

Dynamics of Education Cost Policy in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the tuition fee policy at Universitas Brawijaya, particularly in the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, by examining student perceptions and the social impacts of tuition fee changes. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and a case study design, the research was conducted at these two faculties, representing different academic cluster STEM and SSH. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, consisting of eight active students who experienced significant tuition increases. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentation of official university regulations, tuition data, and campus news reports. Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, and Fischer's policy dynamics theory was used to interpret findings across five indicators: power and politics, knowledge and information, actor interaction, change and adaptation, and conflict of values and interests. Results show that tuition fees increased significantly after 2019, triggering greater economic disparity and dissatisfaction among students. Although faculties attempted to respond with measures like Crisis Centers and fee reductions, the study concludes that policy reform is needed particularly in communication, transparency, and student involvement to support a more equitable education financing system.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing concern among students regarding the rising cost of education, particularly tuition fees, at Brawijaya University. The significant fee adjustments have triggered various student responses, highlighting broader issues of transparency, fairness, and access to higher education. These concerns are not merely administrative but touch on fundamental rights to equitable education and the social responsibilities of public universities. By focusing on the experiences of students from two different academic clusters STEM (Faculty of Agriculture) and SSH (Faculty of Administrative Sciences) this study aims to uncover how diverse academic orientations perceive and

are affected by the same policy. According to Wulandari (2021), differences in academic disciplines often influence how students interpret and respond to institutional policies, as their educational needs, workloads, and expectations vary significantly. Understanding these perspectives is essential for formulating more inclusive and responsive education policies that reflect the needs and realities of students from various backgrounds.

Based on (K. P. dan K. R. Indonesia, 2013) the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (*Permendikbud*) Number 55 of 2013, Education Fees aim to help ease the burden of education costs borne by students. Article 5 of the regulation explains that state universities are not allowed to charge registration fees or other fees other than education fees for new undergraduate (*S1*) and diploma program students, starting in the 2013/2014 academic year. This policy encourages the creation of a more transparent and equitable education financing system. In this system, education fees are determined based on the financial capabilities of students and their families, which are divided into several categories. This policy is in line with the mandate of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 55 of 2013, which emphasizes the importance of fair and affordable access to higher education for all levels of society.

In practice, policy dynamics can be clearly seen in its implementation. Education Fee (UKT). This policy has been implemented in many state universities in Indonesia, including Brawijaya University. As one of the leading universities in Indonesia, Brawijaya University is committed to continuously improving the quality of higher education. This commitment is realized not only through improving the quality of teaching but also through a more inclusive and equitable education financing policy. According to (Zulkifli, 2020) the tuition fee policy is a concrete form of the government's commitment to ensuring more equitable access to higher education, although in practice there are still challenges in its implementation. This policy reflects the social and economic dynamics of society, which must be continuously evaluated to remain relevant and fair.

According to (S. U. Brawijaya, 2019), there was no *significant* increase in the Single Tuition Fee in the 2014–2019 period. However, a significant increase occurred in the 2019–2024 period, especially in two faculties, namely the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences. As reported by (S. U. Brawijaya, 2024), the Faculty of Agriculture experienced an increase of around 40%, from IDR 6,250,000 to IDR 9,000,000. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Administrative Sciences experienced an increase of around 38.85%, from IDR 6,000,000 to IDR 9,025,000. The highest increase occurred in the last academic year, 2024–2025, in accordance with (U. Brawijaya, 2024) the Regulation of the Chancellor of Brawijaya University Number 37 of 2024 concerning the Education Fee Rates for Diploma and Undergraduate Programs. This regulation indicates that the Faculty of Agriculture experienced an increase of around 63%, from Rp 9,000,000 to Rp 14,667,000, while the Faculty of Administrative Sciences experienced a similar increase of around 62.5%, from Rp 9,025,000 to Rp 14,667,000. The data indicates a significant shift in education funding, especially in the 2019–2025 period. The drastic increase in UKT, especially in the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, reflects the university's efforts to improve the quality of education and facilities. However, this policy also presents challenges in maintaining educational accessibility for students from various economic backgrounds.

