College Students Expectation Toward Tutor in Distance Education

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Abstract

Teacher performance will affect students' endurance, motivation, and spirit during learning. Someone's competence to become a teacher/Tutor is no longer enough by only mastering teaching materials, especially for tutors whose role is more as a facilitator. The purpose of this research is to find out the expectations of college students toward tutors in distance education. This research is qualitative by using a survey method. The aspect measured used an instrument of the Likert scale and then analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Key findings highlight that students recognize the importance of tutors' skills and appreciate the benefits of guided tutorials. There is a notable expectation among students for tutors and the Universitas Terbuka (UT) units to collaborate effectively to enhance tutorial services, which are integral to the learning structure in distance education. The results indicate a positive correlation between the tutors' abilities and the provision of efficient and effective learning support. Students' understanding of tutors' skills, their perception of the benefits of guided tutorials, and their internal consistency in evaluating tutor performance during tutorials are collectively rated as 'good'. This reflects the tutors' successful efforts in assisting students to become independent learners who are self-motivated and actively engaged in the learning process. The study underscores the need for focused tutor training programs aimed at developing competencies that align with students' expectations and the demands of distance education.

INTRODUCTION

The use of technology in education has become a frequently discussed issue in various activities (Orgaz et al., 2018; Traxler, 2018), the existence of technology in the educational world means that it can be used as a medium of delivery of learning programs both unidirectional and interactive (Husaini, 2014; Kadarko, 2000), the learning process is no longer limited by certain classroom (Barokati & Annas, 2013; Mulyasa, 2015), besides that, the use of technology has enabled the emergence of distance learning and encouraged greater innovation in creating teaching method inside and outside the classroom (Almeida & Simoes, n.d.; Kara & Can, 2019).

Distance education is a learning solution in Indonesia today, but the lack of equipment, personnel, and resources and the limitation of educational technology, as well as the skill and quality of teachers, are insufficient (Barokati & Annas, 2013; Kurniawan, 2014). Distance education provides broader learning opportunities by using flexible learning and learning methods, as well as providing, visiting, and

conveying knowledge to students wherever they reside, therefore it helps them to realize universal access. Distance education is characterized by the distance between students, teachers, and education management centers and the use more of media.

Distance learning is an educational innovation involving the element of information technology in learning. The substance of distance learning is as in online learning, which means that the use of online learning involves elements of technology which means the internet network as a system. Online learning has been widely done in the context of the university, as evidenced by several studies explaining this (Johnson & Cooke, 2016; Orgaz et al., 2018; Traxler, 2018), online learning provides benefits in helping to provide access to learning for everyone, therefore removing physical barriers as a factor for learning in the classroom (Kara & Can, 2019), even if it is regarded as something effective to apply especially in college, but according to Pilkington (2018) it is undeniable that not all learning can be moved into a distance learning environment.

In addressing these challenges, the Quality Improvement and Academic Services program focuses on enhancing learning assistance services. A key strategy involves offering face-to-face tutorials, designed to resolve various learning issues through additional explanations, discussions, and other interactive activities. These tutorials aim not only to boost students' motivation and independence in learning but also to enhance their ability to complete their studies effectively. As revealed by Kurniawan and Tommy (2014), Students expect tutors to trigger discussions, tutors are serious but relaxed, tutors master the material, tutors make a comfortable atmosphere, tutors do not intervene much, tutors understand the stages of tutorials, tutors give feedback, tutors come on time, tutors keep directing.

In the evolving landscape of distance learning environment. The role of teachers and tutors is pivotal in enhancing the educational experience. As Mulyasa (2015) notes, the primary function of these educators is to assist students in comprehending and mastering the course material. This task requires tutors to not only prepare and present content effectively but also to clearly articulate key concepts, ensuring that students have a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Furthermore, tutors must possess strong communication skills, as emphasized by Johnson & Cooke (2016), enabling them to connect with students effectively. This connection is crucial for motivating students, creating assessments to track progress, and addressing learning challenges, as identified by Barokati & Annas (2013). In the context of technology-driven learning, which many regard as inherently motivating due to its elements of curiosity, novelty, and fantasy (Johnson & Cooke, 2016), the importance of motivation in learning success cannot be overstated. Kara & Can (2019) highlight the need to reevaluate learning motivation within technologically enhanced environments.

