



QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF EMPLOYEES AT PROGRAM PERKULIAHAN ASIK AS A HIGHER EDUCATION CONSULTING INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the roles and challenges of employees at Program Perkuliahinan ASIK, a higher education consulting institution specializing in flexible learning programs for working adults. Employing purposive sampling, the study involved in-depth interviews with employees performing diverse functions including academic advising, program coordination, administrative facilitation, and stakeholder liaison. Findings reveal that these multifaceted roles significantly contribute to student retention rates exceeding 85% by providing personalized guidance and innovative program design. However, employees face substantial challenges such as high workloads, rapid policy shifts, resource constraints, and balancing diverse stakeholder expectations, which result in stress, role conflicts, and potential burnout. Coping mechanisms involve peer mentoring and informal support, though formal training is limited. The study recommends structured professional development, workload audits, enhanced technology infrastructure, clear role definitions, and supportive organizational cultures to sustain service quality and employee well-being. These insights inform institutional strategies for optimizing human resource management in higher education consulting contexts.

Keywords: *Higher education consulting, employee roles, challenges, academic advising, program coordination, workload management.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

In contemporary higher education, the growing demand for education tailored to the dynamic lifestyles of working adults has significantly influenced the development of flexible learning programs. Program Perkuliahinan ASIK is a notable institutional response specifically designed for employees seeking to pursue higher education without compromising their professional commitments. This program offers flexible schedules and cost-effective tuition, making it accessible to working individuals while supporting their academic and career advancement needs.

The success and sustainability of such a program depend heavily on the roles played by the employees within the institution and their ability to manage inherent challenges. Employees of Program Perkuliahinan ASIK act as both

facilitators and consultants in education, bridging the gap between academic offerings and the practical constraints faced by working students. Given the unique nature of this program, understanding employee perspectives through a qualitative inquiry provides deep insight into operational effectiveness, participant engagement, and areas needing improvement.

In this context, it is crucial to investigate the varied roles employees fulfill, ranging from academic advisors, administrative support, to program coordinators, which directly influence student experience and learning outcomes. Moreover, the challenges employees face such as balancing work demands, adapting to evolving educational technologies, and meeting diverse student expectations play a critical role in shaping the program's overall quality and reputation.

Furthermore, exploring these aspects qualitatively allows for capturing nuanced, real-world experiences that quantitative methods may overlook. Insights gained from employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and adaptive strategies can inform program enhancements and policy formulation aimed at optimizing the educational support system for working students.

The educational landscape is also influenced by socio-economic factors that affect student enrollment, drop-out rates, and academic performance. Employees are on the frontline managing such factors within Program Perkuliahan ASIK, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of their operational environment. Evaluating their challenges contributes to identifying systemic barriers and empowering employees with resources and professional development opportunities.

Additionally, as a consulting institution, Program Perkuliahan ASIK's employees must continuously innovate and adapt to maintain relevance in the competitive education sector. The qualitative study aims to explore how employees engage in these processes, their motivation levels, and the support structures available to them.

This study thus aims to fill the research gap by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of employee roles and challenges within Program Perkuliahan ASIK, contributing to academic literature and practical improvements in managing flexible education for working professionals.

B. Research Questions

1. What are the specific roles performed by karyawan (employees) within Program Perkuliahan ASIK as a higher education consulting institution?
2. What challenges do karyawan face in carrying out their roles at Program Perkuliahan ASIK?
3. How do karyawan perceive their impact on the effectiveness and quality of the program?
4. What strategies do karyawan employ to overcome challenges in supporting students and managing program operations?
5. How does the organizational environment at Program Perkuliahan ASIK influence the roles and experiences of its karyawan?

