



Journal of Science and Technological Education, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2024
ISSN: 2830-5043 (Print) 2830-4829 (Online)

Journal of Science and Technological Education
(META)

journal homepage: www.meta.amiin.or.id

Article history: Received December 18, 2024; Accepted December 25, 2024; Published December 26, 2024

An Analysis of the Single Tuition Fee System at Medan State University

Theresia Febriana Siregar

Department of Chemistry, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia
Correspondence author, theresiasiregar31@gmail.com

Farid Hakim Sitompul

Department of Chemistry, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Stiven Solomo Simbolon

Department of Chemistry, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Istiqomah

Department of Chemistry, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Christina Simanihuruk

Department of Chemistry, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Abstract The Single Tuition Fee (UKT) system at Universitas Negeri Medan (Unimed) reflects a commendable initiative to promote equitable access to higher education by tailoring tuition fees to students' economic capacities. This study examines the implementation and impact of the UKT system in 2024, with a focus on its distribution across socioeconomic groups and students' perceptions of university services. Data collection involved a Google Form survey and interviews with students from various faculties, analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The findings highlight a concentration of students in lower-income UKT brackets, aligning with the system's inclusivity goals. However, opportunities for enhancement were identified, particularly regarding transparency in the UKT allocation process and the alignment of university services with students' expectations. This study underscores the importance of refining the system to foster fairness and satisfaction while maintaining Unimed's commitment to accessible and high-quality education for all.

Keywords: Single tuition fee system, Higher education, Socioeconomic, Educational services, Equitable access

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a cornerstone for individual and societal growth, acting as a catalyst for economic development, social mobility, and cultural enrichment. In Indonesia, however, access to quality education has long been a significant challenge, often hindered by economic barriers that disproportionately affect underprivileged communities. The introduction of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) system in the 2013/2014 academic year marked a pivotal step in addressing these challenges. Designed to tailor tuition fees to students' financial capacities, the UKT system aims to reduce economic disparities and enhance access to higher education for all socioeconomic groups (Anshari & Zulfitriya, 2024; Nurizati et al., 2024). By eliminating entrance fees and implementing a tiered tuition structure, this policy aspires to make higher education more equitable and inclusive (Brahmana et al., 2023; Retnoningsih & Marom, 2017).

Despite its noble intentions, the practical implementation of the UKT system has sparked widespread debate. Concerns have been raised about the fairness and transparency of the allocation process (Yuliana & Hermawati, 2024; Husni et al., 2024), with many students and parents questioning whether the system adequately reflects their financial realities. Reports of students from low-income families being assigned to higher UKT groups and vice versa highlight the inconsistencies and perceived inequities in the system. These issues not only undermine the policy's objectives but also contribute to growing dissatisfaction among stakeholders.

Universitas Negeri Medan (Unimed) exemplifies these challenges. As a PTN-BLU (Public Service Agency State University) since 2018, Unimed operates under the UKT system while enjoying financial and operational autonomy. This dual responsibility places Unimed in a unique position to balance financial sustainability with its mandate to provide equitable education. However, some complaints from students and parents about the allocation of UKT groups and the opinions of some people about the still lacking quality of university services indicate a disconnect between policy intentions and outcomes. The dissatisfaction voiced by stakeholders underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the UKT system at Unimed to identify its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policy and operational changes that can enhance the effectiveness and equity of the UKT system. By examining the distribution of UKT groups among students at Unimed in 2024, this study aims to uncover patterns and disparities that may hinder the system's objectives. Additionally, the research explores the relationship between tuition fees and service satisfaction, shedding light on the broader implications of the UKT system for student welfare and institutional accountability.

The importance of this research extends beyond Unimed, as the findings can serve as a valuable reference for other universities implementing the UKT system. Education is a fundamental right (Rulandari, 2021), and ensuring its accessibility and affordability is essential for fostering a just and inclusive society. The

disparities and dissatisfaction associated with the UKT system highlight the broader challenges faced by Indonesia's higher education sector, which must navigate the complexities of financial sustainability, equity, and quality assurance.

One of the primary objectives of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the UKT system aligns with its intended goals of equity and inclusivity. By analyzing the distribution of students across different UKT groups, the research seeks to determine whether the system fairly reflects the economic conditions of students and their families. This analysis is complemented by an investigation into student satisfaction with university services, providing a holistic understanding of the UKT system's impact.