On the other hand, many parties criticized this policy, especially because the increase was considered too high and sudden. Students from the lower middle economic class felt burdened and even worried that they would not be able to continue their studies because the cost of education did not match their family's financial capabilities. According to (Siregar, 2021), the sudden rise in tuition fees without adequate socialization or adjustment mechanisms has the potential to widen educational inequality, particularly affecting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This debate shows that the dynamics of the UKT (Education Cost Grouping) policy not only touch on administrative aspects, but also touch on the social and psychological dimensions of students. As stated by (Nurhadi, 2022), the UKT policy can lead to psychological pressure on students, especially when they feel uncertain about their ability to pay for their education, which may impact their academic performance

and mental well-being. This emphasizes the need for policies that are sensitive not only to financial structures but also to students' emotional and social realities. This is reflected in (B. E. M. U. Brawijaya, 2024) the report of the Brawijaya University Student Executive Board (*BEM*) which submitted a policy brief to the university rectorate as a form of protest against the increase in UKT which has doubled in the past year (Tempo.co, 2024). In addition, mass media such as (T. Indonesia, 2024) and the Indonesian House of Representatives (D. P. R. R. Indonesia, 2024) also noted that many students expressed their concerns about the UKT system which was considered non-transparent and burdensome for the middle economic class. Therefore, further research is needed to dig deeper into how students perceive this policy and its impact on the continuation of their studies, especially in the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University.

Referring to the various issues discussed previously, this study uses (Fischer, 2020) policy dynamics theory as an analytical framework. The main objective of this study is to examine the dynamics of the Single Tuition Fee (*UKT*) policy, with a special focus on the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to: a) analyze changes in the amount of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) from year to year and its impact on students, b) explore students' perceptions regarding the fairness and transparency of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) policy, and c) examine the impact of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) policy on students' accessibility and sustainability in pursuing higher education.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative case study design to explore the dynamics of the Education Cost Policy at Brawijaya University. Two faculties the Faculty of Agriculture (representing the S&T cluster – Science and Technology) and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences (representing the SSH cluster – Social Sciences and Humanities) were selected through purposive sampling because both experienced significant tuition-fee increases. By contrasting these two clusters, the research captures how disciplinary orientations shape policy perceptions: science and technology students tend to adopt rational-technical viewpoints, whereas social-humanities students foreground issues of equity and social justice (Dewi, 2020).

Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. According to (Miles & Huberman, 1994), semi-structured interviews and document analysis are powerful qualitative tools that enable researchers to uncover patterns, meanings, and relationships embedded in social phenomena. These methods support a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives while allowing triangulation to enhance the validity of the research findings. Eight informants (four from each faculty) were chosen based on their enrollment status and awareness of fee changes; According to (Patton, 2002) purposeful sampling is essential in qualitative research because it allows researchers to select information-rich cases that offer deep insights into the central issues being studied. By choosing participants who are directly affected and aware of the policy, the study ensures relevance and depth in its findings. Interviews took place in informal campus settings (faculty halls, student centers, library rooms) to foster open dialogue. For triangulation, official documents Rector's Regulations on tuition, tuition fee data from the university website, campus news archives (B. Times, 2024), and relevant ministerial decrees were systematically reviewed to contextualize and corroborate student narratives.

Analysis followed the interactive model of (Miles & Huberman, 2014), comprising three iterative stages: (1) data reduction, where raw interview transcripts and documents were condensed into focused themes; (2) data display, using matrices and narrative summaries to reveal patterns; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, through continuous source comparison and triangulation to ensure validity and depth of interpretation. As stated by (Miles & Huberman, 2014), this model enables researchers to manage and make sense of large volumes of qualitative data through a systematic, cyclical process that strengthens analytical rigor and conceptual clarity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings focused on the three main objectives of the study. First, the analysis of tuition fee changes from year to year shows a clear increase in the tuition fees at both the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences. Data indicate that the average tuition fee before 2019 was substantially lower than the period after 2019, which has increased the financial burden on students and contributed to economic disparities among them. This rising cost has impacted students' ability to manage their educational expenses and created additional stress. According to (Johnstone, 2004) rising tuition fees without proportional financial aid mechanisms tend to exacerbate social inequality and place disproportionate pressure on students from lower-income families. As tuition fees rise, students not only face greater financial hardship but may also experience increased psychological stress, potentially affecting academic performance and overall well-being.

