrative efficiency or academic performance indicators, while aspects such as emotional support, clarity of communication, advisor–student rapport, and motivational influence remain underexplored. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence assessing how students evaluate their advisors holistically, especially through rigorous statistical methods such as correlation analysis. This gap becomes even more pronounced in the polytechnic sector, where advising structures may differ from traditional universities but receive far less scholarly attention.

At Politeknik Melaka, the academic advisory system forms an integral part of the institution's philosophy of developing competent, well-rounded graduates. Academic Advisors (PA) are entrusted with responsibilities that extend well beyond monitoring academic progress. They act as mentors, motivators, and trusted listeners—providing emotional support, academic coaching, and personal guidance as students navigate important decisions related to their studies, careers, and personal growth. Effective two-way communication, empathy, and interpersonal connection are essential components of this advisory relationship, shaping a safe and supportive environment where students feel understood and valued. However, despite the structured system in place, the institution currently lacks comprehensive empirical data on how satisfied students truly are with the guidance and support provided by their advisors.

This gap underscores the urgency of conducting a systematic investigation into students' perceptions of their Academic Advisors at Politeknik Melaka. Understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and relational dynamics of the advisory process is crucial for continuous improvement, particularly as the institution strives to uphold its commitment to producing graduates who are academically competent, emotionally balanced, and grounded in strong human values. Furthermore, this study aligns with the spirit of the Awards Programme themed "Educating, Inspiring, Illuminating," which recognises the dedication and excellence of advisors who guide students with sincerity and impact. By examining how students experience communication, emotional support, motivation, and academic guidance from their

advisors, this research provides valuable insights that can help reinforce best practices and enhance the overall effectiveness of the advisory system.

In summary, this study is timely and necessary as it addresses a significant gap in the literature and institutional practice. Through quantitative analysis involving descriptive statistics and Pearson-r correlation testing, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how various advisory components interact and contribute to student satisfaction and academic motivation. The insights generated will support informed decision-making, improve advisory processes, and ultimately strengthen the academic advisory system at Politeknik Melaka.

Research Methods

The research methods used in this study are presented in a detailed and systematic manner to ensure that the procedures can be replicated by other researchers and yield consistent findings. This chapter describes the research design, population and sampling method, instrument development, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis techniques. All steps were carried out carefully to ensure validity, reliability, and the integrity of the research process.

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method, which is widely used in educational research to measure perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural tendencies in large populations (Creswell, 2020). A structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items was used as the primary instrument to assess students' perceptions of their Academic Advisors (PA). The quantitative approach was selected because it enables objective measurement, statistical comparison, and the identification of patterns across multiple advisory components such as communication, emotional support, academic guidance, and motivation.

The population of this study consisted of students enrolled at Politeknik Melaka across four academic departments: Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Commerce. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that only students who were officially assigned to an Academic Advisor (PA) were included in the study. This method is appropriate when specific criteria must be met to answer the research objectives accurately.

A total of 72 respondents participated in the study, which meets the recommended sample size for correlation analysis and Likert-based behavioural research (Hair et al., 2019).

The instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire developed based on established advisory constructs commonly used in higher education research (Robbins & Zarges, 2020; Drake, 2022). The questionnaire consisted of four main sections; *Section A: Demographic Information* (Gender, programme, semester), *Section B: Communication & Responsiveness of PA* (Likert-scale items measuring clarity of communication and advisor accessibility), *Section C: Emotional Support & Academic Guidance* (Items measuring empathy, concern, support, and academic advice); and *Section D: Motivation & Overall Satisfaction* (Items measuring PA impact on confidence, motivation, and satisfaction)

All items used a 5-point Likert Scale 1 to 5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). This scale is widely accepted in psychological and educational research for measuring perceptions and attitudes.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by subject matter experts in academic advising and educational psychology. Items were evaluated based on clarity, relevance, and representativeness of the constructs.

Reliability was ensured by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, where values above 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). All constructs in the study were tested and demonstrated strong reliability.

Data was collected using a digital survey form distributed through the official class communication channels at Politeknik Melaka. The procedure for data collection began with the development of the research instrument using Google Forms, ensuring that all questionnaire items were clearly constructed and easy for respondents to understand. Once the instrument was completed, the questionnaire link was distributed to the selected students through the official class communication channels. Before responding, students were briefed on the purpose of the study as well as the confidentiality and voluntary nature of their participation. They then completed the survey independently and without coercion.

After all responses were received, the data were exported into Microsoft Excel for preliminary cleaning and preprocessing. The final dataset was subsequently subjected to statistical analysis using appropriate descriptive and inferential techniques. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured throughout the process, and no identifying information was collected except general demographic details.