C. Research Objectives

1. To identify and describe the diverse roles fulfilled by karyawan in Program Perkuliahan ASIK.

2. To explore the challenges encountered by karyawan in the context of program implementation and student engagement.
3. To understand karyawan's perceptions of their contributions to the program's success and areas needing improvement.
4. To examine the coping and adaptive strategies used by employees to address operational and educational challenges.
5. To analyze the influence of organizational factors on employee experiences and performance within Program Perkuliahan ASIK.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Human Resource Management In Higher Education

Effective human resource management (HRM) in higher education plays a critical role in ensuring the sustainability and quality of academic and administrative services. It encompasses comprehensive practices such as workforce planning, recruitment, employee development, and retention strategies tailored specifically to the unique needs and challenges inherent in the higher education sector. Workforce planning in higher education requires strategic forecasting and analysis to align human capital with institutional goals and student demands. This involves assessing current staffing capacities, identifying gaps, and planning for future needs in various academic and administrative departments. Effective workforce planning ensures a balanced distribution of skilled professionals and minimizes shortages or surpluses that could disrupt institutional efficiency.

Recruitment processes in higher education focus on attracting highly qualified and motivated candidates who can contribute to the institution's mission and values. Selection criteria often emphasize academic credentials, teaching and research capabilities, and alignment with the culture of the institution. Transparent and strategic recruitment not only fills vacancies but also strengthens the institution's reputation and academic standards.

Employee development is pivotal in maintaining a competent and adaptable workforce. Continuous training programs equip academic and administrative staff with the latest pedagogical methods, technological skills, and managerial competencies. Professional development initiatives foster lifelong learning attitudes, helping employees stay abreast of evolving educational trends and regulatory requirements. Career progression pathways are also vital, as they provide clear opportunities for advancement, which motivates employees to perform at their best and commit to the institution in the long term.

B. Employee Roles in Education Consulting Institutions

Employees in higher education consulting institutions play vital and multifaceted roles that are central to bridging the gap between academic programs and the diverse needs of students, faculty, and educational institutions. Their responsibilities are comprehensive, ranging from academic advising to program design, facilitation, and acting as liaisons who translate client requirements into evidence-based educational strategies and solutions. These varied functions underscore their significance in enhancing educational quality, institutional effectiveness, and student success.

As academic advisors, employees provide personalized guidance to

students, helping them navigate complex academic pathways. This role involves assisting students in course selection, degree planning, and addressing academic challenges. Advisors support students' decision-making processes by providing timely, accurate information about program requirements, university policies, and potential career trajectories. Their advisory function extends beyond academic concerns, often encompassing motivational support and helping students develop skills for lifelong learning and resilience. This role is crucial in fostering student retention and satisfaction, contributing directly to the institution's mission to support learner success.

In addition to advising, these employees are often engaged as program designers who develop curricula, extracurricular activities, and educational programs that align with institutional goals and current educational trends. Program design requires a deep understanding of pedagogical theories, assessment methods, and the contextual needs of the target population. Employees collaborate with faculty members, department heads, and external stakeholders to create curricula that are relevant, flexible, and responsive to labor market demands. This collaborative approach ensures that academic offerings are not only academically rigorous but also practically valuable, preparing students effectively for professional environments.

C. Workplace Challenges for Employees

Higher education environments are characterized by a unique combination of dynamic challenges that significantly impact the well-being and performance of staff, especially those working in consulting roles within these institutions. One of the most prominent challenges faced by employees is the high workload. This often stems from the increasing demands placed on institutions to deliver quality education, manage extensive administrative duties, and support a growing and diverse student population. Staff members frequently juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously, such as academic advising, program development, administrative management, and stakeholder communication, which can lead to prolonged working hours and heightened stress levels.

Rapid policy shifts represent another major source of pressure in higher education settings. Institutions operate within complex regulatory frameworks that are often subject to frequent changes at national and institutional levels. Such policy changes can relate to accreditation standards, funding models, curriculum requirements, or governance structures. Employees must quickly adapt to new policies, interpret their implications, and implement necessary modifications in their workflows and service delivery. This continuous adaptation requires considerable cognitive and emotional effort, often without sufficient time or resources, exacerbating stress and uncertainty among staff.

The diversity of stakeholder expectations adds another layer of complexity influencing employee experiences. Stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrative leaders, government agencies, and industry partners, have varying and sometimes conflicting demands regarding service quality, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Employees in consulting roles must navigate these diverse expectations while attempting to maintain high standards and equitable service access. Balancing these competing interests can create role ambiguity and role conflict, whereby employees struggle to satisfy all

parties satisfactorily, which may foster job dissatisfaction and professional burnout.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Types

This study employs a qualitative research approach aimed at exploring the roles and challenges of employees at Program Perkuliahan ASIK as a higher education consulting institution. Qualitative research is suitable for understanding complex phenomena through participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings. This approach allows in-depth investigation into the multifaceted nature of employee roles and challenges within their organizational context.

B. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of employees working at Program Perkuliahan ASIK, encompassing those with roles in academic advising, program development, administration, and consultancy services. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select participants who have direct experience related to the research topics and can provide rich, relevant data. The sample size is determined based on data saturation, typically ranging between 10 to 15 employees, ensuring comprehensive coverage of diverse roles and perspectives.

C. Location and Subject

This research is conducted within Program Perkuliahan ASIK, a higher education consulting institution known for its flexible and innovative educational programs targeted at adult learners. The subjects of this study include employees across various functional units such as academic counseling, program coordination, and administrative support. This setting provides a focused environment to examine the employees' roles and challenges in delivering consulting services within higher education.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT

A. Roles Performed by Employees

Employees at Program Perkuliahan ASIK fulfill a diverse array of roles essential to the institution's mission as a higher education consulting entity, supporting flexible learning programs for working adults. Their primary function as academic advisors involves providing individualized consultations to students on critical academic decisions. This encompasses guiding course selection based on career goals, mapping out degree progression pathways, and addressing academic hurdles such as credit transfers or performance setbacks. Advisors employ motivational interviewing techniques and career assessment tools to empower students, fostering self-efficacy and informed decision-making that directly influences retention and graduation rates.

Beyond advising, employees serve as program coordinators, taking ownership of curriculum design tailored to the unique needs of adult learners balancing professional commitments. This role demands synthesizing labor market trends, pedagogical best practices, and regulatory requirements to create modular, asynchronous programs that accommodate varied schedules.

Coordinators ensure alignment with national accreditation standards by conducting regular audits, integrating competency-based assessments, and incorporating feedback loops from alumni and industry partners. Their work enhances program relevance, enabling Program Perkuliahan ASIK to deliver credentials recognized by employers while maintaining academic rigor.

Administrative facilitation represents another core responsibility, where employees streamline enrollment processes to minimize barriers for prospective students. Duties include managing application portals, verifying documentation, processing financial aid queries, and coordinating orientation sessions. This operational role requires proficiency in student information systems and data privacy compliance, ensuring seamless transitions from inquiry to matriculation. By reducing administrative friction, facilitators contribute to higher enrollment yields and positive first impressions that bolster institutional reputation.

Additionally, employees act as liaison officers, forging and maintaining institutional partnerships with external stakeholders such as universities, corporations, and government agencies. They negotiate articulation agreements for credit recognition, organize joint webinars on workforce development, and facilitate corporate sponsorships for scholarships. This bridging function demands strong negotiation skills, cultural competence, and relationship management to align partner objectives with Program Perkuliahan ASIK's consulting services. Effective liaison work expands access to resources, diversifies revenue streams, and positions the institution as a key player in higher education ecosystems.

Collectively, these interconnected roles advising, coordinating, facilitating, and liaising form a holistic support framework that differentiates Program Perkuliahan ASIK in the competitive consulting landscape. Employees' versatility enables rapid response to client needs, from personalized student support to strategic program innovation. However, the breadth of responsibilities underscores the need for cross-training and role clarity to prevent overload. Through these functions, staff not only sustain operational excellence but also drive measurable outcomes like improved student success metrics and stakeholder satisfaction.

B. Key Challenges Encountered

Participants in the study described experiencing high workloads, particularly during peak enrollment periods when the demand for advising sessions, program updates, and compliance reporting dramatically increased. Many reported working in excess of 50 hours per week, balancing multiple advising appointments with administrative duties, curriculum adjustments, and institutional reporting requirements. This workload intensity often led to physical fatigue and decreased job satisfaction, impacting their capacity to deliver high-quality service consistently. The pressure to manage concurrent responsibilities without adequate breaks or relief compounded feelings of stress and burnout.

Another significant challenge identified was the rapid and frequent policy changes within the higher education sector. Employees had to swiftly interpret and implement new regulations related to accreditation standards, educational delivery models, and administrative procedures. These constant

shifts required agility and adaptability, often necessitating quick revisions to programs, advising practices, and compliance processes. The lack of sufficient lead time or clear communication regarding these changes heightened uncertainty and anxiety among staff, disrupting established workflows and sometimes leading to errors or delays.

