

A Preliminary Findings in a Social Support and Perceived Academic Achievement in TVET Institutions in Malaysia During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Advisory and mentoring come in different styles and concepts. Hence it purposely enhance student-enabled learning. However different varying types of advisory would lead to different outcomes. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Malaysia offers specific types of advisory and committee. The type of advisory given has become a conflict to either the academic advisor and TVET students. Academic advisors expects the students to be more independent and require less mentoring and advising. However students' expectation require much more expectation on advising with less monitoring. Thus this study is aiming at crystallizing the actual perspectives of academic advisors among TVET students. This cross-sectional study aiming at determining how social support is related to the perceived academic achievement of TVET students. This study will examine emotional, appraisal, and instrumental support would benefit Malaysia TVET students. This quantitative study will utilize four sets of adapted items and would be distributed to all TVET institutions in Malaysia. The questionnaire will be conducted on 30 samples of a pilot test before could be administered to the samples using simple random sampling. The finding is expected to give quite an impact and infer to an academic advising committee in Malaysian education.

Keywords: - Social support, emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, perceived academic achievement

1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Educational Training in Malaysia is developing. Starting with Vocational training in a secondary school in 1964 (Azila et al, 2010). Later it was introduced to higher education. TVET has been regarded as a primary provider of human capital in industrialized nation. TVET has become primary education in most developed countries and it has been witnessed that almost 70% of students in Germany have entering TVET (Ahmad et al., 2015). Thus to be more competitive in preparing its human capital, Malaysia put enhancement on its TVET.

Until 2010, it is only 28% of higher-skilled workers in Malaysia is Malaysian and this situation put the Malaysian government realize how important it increases TVET graduates. Thru its Economic Transformation Program (ETP), TVET graduates are expected to take 1.5 million from 3.0 Million employment in 2020. Today there are more than 500 TVET institutions from various ministries in Malaysia. TVET has become an engine of growth especially in RMK 12 (Rancangan Malaysia Ke 12). These graduates are expected to become a higher-skilled workers who will fulfil the demand for semi-

skilled and skilled talents in the country. In 2016, more than 50% of school leavers join TVET institutions proves that TVET institutions enrolment is succeeding (Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Malaysia, 2016).

TVET institutions offer a wide range of diplomas, first-degree, and post-graduate programs. All facilities and requirements of higher education in Malaysia are followed in implementing TVET. This is included a student advisory system that has long been practiced. The student advisory system has become among the major concerns (TVET) in Malaysia. For instance, Academic Advisory has become a major item in PENA (Penaziran Akademik Sistem Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti), and various ways including iPENA and iPAD have been developed to manage and improve academic advising in Malaysian Polytechnic and Community College. Academic advising is a vital part of student's life in an institution. It is a teacher-student relationship that purposely enables them to know the facilities and to understand themselves as students (Van et al., 2002). It is one of the teaching forms in higher learning to escalate the learning and development outcomes including the Outcome Based Education component; cognitive, affective,

and psychomotor (Harrison, 2009).

Academic advising is important to students especially young students (Nawi et al., 2018). The academic advisor would be responsible to guide students concerning their studies, self-development, and career path. These kinds of advice and concerns would be relatively significant to social support. Thus academic advising has begun to operate and providing continuous social support to students including in TVET institutions. Likewise, Politeknik Malaysia has started its academic advising system in all 30 institutions across Malaysia in 2004. That was the time whereby academic advising started to become vital in student's life in their entire 3 years of study. Other TVET institutions like University Malaysia Perlis have their academic advising which is also called Rakan Pembimbing Siswa.

However, the pandemic of Covid-19 which has happened in 2020 gives an alarming signal when online learning becomes crucial (White, 2020). An academic advisor is deemed required in managing the students especially in the difficulties faced by students in their online learning. Thus it is important to revisit the functions of academic advising in facilitating online learning. Due to pandemics, students are not entering the campus and it is not the function of an academic advisor to provide facilities to students during online learning. However there are some circumstances, an academic advisor can accelerate the process. Thus this paper put more concerns on the ultimate aim for academic advisors which should be in place and should enhance students' achievement.