Furthermore, this research aims to identify actionable recommendations for improving the UKT system at Unimed. Transparency and fairness are critical components of any tuition fee policy (Adeusi et al., 2024), and this study explores strategies for enhancing these aspects. Whether through clearer communication of allocation criteria, more robust data collection mechanisms, or greater accountability in decision-making processes, the findings of this research can contribute to meaningful reforms that benefit both students and the institution.

The rationale for focusing on Unimed stems from its status as a leading public university in Indonesia and its representative role within the PTN-BLU framework. As a university with financial and operational autonomy, Unimed has the flexibility to innovate and implement reforms that can serve as a model for other institutions. However, this autonomy also comes with heightened accountability, as stakeholders expect Unimed to uphold its commitment to equitable and high-quality education. By addressing the challenges associated with the UKT system, Unimed can reaffirm its leadership and demonstrate its dedication to student welfare.

This study addresses a pressing issue in Indonesia's higher education landscape: the equitable implementation of the UKT system. By shedding light on the experiences and perceptions of students at Unimed, the research provides valuable insights into the system's strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about how to make higher education in Indonesia more accessible, affordable, and inclusive, ensuring that it serves as a powerful engine for individual and societal progress.

METHOD

Data Collection

Participants included students from various faculties at Unimed in June–November 2024. Data collection methods included a Google Form survey and unstructured interviews, which aimed to gather qualitative insights into students' experiences and perspectives regarding the UKT system.

Data Collection Process

The survey was disseminated through unofficial university communication channels, ensuring wide reach. Selected students were interviewed to gain deeper insights into their satisfaction levels and the challenges they faced with the UKT system. Only fully completed responses from registered students were included in the analysis.

Data Analysis

The data underwent descriptive statistical analysis, focusing on examining the number of students per UKT group across faculties, calculating the proportion of students in each group relative to the total sample, and analyzing interview responses to complement statistical findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the UKT system at Medan State University in 2024 highlights a complex landscape with opportunities for improvement. Quantitative data gathered from a sample of 64 students reveals an uneven distribution across UKT groups. Group I (IDR 500,000) includes 3 students, all from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA). Group II (IDR 1,000,000) comprises 11 students, with 9 from FMIPA and 1 each from the Faculty of Social Sciences (FIS) and the Faculty of Communication Sciences (FIK). Group III (IDR 2,000,000–2,500,000) has 8 students, with 7 from FMIPA and 1 from the Faculty of Languages and Arts (FBS). Group IV (IDR 2,800,000–3,500,000) includes 8 students, with 7 from FMIPA and 1 from FIK. Group V (IDR 3,500,000–4,500,000) is represented by 15 students, with 14 from FMIPA and 1 from the Faculty of Engineering. Group VI (IDR 4,500,000–5,500,000) has 8 students, with 7 from FMIPA and 1 from Engineering. Group VII (IDR 5,500,000–6,500,000) includes 4 students, with 3 from FMIPA and 1 from Engineering. Finally, Group VIII (IDR 6,500,000–7,500,000) comprises 7 students, with 6 from FMIPA and 1 from Engineering. These findings reflect Unimed's efforts to accommodate economically disadvantaged students while highlighting potential areas for refining allocation mechanisms and ensuring equity and inclusivity.

Qualitative feedback from students provides additional perspectives. Some students expressed concerns regarding the transparency of the UKT determination process, feeling that their financial circumstances were not always accurately reflected in their group assignments. This feedback underscores the importance of aligning the system with students' expectations to foster a stronger sense of fairness and trust.

Additionally, students noted opportunities for enhancing university services to better match the expectations associated with tuition fees. Aligning service quality with financial contributions can help strengthen satisfaction and support the university's commitment to student welfare (Alsheyadi & Albalushi, 2020).

In the broader context of Indonesian higher education, challenges similar to those observed at Unimed are present across institutions, particularly in balancing financial autonomy with equity and accountability. For example, some universities with PTN-BH status have faced feedback regarding tuition fee adjustments, as seen in other prominent institutions. This comparison highlights the shared challenges within the sector and the need for collaborative efforts toward reform.

To enhance the UKT system, Unimed could consider adopting a more data-driven approach for group assignments, utilizing comprehensive assessments of students' financial circumstances. Clear communication of allocation criteria and processes would also help build confidence among stakeholders. Furthermore, investments in infrastructure, academic resources, and services are recommended to better align the university's offerings with its mission of equitable education (Kang, 2021).