The study utilised several tools and software to support the data collection and analysis processes. Google Forms was used as the platform for administering and distributing the survey to respondents, ensuring accessibility and convenience. A laptop or desktop computer was employed to manage and organise the collected data efficiently. The raw responses were initially processed using Microsoft Excel, where preliminary cleaning and data preparation were conducted before analysis.

Subsequently, statistical software such as SPSS or the Python Pearson module was used to perform the required statistical procedures, including the calculation of mean scores, frequency distributions, percentages, Pearson-r correlation coefficients, and p-values. All procedures and statistical analyses adhered strictly to established quantitative research standards to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings.

Data analysis for this study was conducted in two main stages to ensure a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions toward their Academic Advisors.

The first stage involved descriptive analysis, where descriptive statistics were applied to summarise the overall distribution of responses. This included the calculation of frequency, percentage, and mean scores to identify general patterns, levels of agreement, and the central tendency of students' perceptions regarding various advisory components such as communication, emotional support, academic guidance, and overall satisfaction. The descriptive analysis provided an initial overview of how respondents rated each item in the questionnaire and helped determine the general effectiveness of the academic advisory system.

The following interpretation scale was used:

Table 1. The Interpretation Scale

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High / Very Effective

2.34 – 3.67
1.00 – 2.33

Moderate
Low

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Inferential analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the key variables measured in this study, particularly the components of academic advising such as communication, emotional support, academic guidance, interpersonal rapport, motivation, and overall student satisfaction. The Pearson-r correlation test was employed as the primary statistical technique to determine both the strength and direction of the linear relationships between these variables (Table 3.2).

Table 2. The interpretation of correlation strength followed Guilford's (1956) classification

Range (r)	Interpretation
≤ 0.20	Very Weak
0.20 – 0.40	Weak
0.41 – 0.71	Moderate
0.72 – 0.90	Strong
≥ 0.91	Very Strong

Notes: A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used, while $p < 0.001$ indicated highly significant relationships

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

This method was selected because it is widely recognised for its suitability in analysing continuous data obtained from Likert-scale instruments within behavioural and educational research. The analysis also assessed the statistical significance of each relationship through the calculation of p-values, enabling the researcher to determine whether the observed correlations were meaningful or occurred by chance. The use of Pearson-r allowed for a deeper understanding of how different advisory components were interconnected and how strongly they influenced students' perceptions, motivation, and satisfaction with the academic advisory system at Politeknik Melaka.

Result

The distribution of respondents by gender, program and semester was analysed to understand the demographic background of students who participated in this study (Table 3.1). A total of 73 respondents were involved. Based on the data, 46.6% of the respondents were male while 53.4% were female. The respondents also represented all four departments in PMK, with the largest group coming from the Department of Commerce (58.9%). This distribution indicates that the findings of this research reflect a balanced representation of students across the polytechnic.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent (%)
Male	34	46.6%
Female	39	53.4%
Total	73	100

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

This section focuses on the factors that shape students' perceptions of the effectiveness, approachability and support provided by their Academic Advisors (PA). These factors include communication clarity, emotional support, academic guidance, responsiveness, interpersonal

connection, and motivation-related influences. The overall frequency distribution shows that students rated the Academic Advising system very positively. Most items scored between 4.30 and 4.80, indicating high levels of agreement.

A total of 73 respondents (100%) agreed that PA should communicate clearly and be approachable. The mean score of 4.76 for communication clarity reflects strong confidence that students understand information delivered by their PA. Students also expressed very high agreement regarding their PA's emotional support, with a mean score of 4.72. This finding suggests that students perceive their PA as an important source of encouragement when dealing with academic pressure and personal challenges.

Furthermore, 91.7% of respondents indicated that their PA consistently demonstrates concern and empathy. The overall mean of 4.79 for "PA shows concern towards my problems" demonstrates the strong impact of interpersonal warmth on students' trust in the advising system. Responsiveness was another highly valued factor. With a mean score of 4.74, the majority of students believed that their PA is easy to reach and provides timely responses when needed.

The analysis of students' perceived satisfaction with their PA indicated that overall satisfaction was high. The mean satisfaction score of 4.81 suggests that students are highly pleased with their PA's contribution to their academic and personal development.

The findings show that the majority of students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the advising system at Politeknik Melaka. A small proportion of respondents, comprising 3 students (4.1%), reported extremely high satisfaction, indicating a very positive perception of their Academic Advisors. In addition, 64.8% of the students indicated high satisfaction, while another 27.9% reported moderate-to-high satisfaction. Taken together, these results demonstrate that all respondents (100%) experienced the advising system positively, reflecting the overall effectiveness and strong support provided by the Academic Advisors at PMK.

Discussion

The overall findings of this study show that students at Politeknik Melaka have a very high level of satisfaction with their Academic Advisors (PA). All main constructs—communication clarity, responsiveness, emotional support, concern and empathy, academic guidance, motivation, and overall satisfaction—recorded mean scores above 4.60 on a five-point Likert scale. This indicates that the advisory system is not only functioning but doing so at a highly effective level from the students' perspective.