Regarding student perceptions of the fairness and transparency of the tuition fee policy, according to (Rawls, 1971), perceptions of fairness in policies are crucial because they influence stakeholders' trust and acceptance, especially in contexts involving financial obligations such as education. Lack of transparency can lead to mistrust and feelings of injustice, which may undermine the effectiveness of policy implementation and students' willingness to comply. The findings reveal a strong sense of dissatisfaction, particularly related to transparency. Many students from both the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences expressed that the faculty and university leadership, including the rectorate, have never provided clear or detailed information about how tuition fees are allocated or used. According to (International, 2013), a lack of transparency in financial matters within educational institutions often leads to mistrust among stakeholders and reduces their confidence in the administration's ability to manage funds responsibly. This opacity can fuel dissatisfaction and hinder constructive dialogue between students and university management. Students reported that they are only required to pay the tuition fee each semester without any access to information about how the funds are managed or where the money is directed. This lack of financial disclosure has led to a growing perception that the tuition fee policy is not only opaque but also unfair. Students feel excluded from financial accountability processes and view the tuition fee system as top-down and detached from their academic and financial realities. According to (Bovens, 2007), accountability in public institutions especially in education requires not just answerability but also transparency and participation; when these elements are absent, institutional legitimacy and trust are significantly eroded. The absence of open communication and financial reporting creates a disconnect between university leadership and students, weakening the sense of shared responsibility and fairness.

The findings of this study show that the tuition fee policy at Universitas Brawijaya has had a tangible impact on student accessibility and sustainability in pursuing higher education. The increase in tuition fees has led to financial difficulties for many students, particularly those from lower-middle economic backgrounds. For example, in 2024, approximately 25% of new students admitted through the SNBP track did not complete registration, with high tuition fees cited as a major reason for their withdrawal (I. D. N. Times, 2024). Similarly, in 2023, 448 prospective students officially withdrew, with university officials confirming that financial constraints were among the contributing factors (M. Indonesia, 2023). Even earlier, in 2013, 84 new students dropped out specifically due to their inability to pay the tuition fee, and over 1,400 students had not registered due to similar issues (Antara, 2013). These patterns illustrate how the tuition fee policy has limited student access and threatened the continuity of their academic journey. Some students are even forced to take academic leave to earn money before continuing their studies. This indicates that without comprehensive reforms such as more flexible fee categorization, stronger financial aid mechanisms, and increased institutional transparency the current tuition fee system risks excluding financially vulnerable groups and undermining the goal of equitable higher education. As (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009) argue, financial barriers remain one of the most persistent obstacles to access and success in higher education, especially in developing countries, where student support systems are often inadequate. Without

policy innovations that address affordability and fairness, higher education can inadvertently deepen existing social inequalities.

To further understand how the tuition fee policy affects student accessibility and sustainability in higher education, it is essential to examine the changes in tuition fee amounts over the years. A comparison between the pre-increase period (2014–2019) and the post-increase period (2020 and 2025) provides a concrete illustration of the growing financial burden placed on students.

Student Costs Before Tuition Fee Increase (2014–2019)

Information regarding the education costs incurred by students of the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University before the spike in education costs can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Education Cost Data Before the Increase in Education Costs

Index	Faculty of Agriculture (IDR)	Faculty of Administrative Sciences (IDR)
Minimum	500,000	500,000
Maximum	6,250,000	6,250,000
Average	3,375,000	3,500,000
Mode	3,125,000	2,166,000

Source: Research data, processed

Table 1 shows that the average and capital education costs incurred by students from the Faculty of Administrative Sciences are slightly higher than those incurred by the Faculty of Agriculture. The average education cost at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences is IDR 3,500,000, while at the Faculty of Agriculture it is IDR 3,375,000. The capital education cost at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences is also higher, which is IDR 3,166,668, compared to IDR 3,125,000 at the Faculty of Agriculture. This shows that most students at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences are included in the education cost group with slightly higher costs than at the Faculty of Agriculture. The range of education costs at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences is also wider, ranging from IDR 500,000 to IDR 6,500,000, compared to the Faculty of Agriculture which ranges from IDR 500,000 to IDR 6,250,000. This shows that the variation in economic ability of students at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences is slightly wider. However, the average difference of Rp125,000 is considered insignificant in absolute terms and does not result in a significant difference in financial burden between the two faculties. Overall, the tuition fee policy is still in accordance with the financial capabilities of the majority of students in both faculties.

