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The Impact of the Increase in Single Tuition Fees (UKT) on Access to Education at State Universities in Indonesia

Elvina Rahmania*, Muhammad Sirozi

Universitas Islam Negari Raden Fatah Palembang, 30126, Indonesia

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* Corresponding author:

E-mail: elvinarahmania@radenfatah.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The Single Tuition Fee (UKT) policy is implemented as an effort to standardize education costs at state universities (PTN). This study aims to determine the impact of the increase in the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) on access to education at state universities in Indonesia. This study uses a literature study method by analyzing various relevant literature related to single tuition fees and access to education. The sources of data and information include various types of literature such as books, articles, magazines, websites, both Google Scholar, and publish or perish that are relevant to the research theme. The results of the study show that the increase in UKT has the potential to reduce access to education for students from low-income backgrounds. This can lead to a decrease in the number of prospective new students, widening the social gap, the financial burden on parents or students, and can result in students dropping out of college. For well-off families, the increase in UKT is not a problem where parents have a steady income, where only students from well-off families can access quality higher education. Meanwhile, for underprivileged families or those with mediocre or irregular incomes, it will be a big problem related to the increase in the single tuition fee. This also has an impact on life such as unemployment, crime and poverty will increase. Mental health due to stress and anxiety about the cost of education. The increasing cost of education in higher education is an obstacle for students who want to gain access to quality education

1. Introduction

Education is the right of every nation and country. Every citizen has the right to receive a decent education, which is the state's obligation to provide. The state has a responsibility to provide access to quality education for all citizens, without discrimination. Every effort is made to create superior human resources (HR) in quantity and quality (Aji & Mala, 2024). High quality human resources owned by a country are the product of high quality education. In supporting education, the role of the family is needed. The family has a very important role as a means and facilitator for children in developing their abilities and knowledge in meeting their

educational needs, one of which is the cost of education. Education will not be able to take place without the support and role of the family, whether psychologically, physically or financially (Syaifulloh et al., 2020). Education is considered an investment in human resources, which in its implementation cannot be separated from the issue of the use of education funds.

Indonesia, as the most populous country in Southeast Asia, faces major challenges in providing equitable and quality education. With its cultural, linguistic, and geographical diversity, the education system in Indonesia must be able to meet the needs of various community groups spread across thousands of islands (Rahmania et al., 2025). According to Suryana, the development of national education in Indonesia is still faced with various serious challenges, (a) equalizing and expanding access; (b) improving quality, relevance, and competitiveness; (c) structuring governance, accountability, and public image; and (d) increasing financing (Suryana, 2020). Tuition fees are one of the factors considered by prospective students when choosing a college.

The Indonesian government has implemented a Single Tuition Fee (UKT) system as an effort to make it easier for students to pay for their education. UKT is determined based on the economic capabilities of students and is expected to increase the accessibility of higher education for all levels of society, especially for students from underprivileged families. The government provides an education budget. The education budget of 20 percent of the state revenue and expenditure budget (APBN) is a government obligation regulated in the 1945 Constitution. Until February 28, 2025, the education budget in the 2025 APBN has been realized at IDR 76.4 trillion or 10.6 percent of the APBN. Although the government is currently promoting budget efficiency in the APBN, the allocation of the education budget is maintained. The government also ensures that the education budget is used optimally and on target (Saptati, 2025).

However, the reality is that the increase in UKT often becomes a controversial issue and raises concerns from many parties. There is a statement by the Acting Secretary of the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Tjitjik Tjahjandarie, who stated that higher education is tertiary and not mandatory (Mashabi & Kasih, 2024). This triggered students to hold demonstrations as a form of student protest. The high cost of education can affect a person's interest in continuing their education at university.

In the midst of the current unstable economic situation, society is increasingly sensitive to the cost of education. Higher education plays an important role in creating quality human resources that are able to compete in the era of globalization. As a strategic institution, state universities (PTN) are expected to provide equal and quality access to education for all levels of society. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the increase in UKT on access to education at state universities in Indonesia.