Therefore, the expectations placed on tutors are substantial. They are tasked with not only imparting knowledge but also supporting students who encounter difficulties throughout their learning journey. The performance of these educators significantly influences students' perseverance, motivation, and enthusiasm in the learning process. In today's educational climate, where the role of a tutor transcends mere knowledge delivery to encompass facilitation, their competency in handling a variety of educational and motivational needs is more crucial than ever.

This research centers on examining the specific expectations and needs of students during tutorial activities in the context of distance learning. It aims to identify the elements that students find most beneficial or challenging within these sessions. The study also investigates the types of services within tutorials that students believe contribute to their educational success. The emphasis on tutorials arises from their significant demand among students and the tutors' crucial role in addressing a variety of learning challenges. This research will explore the expectations and needs students have for tutors, particularly in an 8-week tutorial setting. A key aspect of this investigation is to assess the level of student satisfaction with tutors, which is an essential indicator of the quality of tutorial services provided. The overarching goal is to gain insights into how students perceive tutor performance and the effectiveness of tutorials in facilitating their learning in a distance learning environment. This exploration will help in understanding whether the focus should be on enhancing the quality of tutors, the tutoring methods used, or the medium of learning itself.

METHODS

This research targets active students at the Open University as its population. For a robust and representative analysis, a random sampling technique is employed, selecting 343 active students from various courses. This sample size adheres to the guidelines suggested by Psacharopoulos (2003), which recommend a sample size of 5 to 10 percent for operational efficiency in large populations. Random sampling is chosen to ensure each individual in the large and relatively homogeneous student population has an equal chance of being included in the study.

The research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing a survey method as its primary tool. Pinsonneault & Kraemer (1993) describe survey research as an effective means to quantitatively delineate specific characteristics of a given population. This approach allows for the collection of data from a selected group, the results of which can be generalized to the broader population. This method is particularly apt for examining student motivation in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The survey employs a Likert scale instrument with a five-point rating system, ranging from 'very less' (scale 1) to 'excellent' (scale 5). This scale is designed to gauge various aspects including students' understanding of tutoring skills, their perception of the benefits of guided tutorials, and their internal consistency in evaluating these elements. The use of this instrument will provide a nuanced understanding of the students' perspectives on these key indicators.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

A total of 194 tutors from 13 Open Universities, located in various cities including Batam, Banjarmasin, Medan, Lampung, Ambon, Makassar, Sorong, Yogyakarta, Purwokerto, Malang, Pekanbaru, Jambi, and Denpasar, are included in this study. It can be described that Tutors in open university consist of Tutors from public and private universities and also from educational practitioners who have the

field of Science according to open university needs. They already have the ability to become a tutor ranging from the ability to plan, implement and evaluate, after first getting training. The following information on respondence based on unit distance learning programs is presented in figure 1
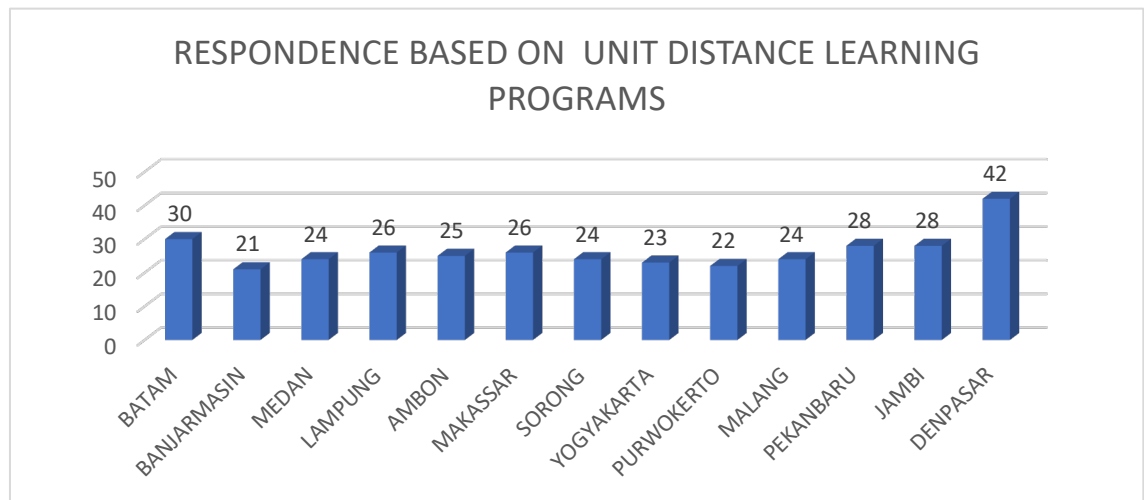