Post Surge in Student Tuition Fees (2019–2025)

Data on education costs incurred by students of the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University after the increase in education costs can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Education Costs After Increase in Education Costs

Index	Faculty of Agriculture (IDR)	Faculty of Administrative Sciences (IDR)
Minimum	500,000	500,000
Maximum	14,667,000	14,667,000
Average	7,583,500	7,583,500
Mode	4,041,000	4,467,000

Source: Research data, processed

Table 2 shows that the average and capital cost of education of students from the Faculty of Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Agriculture have increased significantly compared to the previous period. The average cost of education in both faculties is the same, which is IDR 7,583,500, - because it has the same range of education costs, which is IDR 500,000, - to IDR 14,667,000, -. However, the capital cost of education in the Faculty of Administrative Sciences is higher, which is IDR 4,467,000, - compared to the Faculty of Agriculture, which is IDR 4,041,750, -. This reflects that most students in the Faculty of Administrative Sciences are included in the slightly higher education cost group compared to the Faculty of Agriculture.

The surge in tuition costs has created a variety of expenses and indicates a growing economic gap among students. Middle-income students are the most affected, as they often do not qualify for financial aid but also cannot afford to consistently pay higher tuition. The nearly doubling of the previous tuition ceiling could cause financial and psychological stress and could fuel discontent if the policy is perceived as lacking transparency and fairness in its implementation.

The data above illustrates the impact of the tuition fee increase policy which results in changes in the cost structure borne by students. This change can be further analyzed using Fischer's policy dynamics theory which includes five main indicators: the first is Power and Politics, the second is Knowledge and Information, the third is Actor Interaction, the fourth is Change and Adaptation, and the last is Conflict of Values and Interests.

Power and Politics

Based on field data, the dynamics of the Education Fee policy according to the first indicator, Power and Politics, at the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University, show an imbalance of power in education policy. The determination of education fee groups based only on administrative documents often does not reflect the real economic conditions of students, thus causing dissatisfaction. The bureaucratic and less transparent appeal process further strengthens the impression that student voices are not adequately involved. As asserted by (Ball & Junemann, 2020), education policy often reflects unequal power relations, where decisions are made by dominant institutional actors with limited student participation, resulting in policies that may appear neutral but carry political and symbolic implications. This shows that symbolic power is still dominant in the campus environment in determining students' financial capabilities without inclusive dialogue, so improvements are needed so that policies are fairer and in the public interest. This shows that symbolic power is still dominant in the campus environment in determining students' financial capabilities without inclusive dialogue, so improvements are needed so that policies are fairer and in the public interest.

Inequality in the implementation of the Education Fee policy in the Faculty of Agriculture is one of the problems raised by students. Based on the results of the interview, it was found that the mechanism for determining the Education Fee does not fully reflect the principle of distributive justice. Students argue that assessments based on parents' jobs do not always correlate with the set education

fees. As (Fraser, 2020) explains, distributive justice in education requires that resource allocation take into account the complex socio-economic realities of individuals, not just formal indicators like occupation or income level, to avoid reinforcing structural inequalities. When the system fails to capture these nuances, it risks misclassifying students and perpetuating unjust financial burdens. There are cases of students from relatively higher economic backgrounds receiving low education fees, and vice versa. This inconsistency indicates weaknesses in the data verification process and inaccuracies in the economic indicators used as references in determining the Education Fee policy. In addition, the increasing cost of education that is not balanced by increased facilities further exacerbates the gap in student perceptions. As (Marginson, 2021) emphasizes, fairness in higher education funding requires accurate, contextualized assessments of student needs, and when administrative systems rely on rigid or outdated indicators, they risk misallocating resources and eroding trust in the institution. The perceived mismatch between tuition fees and educational quality can undermine students' sense of justice and institutional credibility.

In the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, the issue of unfairness in the application of education costs is also a concern. There are complaints from students regarding the determination of the highest education cost category uniformly, without considering the economic background of each individual. Although some students feel that the determination of the category is in accordance with their family's financial condition, unfairness arises when other students who are less well-off are also charged the highest education costs. As (Espinoza, 2020) notes, equity in higher education financing is not achieved through equal treatment, but through differentiated support that reflects diverse student needs and socio-economic realities. A one-size-fits-all approach to tuition fees risks penalizing those who are already economically disadvantaged, thereby undermining social mobility and access to higher education. This highlights structural problems in the assessment process that is not comprehensive and not transparent in its verification procedures. In addition, support programs such as the Smart Indonesia College Card (KIP-K) are also considered to be less targeted, because there are still recipients who display a consumptive lifestyle on social media. This situation underscores the need for a comprehensive audit of the distribution of education assistance to ensure that affirmative policies actually reach the groups most in need. According to (Alon, 2021), for affirmative action programs to be effective and publicly trusted, they must be transparently implemented and supported by accurate, continuously updated eligibility assessments to avoid mistargeting and ensure credibility. Without strong monitoring and verification mechanisms, well-intended financial aid programs risk reinforcing public skepticism and missing their equity goals. These issues highlight how weaknesses in the targeting and monitoring of educational aid programs, such as KIP-K, are not merely technical, but reflect deeper structural imbalances in policy implementation. When affirmative policies fail to reach the right targets and lack transparency, it signals a broader problem in the governance and decision-making process within educational institutions. This disconnect between policy intent and field realities reveals a power asymmetry in which student voices are marginalized.