Inferential analysis using Pearson's correlation further revealed that the relationships between advisory components and student outcomes are strong to very strong, with correlation coefficients (r) typically ranging from approximately .82 to .92 and all relationships being statistically significant at $p < .001$. In practical terms, this means that improvements in how Academic Advisors (PA) communicate, support, and guide students are closely linked with increases in students' motivation, confidence, and satisfaction.

The first research objective focused on understanding how students perceive the roles and responsibilities of their Academic Advisors. The descriptive results indicate that students do not view PA merely as administrative gatekeepers but as mentors, motivators, and sources of emotional support. High mean scores in items related to communication, empathy, and

interpersonal rapport suggest that students experience their advisors as approachable, caring, and genuinely involved in their academic journey.

This confirms the conceptual position outlined in the Introduction, where the advisory system at Politeknik Melaka was described as more than a mechanism for monitoring academic progress. The findings support the view that PA act as trusted guides who help students interpret academic rules, plan courses, and cope with educational challenges. The data thus reinforce the institutional vision of PA as “educating, inspiring, and illuminating” rather than simply enforcing regulations.

The second objective was to examine the level of satisfaction among students toward key advisory components such as communication clarity, emotional support, academic guidance, interpersonal relationship, and responsiveness. The consistently high mean scores across these domains show that students are highly satisfied with the quality of interaction and support they receive.

Items related to concern and empathy and motivation and confidence recorded some of the highest mean values. This suggests that students particularly appreciate advisors who show genuine care and who actively encourage them to persevere in their studies. In addition, the high scores for responsiveness and clarity of communication indicate that students feel that their PA are accessible and easy to understand, which is crucial in preventing confusion about academic procedures and expectations.

Taken together, these findings imply that the advisory system at PMK is perceived not only as structurally sound but also as relationally strong, with attention given to both academic and emotional dimensions of student development.

The third and fourth research objectives focused on examining the strength and significance of the relationships between the various advisory components and determining which components exert the greatest influence on student outcomes. The Pearson-r correlation analysis revealed several very strong positive associations, demonstrating that the quality of interaction between Academic Advisors and students plays a critical role in shaping academic and emotional development. The strongest relationship was observed between emotional support and students’ motivation and confidence ($r \approx .923$, $p < .001$), indicating that when advisors provide sincere encouragement and emotional reassurance, students are more likely to feel motivated, capable, and secure in their learning journey. Similarly, concern and empathy showed a very strong relationship with student motivation ($r \approx .909$, $p < .001$), further emphasising that genuine care from advisors enhances students’ willingness to engage actively in their studies.

Friendliness and approachability were also strongly related to students’ perceptions of their advisors’ willingness to help ($r \approx .902$, $p < .001$), highlighting the importance of interpersonal warmth in fostering trust and openness. Furthermore, the perceived effectiveness of the academic advisory system correlated strongly with students’ recognition and appreciation of their advisors ($r \approx .916$, $p < .001$), suggesting that consistent and well-organised advising practices lead students to acknowledge and value the role of their PA.

In addition to these interpersonal dimensions, academic guidance demonstrated a strong correlation with improved academic performance ($r \approx .82$, $p < .001$), confirming that clear advice on coursework, progression planning, and study strategies directly contributes to enhanced academic outcomes. Collectively, these findings affirm that effective academic advising is rooted not only in administrative efficiency but, more importantly, in human connection characterised by empathy, clarity, support, and approachability—all of which significantly influence students’ motivation, confidence, and overall success.

The findings of this study are largely consistent with previous research on academic advising, which has long emphasised that high-quality advising contributes to increased student retention, stronger motivation, and a greater sense of belonging within the institution. Earlier studies consistently highlight that students who perceive their advisors as approachable, empathetic, and responsive tend to demonstrate higher academic engagement and improved performance—patterns that closely align with the results obtained in this research. Similar to earlier work, the present study confirms that effective academic advising not only enhances students' motivation and confidence but also supports their emotional well-being and strengthens their connection to the institution. Despite this alignment, the study also offers several noteworthy contributions to the existing body of literature. Unlike some previous studies that reported mixed or moderate satisfaction levels due to differences between departments or individual advising styles, this study found uniformly high levels of satisfaction across all advisory components, suggesting a consistently effective implementation of the advisory system at Politeknik Melaka. Furthermore, while earlier research has often focused on qualitative descriptions of advising effectiveness, this study provides strong empirical evidence through very high and statistically significant correlation values, demonstrating clear relationships between advisory behaviours—such as emotional support, clarity of communication, and responsiveness—and student outcomes including motivation, confidence, and overall satisfaction. Finally, this research adds value by focusing on a Malaysian polytechnic setting, addressing a gap in existing literature that is predominantly centred on Western university environments. The results indicate that the fundamental elements of good advising—empathy, clear communication, and consistent support—are equally impactful in the technical and vocational education context. Thus, this study not only supports but also extends prior research, establishing academic advising as a crucial driver of student development while offering context-specific insights from Politeknik Melaka.