This paper concerns with three objectives which are to determine how social support is related to the perceived academic achievement of TVET students. This objective is hoped to be achieved by having another specific objective as such (1) to examine the emotional-informational support towards the perceived academic achievement of TVET students in Malaysia, (2) to determine appraisal support towards the perceived academic achievement of TVET students in Malaysia and (3) to determine instrumental support towards the perceived academic achievement of TVET students in Malaysia. This study intends to examine the mentioned objectives of TVET students in Malaysia. This study is hoped to measure how social support is related to the perceived academic achievement of TVET students, especially during a pandemic. This study is anticipated to provide significant contributions to literature and the development of a body of knowledge as root to behavioural studies concerning education practice. This study is an essential and timely effort to redefine the functions of academic advisors as social support providers to education services.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Support

In this community which bases itself on friendship as the best medicine and key to success (Sarason and Sarason, 1985), social support seems important especially to young students. This theory has been widely investigated in various areas including health and education (Cohen and Syme, 1985). Historically three scholars have been regarded as the father of social support; John Cassel, Gerald Caplan, and Sydney Cobb. John Cassel is well known for his groundwork of social support relation to stress-related disorder in 1976 while earlier in 1974; Gerald Caplan found a need for family, friends, groups, and neighbourhood as social support to life changes and crisis. Later Sidney Cobb in 1976, further viewed social support as information that would make people feel loved, cared for, belonged, and valued (Miller et al., 2003).

This theory is developing and the definition is also evolving. Social support is defined as the exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the wellbeing of the recipient (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984). The definition brings a strong meaning that an individual needs other in their life. Similarly, in the education system, teacher support is one of the most important support which should be provided in an educational institution environment and facilities (Danielsen and Wold, 2009). This is the same in TVET institutions in Malaysia. Students need their academic advisor to give support especially during difficulties such as during this pandemic Covid-19 which requires different norms in learning.

Social support as suggested by House (1981) is divided into four types; emotional, instrumental, information, and appraisal. Emotional support requires the affection, empathy, and acceptance gained by the supporter while instrumental entails the physical support received while informational support involves advice and information received. Appraisal support seeks more evaluation and response or feedback (Thwet, 2020).

Anxiety which is related insufficient of social support would jeopardize academic ability and learning results (Mukhlis et al, 2020). Not to mention stress level resulted from high expectation from parents has led to this unpleasant situation but social support seem to be both mediator and moderator to this phenomenon. (Poots and Cassidy, 2020). Strong students like sport athletes students are also relying on and require social support from their coaches and captains to succeed (Fogaca, 2019) and keep their mind healthy. Recently during pandemics, social support seems to provide students

with positive coping strategies and improve their mental health including alleviating stress during pandemics (Mai et al., 2021). Social support could be in various terms and types and address this would allow for a meaningful life for the students.

2.2 Perceived Academic Achievement

Academic achievement can be referred to as the communication, skills, and competencies which enable a student to succeed in their life (Genesee, 2006). A study has found that academic achievement is significantly influenced by the teachers' education and experience (George et al., 2005) as well as the attention given to students. Other also found that poor relationship between teacher and students will also affect academic achievement (Al-zoubi, 2015).

While there is limited understanding of the adolescent mechanism of study but there is a positive correlation between academic performance and school environment and facilities (Mateos et al., 2021) including counselling and advising (Bolu-Steve and Oredugba, 2017). A similar effect goes to family advising especially which regards mobile use among adolescence (Buctot et al., 2021). Advising can soothe emotion and is vital to academic performance (Clarkson, 2020).

2.3 Emotional Social Support

Obviously, emotional support has been significantly vital to individual health including improving quality of life and providing high-quality relationships (Tarziev et al., 2018). Despite bundles of study on emotional, emotional is suggested to be seen as an expression of sympathy care, concern, affection, or interest that are directed at alleviating the emotional stress experienced by others (Feng, 2014).

2.4 Appraisal Support

Greater appraisal support predicted an increase in student's psychological and moral (Hurd et al., 2017). A study in Canada of almost 14,000 respondents shows instrumental support is positively predicted on academic achievements and simultaneously the teacher feedback can negatively predicted the similar academic measurement (Wong et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

This cross-sectional study plan is as follows: First, we provide the literature to describe the underpinning theory to support this study. Second, a set questionnaire is designed to measure how social support is related to academic achievement among TVET students. Thirdly, the item has been developed and adapted from ISEL. ISEL is an

Interpersonal Social Evaluation List. ISEL is a psychometrically sound questionnaire which uses to measure social support with said variables. This item was adapted from Cohen and Hoberman (1983). This Likert scale questionnaire uses a 4-point scale ranging from Definitely False to Definitely True. These items have three dimensions and have been developed into separate dimensions which were also developed from (Beutel et al., 2017). The dependent variable in this study is perceived as academic achievement. The instrument was adapted from Ainin et al. (2015). After this stage of writing, the item will be sent for peer-reviewed and then undergone a pilot test. 30 samples of the pilot test have been distributed and a few improvements were found to be done. The sample frame would be the name list of all students in TVET institutions in Malaysia which will be acquired from each institution.

After the pilot test, the Cronbach Alpha would be used to see the reliability test. The original set of the questionnaire has been showing an overall internal consistency above 0.6. All items to measure three independent variables and a single dependent variable would be conducted online in this yet ending pandemic.