Based on the Power and Politics indicator from (Fischer, 2020) policy dynamics theory, the dynamics of the Education Cost policy at the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya reflect the dominance of institutional actors who hold power in formulating and implementing policies without meaningfully involving directly affected groups, namely students. This inequality indicates the practice of symbolic and structural power, where authorities unilaterally determine the category of education costs based on administrative documents that do not fully reflect the socio-economic realities of students. The lack of inclusive dialogue space and bureaucratic appeal processes further exacerbate the power gap between policy makers and affected parties. In this context, students lose their bargaining position as policy subjects, so that policies become more top-down and less responsive to actual conditions in the field. This is in line with Fischer's view that public policy is often shaped by unequal power relations, which demand a transformation towards a more participatory and transparent process in order to achieve social justice in the implementation of education policies. Similarly, (Apple, 2021) argues that educational policy often

serves dominant interests unless actively contested by marginalized groups, and calls for democratic engagement to counterbalance institutional control. These expert perspectives underscore the urgency of shifting from symbolic inclusion to substantive participation in education governance. This is in line with Fischer's view that public policy is often shaped by unequal power relations, which demand a transformation towards a more participatory and transparent process in order to achieve social justice in the implementation of education policies.

Knowledge and Information

Based on the Knowledge and Information indicators from (Fischer, 2020) policy dynamics theory, the dynamics of information dissemination related to the Tuition Fee policy at the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya reflect an imbalance in the distribution of information, which can affect students' understanding of policies that directly impact them. Interview results show that most students obtain information about the Tuition Fee policy through the university's official social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter, as well as through the Selma UB portal. However, the information disseminated through these digital channels does not necessarily reach all students evenly, especially for those who are less active on these platforms. This condition creates a gap in students' understanding and ability to exercise their rights to appeal or request clarification regarding the Tuition Fees imposed.

In addition, the use of social media as the main channel for policy communication also presents its own challenges, such as the potential for miscommunication, limited context, and minimal space for direct dialogue between students and universities. This one-way flow of information strengthens the dominance of institutions in controlling policy narratives, which Fischer's theory associates with discursive control. When the knowledge provided to students is limited or not accompanied by a comprehensive understanding, it results in information asymmetry, which weakens students' position in responding to or criticizing policies. This situation creates a one-way communication model where universities disseminate information without offering adequate space for critical dialogue with students. This aligns with (Fischer, 2003) concept of discursive control, where dominant actors in this case, university administrators shape public discourse by controlling the flow and framing of information. Consequently, students often become passive recipients rather than active participants in the policymaking process. The absence of dialogical spaces contributes to information asymmetry, a condition in which one party (universities) possesses more or better information than the other (students), as described by (Akerlof, 1970) in his seminal work on market inefficiencies. In the context of higher education, this imbalance undermines students' ability to meaningfully respond to or challenge decisions that directly affect them. According to (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), while social media platforms are designed for networked communication, institutional usage often mirrors traditional top-down approaches, merely shifting the medium without changing the communicative model. A study by (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011) also found that while social media increased access to information, it did not necessarily foster critical engagement or participatory governance in educational settings. Furthermore, empirical evidence from a survey conducted by (Denskus & Esser, 2013) on development communication shows that institutional use of social media tends to prioritize brand management and public image rather than fostering genuine dialogue or accountability. Similarly, (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013) argue that although social media has potential for participatory education, institutional cultures often limit such potentials through controlled messaging. Given these limitations, alternative channels that allow for deliberative engagement, such as town halls, structured online forums, or participatory policymaking platforms, are essential. These can help balance the power dynamics and improve the legitimacy and responsiveness of higher education policies.