2. Methodology

This study uses qualitative research through literature study. Literature study is a systematic approach used to collect data and information related to data collection, analysis, management, and interpretation (Adlini et al., 2022). Data collection methods include library research, by collecting information by reviewing various sources, including scientific publications, library books. By identifying and selecting relevant sources for students, UKT, and access to education. These data and information sources include various types of literature such as books, articles, magazines, websites, both Google Scholar, and publish or perish. In processing data from literature sources, several stages are carried out, including selecting topics, collecting information and data sources from books and articles, reading literature for new ideas, making summaries, and analyzing data for conclusions. Finally, the research results are compiled according to procedures, checked with the latest literature, and analyzed for relevance to provide an in-depth understanding of the urgency of understanding the characteristics of learning

3. Result and Discussion

Single Tuition Fee (UKT) and Access to Education

Single Tuition Fee (UKT) is a tuition fee paid by students each semester, which covers all educational costs required to attend lectures at universities in Indonesia. The amount of UKT varies between study programs and faculties. In the process of determining the single tuition fee, students are required to fill out a form containing information about the family's economic conditions, such as income and assets owned. The information provided will then determine the appropriate UKT group for the student. The data generated from the student's submission will be validated by the validator regarding the files uploaded to the system. If the data is valid, it will be forwarded to the verifier, where if the adjustment submission meets the requirements to be adjusted or receive a UKT relief (relaxation), it will be approved and if otherwise, it will be determined or even the UKT can be increased (Rizki & Nugraha, 2021). The determination of UKT is regulated by Permendikbud Number 55 of 2013 and Permendikbud Number 25 of 2020. This policy aims to ensure that the UKT system runs fairly and transparently and provides equal opportunities for all students (Agung et al., 2020)

The purpose of implementing UKT is to ease the burden of education costs for students, especially for those from underprivileged families. UKT is determined by the university for each student after the student is accepted into the university. UKT is divided into several groups based on the economic capabilities of students and their families, starting from the lowest cost group to the highest cost group. Each group has a different amount of costs, which is determined through verification of economic data. This classification usually includes several categories, starting from the lowest cost group to the highest cost group.

As stated in the 1945 Constitution Article 31 paragraph (1) states that "Every citizen has the right to receive an education." So as a concrete step, the state also guarantees the implementation of education through the allocation of prioritized funds. As stated in Article 31 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution which reads: "The state prioritizes the education budget of at least twenty percent of the state revenue and expenditure budget and from the regional revenue and expenditure budget to meet the needs of organizing national education." This means that the certainty of obtaining education is a reality that should be implemented properly. (Rumsiti, 2022). Education basically has an important role in Islamic teachings. Islam views seeking knowledge as an obligation for every Muslim, both male and female. Seeking knowledge is worship, reading the Qur'an and reflecting on it is worship, traveling to gain knowledge is worship. Practicing knowledge is associated with ethics and morals by increasing virtue and fighting evil.

Access is an equal opportunity for all groups and individuals including gender, ethnicity and religion. Access can also be interpreted as an equal opportunity for the community to enjoy programs and policies (Nurohman et al., 2019). Access to education refers to the ability of individuals or groups to obtain quality education without any barriers. This includes the opportunity to register, participate in, and complete educational programs at various levels, from basic education to higher education. Therefore, all forms of discrimination against gender, ethnicity, or social status that can hinder access to education must be eliminated. In advancing science and technology, the government must provide budget assistance for higher education, especially state universities, so that they can play a role in preparing quality graduates, producing science and technology through their research activities, and can play a role in the process of developing society, state and nation as a form of effort to carry out constitutional responsibilities.

Reasons for the Increase in Single Tuition Fees

There are several factors causing the increase in UKT as follows. First, the limited budget for higher education from the government. There is tension between the government and higher education institutions regarding funding. Universities are often forced to increase UKT to cover budget shortfalls, while the government tries to control education costs. The increase in UKT is often influenced by government policies that focus on budget efficiency. Although the government allocates 20 percent of the APBN for education, the portion for universities is still small compared to primary and secondary education.

Second, the change in the status of state universities to PTN-BH (State Universities with Legal Entities) based on Law No. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education. There are 24 state universities in Indonesia that already have PTN-BH status: Andalas University (Unand), Syiah Kuala University (USK), University of Indonesia (UI), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB), Indonesian Education University (UPI), Diponegoro University (Undip), Airlangga University (Unair), Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Hasanuddin University (Unhas), Padjadjaran University (Unpad), Semarang State University (Unnes), Sebelas

Maret University (UNS), Yogyakarta State University (UNY), Brawijaya University (UB), Malang State University (UM), Padang State University (UNP), North Sumatra University (USU), Surabaya State University (Unesa), Open University, International Islamic University of Indonesia (UIII), Jakarta State University (UNJ), Sriwijaya University (Unsri) (Caesaria & Prastiwi, 2024). With this status, education funding becomes the responsibility of universities, no longer the state. Autonomy in financial management given to universities has caused some of them to increase UKT to meet operational needs.