These findings present an opportunity for Unimed to strengthen its position as a leader in accessible and inclusive higher education. By addressing these challenges, the university can serve as a model for other institutions and contribute to a more effective and equitable education system nationwide, ensuring that financial and operational autonomy translates into meaningful benefits for all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The Single Tuition Fee (UKT) system at Medan State University represents a commendable initiative aimed at broadening access to higher education for students from diverse economic backgrounds. This study highlights the system's success in prioritizing economic inclusivity, as evidenced by the significant representation of lower-income groups. However, there are areas where refinement is needed to fully achieve the system's objectives. Challenges such as the need for greater transparency in UKT allocation and opportunities to enhance the quality of university services have been identified as areas for improvement. To address these challenges, policy recommendations emphasize the importance of implementing a transparent and data-driven process for determining UKT categories. This approach would ensure better alignment with students' financial realities and foster trust among stakeholders. Strengthening accountability and communication mechanisms can further enhance confidence in the system.

Additionally, focused investments in educational infrastructure and student services are key to ensuring that the quality of university offerings reflects students' contributions. By proactively addressing these issues, Unimed can reinforce its dedication to equity and inclusivity while serving as a model for other institutions facing similar challenges. A well-refined UKT system, built on principles of fairness and accountability, holds the potential to elevate the higher education experience for all students, empowering them to achieve their aspirations and contribute meaningfully to society. This commitment to

continuous improvement underscores the transformative role of education in fostering both individual and societal advancement.

REFERENCES

- Adeusi, K. B., Jejenywa, T. O., & Jejenywa, T. O. (2024). Advancing financial transparency and ethical governance: innovative cost management and accountability in higher education and industry. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(5), 1533-1546. <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijmer.v6i5.1099>
- Alsheyadi, A. K., & Albalushi, J. (2020). Service quality of student services and student satisfaction: the mediating effect of cross-functional collaboration. *The TQM Journal*, 32(6), 1197-1215. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-10-2019-0234>
- Anshari, Z., & Zulfitria, Z. (2024). Analisis Kebijakan Ekonomi Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan. *Cendikia: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 2(6), 71-78. <https://jurnal.kolibi.org/index.php/cendikia/article/view/1656>
- Brahmana, J. W., Mewengkang, A., & Kaparang, D. R. (2023). Sistem Pendukung Keputusan Penentuan Uang Kuliah Tunggal Mahasiswa Baru Menggunakan Metode Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) di Universitas Negeri Manado. *Edutik: Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi*, 3(2), 212-220. <https://doi.org/10.53682/edutik.v3i2.6943>
- Husni, R., Zuhriya, M., & Diani, R. I. (2024). Analisis Advokasi Mahasiswa Terhadap Kebijakan Pemerintah Indonesia Tentang Kenaikan Ukt Di Perguruan Tinggi Negeri. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Akademik*, 1(4), 328-341. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jmia.v1i4.2172>
- Kang, B. (2021). How the COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping the education service. *The Future of Service Post-COVID-19 Pandemic, Volume 1: Rapid Adoption of Digital Service Technology*, 15-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4126-5_2
- Nurizati, Z., Vernanda, D., & Hendriawan, T. (2024). Analisis Kelayakan Penurunan UKT Pada Mahasiswa dengan Menggunakan Metode Decision Tree. *Jurnal Tekno Kompak*, 18(1), 90-100. <https://doi.org/10.33365/jtk.v18i1.3419>
- Retnoningsih, Y. D., & Marom, A. (2017). Analisis Kebijakan Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Berbasis Uang Kuliah Tunggal Bagi Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Diponegoro Semarang Jawa Tengah. *Journal of Public Policy and Management Review*, 6(2), 482-497. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jppmr.v6i2.16064>
- Rulandari, N. (2021). Study of sustainable development goals (SDGS) quality education in Indonesia in the first three years. *Budapest International*

Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences, 4(2), 2702-2708. <https://doi.org/10.33258/BIRCI.V4I2.1978>

Yuliana, R. A., & Hermawati, I. (2024). Evaluasi Kebijakan Publik Universitas Negeri (PTN) Terkait Kebijakan Kenaikan Biaya Kuliah. *HUMANITIS: Jurnal Homaniora, Sosial dan Bisnis*, 2(7), 614-621. <https://humanisa.my.id/index.php/hms/article/view/156>