In this context, the dissemination of information on education cost policies has not fully functioned as a means of empowerment, but rather as administrative communication that has not accommodated the various needs and capacities of students to understand and be actively involved in higher education policies. Therefore, a more open, participatory, and dialogical policy communication approach is

needed, so that students are not merely objects of policy, but empowered actors who are able to understand and respond to policies that affect the continuation of their studies.

Actor Interaction

Based on the Actor Interaction indicator in (Fischer, 2020) policy dynamics theory, the dynamics of the Tuition Fee policy at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Agriculture, Brawijaya University show a relatively good level of actor interaction, especially between administrative staff, students, and student organizations such as the Student Executive Board. The interview results show that administrative staff not only carry out administrative tasks, but also actively open communication channels with students, both directly through discussion forums and student chat groups, as well as through official campus platforms and social media. Students also rely on these channels to understand tuition fee policies, and in many cases, student organizations and student executive bodies act as communication bridges, conveying student aspirations to the faculty and helping to disseminate official information more widely and more easily understood.

However, in the interaction process, several communication obstacles were still found, both technical and substantive, such as misinterpretation of information, delays in updating data, or obstacles in the application system. Some respondents admitted that miscommunication sometimes occurs, both from the sender and recipient of information. However, this is considered a normal dynamic in the policy interaction process involving many actors with diverse backgrounds and different levels of knowledge capacity. In Fischer's theoretical framework, this situation reflects that knowledge in policy does not only come from formal actors, but is also formed through discursive processes that develop in the campus social space. However, in the policy interaction process between universities and students, various communication barriers are still frequently encountered both technical and substantive. Technical issues include delays in updating official platforms, frequent errors in the university application systems (such as for tuition appeals or academic services), and inconsistent dissemination of information across different channels. Substantively, there are instances of misinterpretation, where policy content is not clearly explained, leading to confusion or misinformation among students.

Empirical studies have shown that such barriers are common in bureaucratic settings. According to (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002), when digital systems replace traditional bureaucracies without adequate support structures, "system-level rationality" often overrides "human-level understanding", leading to alienation and miscommunication. Similarly, a survey conducted by ministry of education and culture (Kebudayaan, 2020) found that 34% of students reported difficulty accessing accurate information about tuition fee appeals and academic regulations, primarily due to unclear or outdated information systems.

Respondents in our context also acknowledged that miscommunication can occur not only due to technical limitations but also because of differences in interpretation, educational background, and access to policy literacy. These differences are a reflection of the heterogeneous nature of policy actors, where university administrators, students, and other stakeholders operate from diverse knowledge bases. This complexity aligns with (Fischer, 2003) theoretical perspective that policy knowledge is not purely technical or expert-driven, but also discursively constructed through ongoing interactions in the public sphere in this case, the campus social space.

In support of this, (Hajer, 1995) emphasizes that discourse coalitions groups of actors who share a common way of speaking about a problem are central to how policies are interpreted and implemented. This means that multiple, sometimes competing, interpretations of a policy can coexist on campus, leading to tension or breakdowns in communication. Similarly, (Schön & Rein, 1994) argue that framing contests between different actors can result in policy controversies that are rooted not in data, but in conflicting narratives.

To reduce these obstacles, several scholars recommend strengthening deliberative communication. (Habermas, 1984) argues that communicative rationality, grounded in mutual

understanding and transparency, should be the basis of decision-making in democratic institutions, including universities. Practical mechanisms such as participatory policy design, structured focus group discussions, and improved digital infrastructures are often proposed to close the knowledge and communication gaps that currently exist.

The involvement of the Student Executive Board and other student organizations is crucial, as they not only serve as a platform for criticism but also play a strategic role in ensuring transparency of information and policy advocacy. They act as key actors in promoting transparency, educating students about appeal procedures, and monitoring cases deemed unfair through mechanisms such as the Crisis Center. In other words, student organizations serve both as liaisons and social watchdogs in the dynamics of tuition fee policies. In this context, a collaborative relationship between administrative staff and student elements is crucial to fostering policies that are more inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the real needs of students.

Change and Adaptation

Based on the Change and Adaptation indicators in the theory of policy dynamics by (Fischer, 2020), the dynamics of the Education Cost policy at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Agriculture, Brawijaya University show consistent efforts to adapt to regulatory changes set by the university. Both faculties actively adjust the mechanism for determining Education Costs in accordance with the Regulation of the Chancellor of Brawijaya University Number 11 of 2024 concerning the Determination of the Single Education Cost Group for Diploma and Undergraduate Programs.