Third, increasing operational costs and facility development. The need for infrastructure renewal, learning technology, laboratories, and improving the quality of human resources requires campuses to have more funds. UKT is often increased to support campus development and development, not just learning. Fourth, changes in government policy. The central government now tends to encourage PTN to be more financially independent. This encourages campuses to rely on internal sources, one of which is by increasing UKT as the main income. Therefore, there needs to be supervision from the center to the regions related to the education budget and ensuring that funds are used efficiently. With supervision, education funds can really be protected from deviant things.

Impact of Single Tuition Fee Increase on Accessibility

The increase in the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) at state universities in Indonesia has had various significant impacts on accessibility. First, the increase in UKT often leads to a reduction in the number of applicants at state universities. The high cost of education can affect a person's interest in continuing their education at university. Many prospective students from low-income families feel burdened by the increasing cost of education, so they choose not to continue their education to a higher level. This can result in a decrease in participation in higher education among certain community groups, thereby reducing the accessibility of higher education for them.

Second, the increase in UKT also causes social inequality. Higher education, which should be a tool for vertical mobility, actually becomes a reinforcement of social stratification for those who are able to continue to access quality education, while the poor are left behind. Higher education plays a role as a means of social mobility, namely encouraging individuals to move to a better socio-economic status. If access to higher education is increasingly limited due to costs, then the opportunity to improve life is also getting smaller. Education becomes an arena for the rich to fight over. The number of poor children who become victims is piling up very high.

Third, the increase in UKT directly increases the financial burden that must be borne by students and parents. For families with low or tight incomes, this can be a serious obstacle to continuing higher education. Late payment of UKT can result in administrative sanctions, such as not being able to take exams, not being able to KRS, to DO (dropping out). Even students with good academic abilities can have their education stopped for economic reasons. There are many intelligent children in Indonesia who have to bury their dreams because their families are unable to bear

the burden of educational costs. The main obstacle for children who are interested in continuing their education to college is the low economy of their parents (Fatmah, 2024). Families who are economically disadvantaged tend to prioritize basic needs (food) over education, such as the character Lintang in the film/book *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata, where Lintang was forced to drop out of school after his father died and had to work to earn a living to support his extended family. The genius Lintang had to be satisfied with being a truck driver because of his family's poverty (Rismawati, 2021). Parents feel pressured, guilty, or ashamed if they cannot afford their child's education. This pressure can lead to conflict in the household or feelings of neglect in children. Students from wealthy families tend to have an easier time adjusting to rising costs.

Fourth, the potential for dropping out of college (drop out) increased financial costs cause some students to have to work part time or even decide to drop out of college. This has a negative impact on the quality of education and the future of the younger generation (Sukardi et al., 2023). The psychological impact of the increase in UTK will cause students to tend to be stressed and anxious. There is a feeling of anxiety about the possibility of dropping out of college, arrears, or failing to complete studies (Dwi Martasari & Ediati, 2018). Students who face UTK increases often experience excessive stress, especially if their parents have difficulty paying, or students who work while studying. Excessive stress and anxiety can damage students' mental health such as depression or anxiety disorders. From academic sessions. Financial limitations can interfere with students' concentration and focus, which can ultimately affect the final results of academic grades. Students are less involved in extracurricular activities or campus organizations because of concerns about additional costs that may arise. Financial stress can reduce students' motivation to study, because they focus more on financial problems than on studying.

While higher education does not always guarantee someone getting the ideal job, having a strong educational background still gives an advantage in the job search process. Generally, jobs that require a higher level of education offer higher salaries and more promising career prospects (Burson et al., 2022). By obtaining a good education, individuals feel more prepared to face the challenges and difficulties that occur in life (Andari et al., 2023). The state should be at the forefront of saving the education of poor children. Without state assistance, the poor will not be able to get an education. The high cost of education will have an impact on people's lives such as unemployment, crime and poverty will increase and economic growth and health will decline. The increasing cost of education, both at school and college levels, is an obstacle for those who want to get access to quality education.