Figure 1. Students spreading from 16 Unit Distance Learning Programs

Student Expectation survey of tutor performance during tutorial activities with indicators of students' understanding of tutor ability, student perception of the benefits of guided tutorials and internal consistency given to 343 active students from all courses As for the results of the survey described in the table 1.

Table 1. Student Expectation Survey of Tutor Performance

Aspect	Criteria	Percentage (%)
Tutor convey the competency/ goal/ target to students	Good	55,30
Tutor helps students to understand the module content	Good	50,90
Tutor helps students in improving the learning skill	Good	49,10
Tutor helps students in improving their skill in reading the module	Good	52,80
Tutor encourages students to be an independent learner	Very good	45,90
Tutor convey the planning of tutorial implementation for the subject tutored	Very good	52,80
Tutor provides the materials needed for the smoothness of tutorial	Good	42,60
Tutor gives the problems that should be learnt to stimulate the group discussion	Good	52,20
Tutor guides students to learn to be independent	Good	44,90
Tutor doing travel to learning center, library, or school to conduct learning session	Sufficient	32,60
Tutor schedule the appointment for learning tutoring with students	Good	41,30
Tutor recommend the text book, software, tools or other learning materials needed	Good	38,50
Tutor gives academic tutorial for students in small group	Good	45,20

Tutor participate in training to improving the practice of learning tutorial or learn new technique of learning tutorial	Good	41,50
Tutor set up a learning environment to improve productivity and learning	Good	41,10
Tutor monitor students' progress in mastering learning materials	Good	43,10
Tutor always give resumes of the edified material	Very good	31,20
Tutor helps in the way of making good resume	Good	41,10
Tutor gives the feedback which is constructive	Good	48,20
Tutor monitor students' performance in mastering learning material	Good	46,20
Tutor develops the materials such as handout, learning material, or quiz presented in tutorial activity	Good	40,90
Tutor communicate students' progress	Good	44,80
Tutor assesses students' progress during tutorial session	Good	43,10
Tutor teaches or gives the information students' learning skill, note taking skill, quiz strategy	Good	44,10
Tutor gives personal instruction to students individually to improve academic performance	Good	42,70
Tutor give an instruction in order to students prepare themselves for final semester test	Very good	50,00
Your Tutor has commitment to help students until final semester	Very good	37,10
Tutor shows positive and professional attitude in giving the tutorial	Very good	41,20
Tutor always on time in attending the tutorial schedule	Good	44,00
Tutor gives polite and professional communication	Very good	43,70
Tutor gives feedback to students buy sing positive affirmation to encourage, motivate or building the trust to students	Very good	40,10
Tutor makes and saves the note of students' assessment result and feedback	Good	47,40
Tutor gives personal instruction to you to improve academic performance	Good	50,40
Average	**Good**	**44,40**

Generally, tutor of open university has understood the activity conducted during the process of lecturing. The average of students' understanding aspects toward tutor's skill, student perception of the benefits of guided tutorial and internal consistency of tutor performance during tutorial activity provide the good category of overview in the tutor's efforts to help students in carrying out the learning process. Such as tutors convey competency/objective, the goal for students to the aspect of giving personal instruction to improve academic performance. Although there are still and found a tutor who has not satisfied students, for instance; Tutors travel to the study center, library, or school to conduct tutoring sessions but more students feel that the tutor has carried out the tutorial task well. Related to the presence of tutor who has not satisfied their students, the open university needs to reconsider the role of tutors and retrain tutors so that tutors can have a general understanding of what they should expect to do during tutorial activities.