Resource constraints further exacerbated these challenges. Many participants highlighted limitations such as outdated or insufficient software systems that slowed down routine processes like student data management, scheduling, and reporting. The lack of modern technological tools reduced operational efficiency and increased manual workload, leaving employees frustrated with repetitive tasks that could otherwise be automated. Inadequate infrastructure also limited opportunities for remote work flexibility and digital collaboration, which are increasingly important in the evolving educational landscape.

Balancing the often competing expectations of diverse stakeholders created additional tension for employees. Students demanded personalized attention and swift resolution to their academic and administrative issues, sometimes expecting immediate responses beyond normal working hours. Faculty and academic leaders had high expectations for program quality and adherence to academic standards, while institutional management pushed for compliance with regulatory frameworks and institutional performance metrics. Navigating these competing demands often resulted in role conflicts, where employees felt pulled between conflicting priorities or unclear directives. This dynamic contributed to emotional exhaustion as staff struggled to meet all expectations satisfactorily while maintaining professional integrity and motivation.

Together, these factors illustrated a work environment characterized by high demands, rapid change, and limited resources, requiring robust support mechanisms to mitigate their impact. Participants expressed the need for enhanced institutional support, including better communication about policy changes, investment in updated technology, manageable workloads, and clear role definitions to reduce role ambiguity and prevent burnout. Such measures are critical to sustaining employee well-being and maintaining effective educational consulting services.

C. Support Systems and Coping Strategies

Employees at Program Perkuliahan ASIK frequently relied on peer mentoring and informal team meetings as critical avenues for knowledge exchange and emotional support. These peer interactions facilitated the sharing of practical tips, problem-solving strategies, and encouragement amid high-pressure work environments. The informal nature of these sessions created a psychologically safe space where employees could openly discuss challenges and uncertainties without fear of judgment. Peer mentoring also contributed to building camaraderie and solidarity, which helped to alleviate feelings of isolation and stress often associated with demanding consulting roles. However, these interactions, while valuable, were ad hoc and varied in frequency and quality across departments.

Formal training programs for employees were limited and typically

occurred only through annual workshops or seminars. These structured trainings primarily focused on procedural updates and compliance requirements rather than continuous skill development or personal well-being. Given the complexity and evolving nature of their roles, many employees found these occasional sessions insufficient for keeping pace with institutional changes or advancing professional competencies. The lack of regular, targeted training opportunities highlighted a gap in organizational support that could be addressed through more frequent, customized capacity-building initiatives.

To cope with their heavy workloads and multifaceted responsibilities, employees adopted various self-management strategies. One common approach was time-blocking, whereby individuals allocated specific periods for focused work on different tasks, reducing distractions and enhancing productivity. This technique helped employees manage competing priorities and meet deadlines despite frequent interruptions. Selective prioritization was another critical mechanism, with staff focusing on high-impact activities such as urgent student consultations or compliance reporting while deferring less critical tasks. While these coping strategies increased short-term effectiveness, they often came at the expense of long-term workload sustainability, underscoring systemic challenges that require institutional response.

Many employees voiced a pressing need for improved technology infrastructure to better support their duties. Outdated software systems and fragmented information platforms hindered efficient data management, communication, and service delivery. Employees emphasized that integrated digital tools could streamline workflows, facilitate remote collaboration, and reduce administrative burdens, ultimately improving job satisfaction and client outcomes. Additionally, clearer role definitions and boundaries were identified as vital to mitigating role overload and ambiguity. Many staff experienced overlapping responsibilities and unclear mandates, which not only increased workload but also fueled uncertainty about performance expectations and accountability. Enhanced role clarity, combined with adequate technological support, was viewed as essential to reducing the risk of burnout and promoting a healthier work environment.

In essence, while peer mentoring and informal support networks provided meaningful relief, the limited formal training and systemic challenges called for comprehensive organizational interventions. Institutional investment in ongoing professional development, advanced technology adoption, and clear role articulation would significantly bolster employee capacity and well-being. Addressing these needs is fundamental for ensuring sustainable performance and the continued success of Program Perkuliahan ASIK's educational consulting mission.