Solutions Related to UTK and Access to Education

The political dimension related to the increase in UTK in Indonesia reflects the tension between the government and society, especially students. The role of the government is crucial in ensuring that UTK does not become a barrier for the nation's children to achieve higher education. If the government prioritizes infrastructure development or other sectors over higher education, then the PTN

budget will decrease, and UKT will increase, which will have a direct impact on the people's right to obtain higher education.

First, a scholarship program for outstanding students and scholarships for the underprivileged so that they can access education without being burdened by costs. These limitations often hinder the younger generation from continuing their education. To overcome this, the government provides assistance in the form of the Smart Indonesia Card (KIP) college program designed to help students from underprivileged families to continue their higher education. Providing assistance through the KIP College program has a positive impact, because these funds are able to meet the educational needs at the tertiary level for prospective students.

Second, installment payments. Installment payments of UKT to help students who are experiencing financial difficulties. This allows students to pay tuition fees in installments, so they are not burdened with payments at once. In some countries such as America, Australia and Nigeria, providing student loans is one of the innovative policies aimed at helping students finance higher education. This policy provides funds that can be borrowed by students to cover educational costs, including Single Tuition Fees (UKT), books, and living expenses (Vidiastuti & Adzam, 2024). After completing their education, students are required to repay the loan within a certain period of time with a set interest. Student loans can be an innovative solution to address the problem of increasing UKT and increasing accessibility to higher education in Indonesia. In this case, it is important to have a dialogue between the government, universities and the community to find a fair and sustainable solution. Cross-sector collaboration can create a higher education model that is more inclusive and affordable for all levels of society. Universities can establish partnerships with the industrial sector to obtain financial support.

Third, the government and PTN's social affirmation pathway and 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, Outermost) areas need to open special quotas for children from disadvantaged areas, children of laborers, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. In remote or rural areas, access to schools or colleges may be limited, making it difficult for children in these areas to get a decent education (Vania et al., 2021). The goal is to expand access to higher education for students in areas with limited facilities and resources. Realizing social justice and equal education throughout Indonesia. Providing opportunities for 3T students to enter PTN through socio-geographic affirmation pathways. Development of a distance learning system (online) to reduce living and transportation costs. Funds from UKT to improve educational facilities such as laboratories and classrooms that support the teaching and learning process, integrating technology in learning to improve the quality of education and facilitate access for students, including online learning (e-learning, zoom, classroom and so on). So that online learning or distance learning can be implemented properly, universities provide free or subsidized internet and learning devices for students.

Fourth, transparency. The government in making a public policy should be guided by the applicable rules and have a bias for the interests of the people in the UKT determination process so that the policy taken is fairer and can be accepted by all

parties (Budianto, 2024). UKT increases that are not accompanied by transparency and fairness can result in a decline in public support for the government, thus potentially triggering protests and demonstrations.

Fifth, supervision and evaluation of UKT policies. The government must carry out strict supervision of UKT policies implemented by universities, including ensuring that increases in education costs do not violate the principles of justice and accessibility. The government needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the financing system. This includes reviewing the regulations governing the determination of UKT and ensuring that the fees charged are commensurate with the quality of education provided. Developing flexible and responsive policies to changes in economic and social conditions needs to be done, so that they can accommodate the needs of students. For example, the UKT reduction policy caused by the corona virus or Covid-19 several years ago, Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in order to accelerate the handling of COVID-19 by closing workplaces, educational institutions, and other crowded centers. As a result, the center of learning shifted from schools to homes (Puspasari et al., 2023). The government prohibits everyone from being outside the house. For all activities carried out, whether school, work or other social activities, must be done at home. This is one of the policies that adjusts to the situation and conditions.

4. Conclusion

The increase in the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) often burdens students, especially those from low-income families or those with irregular incomes. The increase in UKT has an impact that reduces access to higher education, especially for students from low-income backgrounds. This can lead to a decrease in the number of higher education participants, social disparities, and even the potential for dropping out of college, so that students from low-income families cannot access higher education. Therefore, to maintain access to state higher education in Indonesia requires collaboration between the government, universities, industry, and the community. The government needs to increase the quota for high-achieving students and students from low-income families. With this, it is hoped that the UKT of state universities in Indonesia will remain affordable and of high quality for all levels of society, without sacrificing learning opportunities for students from different economic backgrounds. More inclusive and equitable policies are needed to ensure that higher education remains accessible to all groups.

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