Mills' (2015) research exploring tutors' experiences found, that tutors also experience challenges related to student indiscipline, short attention span during learning, lack of study preparation, and classroom management. As a way to respond to these challenges, tutors use a variety of professional, personal, and

institutional mechanisms to deal with their classes and gain support from teaching staff and administration. Further findings are in line with the research results.

Zimmerman (2012), stated the importance of tutor-student interaction during tutorials. According to Zimmerman, Schmidt, Becker, Peterson, Nyland and Surdick (2014), improved communication between tutors and students can clarify their roles and responsibilities and lead to better working relationships. In this way, it is hoped that tutors and students will be involved in discussions about improved content in accordance with their respective role expectations to improve student learning and abilities.

Research Discussion

In general, tutor of open university has understood the activities carried out during the distance learning process. There are two conceptions of what activities have been done and pursued by tutors to help students learn. First, helping in strengthen students' understanding to master the contents of module with various methods. Second, guiding students to have independent learning skills. As the tutors say, being a tutor is a fun activity due to being able to share knowledge with students becomes a model in learning for students' pendas. On the other hand, tutors also feel that they get a lot of learning and information from students about various experiences and problems experienced and felt in real time by students who start their study by reading module or learning independently. Several studies have explained that there is a significant relationship between self-reliance on learning and learning outcomes both in direct learning and in distance learning. (Nurhayati, 2019; Tahar & Enceng, 2006).

The role of tutor is so important that everyone that is interested in providing teaching assistance has the same concept and perception, not only for tutor, students and management institution need to have the same understanding of what a person should play when tutoring in a distance learning system. A tutor is not only a facilitator but is expected to have other roles such as a motivator or a place to ask if students are having problems while studying at open university. High student learning motivation can be noticed based on concentration, according to Azizah (2015) that concentration will make students understand the material being taught, this case is based on the attention will be focused on what is being attracted by students.

From the research result seems that students' understanding of tutoring skill, student perception of the benefits of guided tutorials and internal consistency showed that student expectations from tutorial session could allow tutor and related open university units are able to coordinate to make changes that could improve tutorial services as a learning support structure for distance education students. At the end, tutor training aims to develop the competence of tutor related to their skills to provide efficient and effective learning assistance.

CONCLUSION

From the data analysis previously detailed, it is evident that students' expectations towards tutors in distance education, particularly regarding tutor skill,

perceived benefits of guided tutorials, and internal consistency in tutor performance, fall into a 'good' category. This reflects positively on tutors' efforts to facilitate learning, fostering students' independence and motivation in their educational journey. The findings of this study have significant implications for educational stakeholders in higher education, especially in the context of distance learning. They underscore universities' need to evaluate and enhance tutor engagement strategies, ensuring they align with student expectations and learning needs. Additionally, these results can inform the development of training programs for tutors, equipping them with the skills needed to better support and engage students in a remote learning environment.

This study, however, is not without its limitations. The focus on specific universities and the sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data might introduce bias, and the study does not account for the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of students, which could influence their perceptions and experiences. Despite these limitations, this research contributes novel insights into distance education. It provides a unique perspective on student expectations and the effectiveness of tutor support, a relatively underexplored area in the literature. The study's focus on various universities across different regions adds to its originality, offering a broader understanding of the dynamics at play in distance education settings.

The results of this research are expected to serve as valuable evaluation material for various parties involved in organizing university learning, particularly in the context of utilizing tutors in distance education. This research also aims to provide foundational material for other researchers to analyze and further develop distance learning methodologies in the future. In the realm of distance learning, both lecturers and students must make appropriate preparations to foster the desired learning outcomes.

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