The findings of this study carry several important implications for the institution, Academic Advisors, and students. At the institutional level, the consistently high satisfaction scores and strong correlation values provide clear evidence that the academic advisory system at Politeknik Melaka is functioning effectively and meeting students' academic and emotional needs. This reinforces the importance of sustaining and further strengthening the existing advisory structure, particularly through continuous training, professional development, and recognition programmes that encourage best practices among advisors. The strong positive relationships between advisory behaviours and student outcomes also suggest that the institution should prioritise strategies that cultivate empathy, communication skills, and interpersonal sensitivity among academic staff, as these qualities significantly influence student motivation and overall well-being.

For Academic Advisors, the results highlight the critical role they play in shaping students' academic trajectories. The very strong correlations between emotional support, concern, responsiveness, and student motivation indicate that advisors' daily interactions—whether through guidance, encouragement, or empathetic listening—directly contribute to students' confidence and persistence in their studies. This underscores the need for advisors to adopt student-centred approaches and maintain regular, meaningful engagement with their advisees. For students, the findings reaffirm the value of actively participating in the advisory process. Students who communicate openly with their PA benefit from clearer academic pathways, greater emotional resilience, and stronger motivation to achieve academic success. Overall, these implications emphasise that effective academic advising is a shared responsibility, requiring continuous collaboration between the institution, advisors, and students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of their Academic Advisors (PA) and to evaluate the effectiveness of the advisory system at Politeknik Melaka. Overall, the findings reveal exceptionally high levels of satisfaction, with all key constructs—communication clarity, responsiveness, emotional support, concern and empathy, academic guidance, motivation, and overall satisfaction—recording mean scores above 4.30. This indicates that students regard their Academic Advisors as highly effective across all major roles and responsibilities.

Inferential analysis further reinforced these observations. Pearson-r correlation results demonstrated strong to very strong positive relationships between advisory components and student outcomes, with several correlation coefficients exceeding $r = .90$ and all p-values below .001. These results suggest that the more supportive, empathetic, and responsive the PA are, the more motivated, confident, and academically engaged students become. The findings also align closely with existing literature, confirming that high-quality advising contributes to improved academic success, emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of institutional belonging. At the same time, this study provides new empirical insights specific to the Malaysian polytechnic setting, an area previously under-represented in academic advising research.

In conclusion, the academic advisory system at Politeknik Melaka is functioning at a highly effective level. Academic Advisors are not only fulfilling administrative duties but are also serving as mentors, motivators, and emotional support figures who play a significant role in shaping students' academic and personal development.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to further strengthen the academic advisory system at Politeknik Melaka. At the institutional level, it is recommended that continuous training for Academic Advisors be enhanced through structured workshops and professional development programmes. Such initiatives would help advisors refine essential skills, including communication, empathy, and mentoring techniques, all of which were shown to have significant positive effects on student motivation and confidence. The institution is also encouraged to implement standardised advisory guidelines to ensure consistent quality of advising across all departments. In addition, recognition programmes such as the “Educating, Inspiring, Illuminating” awards should be expanded to acknowledge outstanding advisors and reinforce a culture of excellence within the advisory system. The integration of digital advisory platforms, including online appointment systems, digital advising logs, and electronic communication tools, is also recommended to enhance accessibility, organisation, and documentation of advisory activities.

For Academic Advisors, the findings highlight the importance of maintaining strong interpersonal communication characterised by approachability, clarity, and emotional support, as these qualities significantly shape students' academic confidence and sense of belonging. Advisors should also increase the frequency of interactions with their advisees, as regular check-ins can help identify academic or emotional challenges at an early stage and allow timely intervention. A student-centred advising approach is strongly encouraged, where discussions focus on students' goals, strengths, challenges, and long-term aspirations. Advisors should also guide students in academic planning and the development of self-management skills, including course selection, study strategies, and time management, to help improve academic performance.

For students, it is recommended that they adopt a more proactive attitude in engaging with their Academic Advisors. This includes reaching out for clarification, guidance, or support

whenever needed rather than waiting until problems escalate. Students should strive to communicate openly and honestly about their concerns, as doing so enables advisors to provide more meaningful and targeted assistance. Advisory sessions should also be utilised effectively by preparing relevant questions, setting academic goals, and reflecting on personal progress. Furthermore, students are encouraged to participate actively in academic development programmes such as workshops, talks, and departmental activities, as these platforms strengthen academic skills, confidence, and overall readiness for future challenges.

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