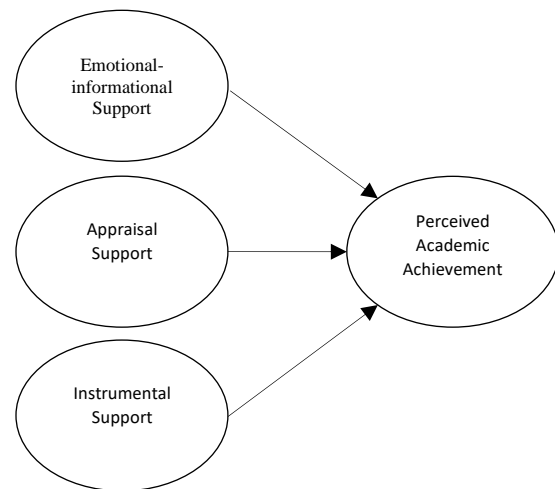


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3.1 Respondents and Instruments

This preliminary study employs 30 respondents. The instruments have been distributed to all TVET institutions in Malaysia in conducting this pilot study. 30 samples have been selected as it is the minimum number to enable reliability analysis. This study utilizes simple random sampling whereby each element of the target population have an equal probability of being selected. This descriptive study is designed to describe the characteristics of the social support of academic advisors and perceived academic performance. In doing so, three constructs

have been developed based on adapted questionnaires.

Table 1: Research Method.

Bil	Methodologies	Description
1.	Research Methodology	Quantitative Descriptive Research (Creswell, 2013)
2.	Research Design	Cross-Sectional Descriptive Research (Hair, 2007)
3.	Research Method	Questionnaire 4 construct
4.	Sample	TVET Students (Simple Random Sampling)
5.	Credibility	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
6.	Sample Size and Design	381 respondents 30 pilot test
7.	Instruments	Adapted
8.	Data Analysis	Multiple Regression Correlation Coefficient
9.	Approach	Deductive Approach,

Based on the pilot study, reliability analysis has been conducted to measure the reliability of the instruments. A minimum of 30 samples of data were chosen as shown in the below table.

Table 2: Case Processing Summary.

	N	%
Cases Valid	30	100
Excluded ^a	0	0
Total	30	100

^a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

The reliability using Cronbach Alpha coefficient analysis has been utilized on 30 samples and it was completely administered.

Table 3: Reliability Value.

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Tangible Social Support	0.628	6
Appraisal Social Support	0.567	4
Emotional Social Support	0.906	6
Perceived Academic Performance	0.884	6

This stage is vital as it is the stage to see the reliability which shows the consistency of the research findings. The rule of thumb of Cronbach Alpha coefficient size permitted a value of more than 0.6 to be considered acceptable (Hair et al.,

2007). The coefficient size of tangible social support which is 0.567 is poor in its strength of association and poses that the scale uses is not reliable. There are a few modifications and alterations which can be made for this purpose of exhibiting a reliable construct to measure the appraisal of social support. One of the ideas is to retest the construct with a bigger sample and adopt additional items into the construct. However, there are also other suggestions to use Guttman's Lambda 2 to earn the better value of consistency or other alternatives by using McDonald's omega (Starkweather, 2012). This preliminary study would also lead to a better sampling strategy that can be used to get a consistent result.

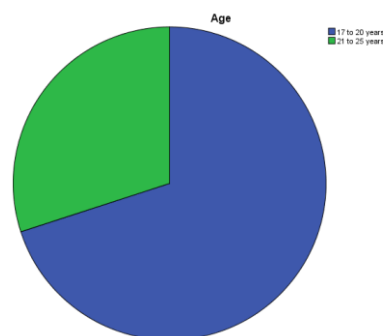


Figure 2: Age

The above figure shows that all 30 samples of pilot test data are youngsters and majority of them aged 17 to 20 years old.

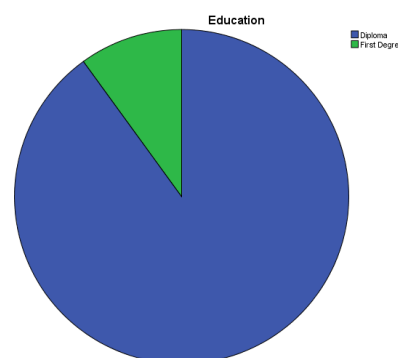


Figure 3: Educational Level

Based on 30 samples, 90% of them are studying at the diploma level. The pilot samples show that most TVET student's samples would largely be from Malaysian Polytechnic and Community College which offers Diploma program.

4. Conclusion

Social support is deemed important to all individuals. Due to the pandemic, the social support functions of an academic advisor should be revisited. In these TVET institutions, the new norms of

learning have created a new way of life and challenges that would jeopardize the academic achievement of students and this would create an emerging function of social support of academic advisors in TVET institutions. Thus measuring the variables and look into the perspectives especially during the COVID-19 pandemic should use good and reliable instruments.

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