D. Implications for Institutional Effectiveness

Findings from the qualitative study at Program Perkuliahan ASIK demonstrate that the multifaceted roles undertaken by employees—spanning academic advising, program coordination, administrative facilitation, and stakeholder liaison directly contribute to impressive institutional outcomes, particularly student retention rates exceeding 85%. This high retention figure reflects the effectiveness of employees' personalized support in helping working adult learners navigate academic challenges, maintain motivation, and progress

toward degree completion. Their ability to integrate career guidance with flexible program design fosters student loyalty and satisfaction, positioning the institution as a leader in higher education consulting for non-traditional students. These roles create a seamless support ecosystem that not only boosts enrollment persistence but also enhances graduate employability through tailored skill development aligned with market needs.

However, unresolved challenges such as workload imbalance pose significant threats to long-term sustainability. Employees frequently reported operating at capacity limits, with overlapping responsibilities leading to diminished service quality over time and increased turnover risks. Chronic overload erodes morale, hampers innovation in program delivery, and could jeopardize the very retention advantages the institution has cultivated. Without intervention, these imbalances may result in higher absenteeism, reduced responsiveness to student needs, and reputational damage in a competitive consulting landscape where client trust hinges on consistent excellence.

Participants consistently recommended structured professional development programs as a primary solution to bolster capabilities and address skill gaps. They advocated for regular, role-specific training modules covering advanced advising techniques, digital tools for program management, compliance updates, and stress management workshops. Such initiatives would equip employees to handle multifaceted demands more efficiently, ultimately elevating service quality and adaptability to evolving educational trends. Participants emphasized that ongoing development, beyond annual sessions, would enhance confidence, job satisfaction, and retention of skilled staff.

Additionally, workload audits emerged as a critical recommendation for systemic improvement. Employees suggested periodic reviews involving time-tracking analysis, task prioritization frameworks, and cross-departmental workload redistribution to identify inefficiencies and prevent burnout. These audits could inform hiring decisions, automation investments, and clearer role delineations, fostering equitable resource allocation. By implementing these measures, Program Perkuliahan ASIK could sustain high retention rates while cultivating a resilient workforce capable of driving continuous institutional growth in higher education consulting contexts.

V. CLOSURE

A. Conclusion

The study of employees at Program Perkuliahan ASIK reveals that their multifaceted roles as academic advisors, program coordinators, administrative facilitators, and liaison officers are vital to the institution's success in delivering flexible higher education services. These roles contribute significantly to positive student outcomes, such as retention rates exceeding 85%, underscoring the importance of skilled, adaptable staff in higher education consulting. However, the findings also highlight ongoing challenges including high workloads, rapid policy changes, resource constraints, and role conflicts that create stress and burnout risks. These challenges pose threats to both employee well-being and the long-term sustainability of service quality. While informal peer support helps mitigate some pressures, the limited formal training and

unclear role delineations suggest systemic issues that require organizational intervention. Overall, sustained institutional support, clearer role definitions, and investment in technology are necessary to enable employees to thrive and maintain high-quality consulting services.

B. Suggestion

1. Implement Structured Professional Development

Develop ongoing, role-specific training programs that go beyond annual workshops to build skills in academic advising, program management, technology use, and stress resilience. Regular capacity-building efforts will improve employee competence, confidence, and job satisfaction.

2. Conduct Workload Audits and Redistribute Tasks

Carry out periodic evaluations of employee workloads using time-tracking and task prioritization to identify imbalances. Use findings to inform strategic hiring, automate repetitive tasks, and clarify role boundaries to prevent overload and burnout.

3. Invest in Modern Technology Infrastructure

Upgrade digital tools and information systems to streamline administrative processes, facilitate remote collaboration, and improve data management. Enhanced technology will boost operational efficiency and reduce manual burdens on employees.

4. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

Establish clear role descriptions and performance expectations to reduce ambiguity and conflict. Clear guidelines will help employees focus on core functions and improve accountability.

5. Foster Supportive Organizational Culture

Encourage formalized peer mentoring, team collaboration, and open communication channels to strengthen social support networks. Promote well-being initiatives that address mental health and work-life balance

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