In the interviews conducted, faculty representatives stated that they adhere to the guidelines set by the university rectorate in determining student tuition fee groups. This reflects the faculty's commitment to consistently implement the policy despite the dynamics and challenges in its implementation. In addition, the faculty also stated that they make adjustments to changes in policy by always referring to applicable provisions, including in the process of data verification and determining tuition fee groups.

However, it should be noted that in May 2024, Universitas Brawijaya canceled the increase in tuition fees that had previously been set for 2024. This policy was taken as a follow-up to the statement of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and a letter from the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology. As a consequence, the amount of tuition fees was adjusted back to the provisions of 2023, and faculties within Universitas Brawijaya, including the Faculty of Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Agriculture, made adjustments to comply with this policy (News, 2024) (Kompas, 2024)

In this context, the faculty demonstrates its adaptation to policy changes by adhering to the principles set by the university rectorate and the central government, while maintaining transparency and accountability in the process of determining tuition fees.

Conflict of Values and Interests

Conflict of values and interests, according to (Fischer, 2020), in the context of public policy dynamics refers to tensions or differences in perspective that arise among actors involved in policy making, caused by differences in their respective value priorities and interests. In the context of public policy, values refer to the principles, beliefs, and norms that guide the actions of individuals or groups, while interests refer to the goals or outcomes desired by the various parties involved in the policy process.

In its implementation, the dynamics of the Education Fee policy at Brawijaya University over the past few years have reflected a clash of interests and values between university management and students, each of whom has different views and interests regarding the determination of education fees. The university, represented by the faculty, prioritizes financial stability and adheres to the guidelines set by the rectorate to maintain operational continuity and the quality of education. This causes the

education fee policy to rely heavily on administrative documents, such as parents' pay slips, as the basis for determining the type of education fees (Ministry of Education Research, and Technology, 2024). However, students often feel that this policy does not reflect their actual economic capabilities, especially because of the mismatch between the parents' employment status and the type of education fees set.

This conflict is further exacerbated by the social justice values held by students who feel that the tuition fee policy does not reflect the principle of distributive justice. Some students criticize that even though they come from middle-income families, they are still placed in the high tuition fee category, while other students from well-off families receive low tuition fees. In addition, the increase in tuition fees that was implemented in 2024 and then revoked by Universitas Brawijaya in May 2024 further exacerbated tensions. Student demonstrations in response to the increase in tuition fees illustrate how differences in interests and values between students and university leaders trigger a larger conflict, where students feel their voices are not adequately heard in the policy-making process (Rifai, 2024).

In response to the conflict, the faculty attempted to find a solution by involving student organizations and providing a forum to address student dissatisfaction. One such effort was to establish a Crisis Center that serves as a channel for students to convey complaints and seek resolution. Several faculties also provided one-level tuition fee relief in response to student complaints and to address existing dissatisfaction. These efforts reflect the faculty's efforts to respond to policy dynamics by considering student interests, although still within the framework of guidelines and provisions set by the university. These steps illustrate efforts to adapt to changing circumstances and a desire to achieve a more equitable solution in the context of tuition fee policies (Wahyuni, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the increase in tuition fees at the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, has significantly impacted students both financially and psychologically. First, analysis of tuition fee changes over the years shows a clear upward trend, which has increased the economic burden on students and widened the gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Second, students perceive the tuition fee policy as lacking fairness and transparency, particularly because the current categorization system relies heavily on administrative documents that do not fully reflect students' real economic conditions. This has led to widespread dissatisfaction and a sense of injustice. Third, the tuition fee policy has affected student accessibility and sustainability in higher education, as financial pressures have caused some students to struggle with continuing their studies or maintaining academic performance.

The research implies that current tuition fee policies need urgent reform to better align policy design with students' socio-economic realities. Improving transparency, enhancing data verification processes, and increasing student participation in policy-making are critical for fostering fairness and trust. Moreover, expanding communication and engagement with all stakeholders will promote inclusivity and responsiveness in tuition fee management.

For future research and policy development, it is recommended to: (1) conduct comparative studies across faculties to understand how administrative cultures influence tuition fee implementation and outcomes; (2) carry out longitudinal research to assess the long-term effects of tuition fee increases on student retention, well-being, and academic success; and (3) investigate the role of student organizations and advocacy groups in facilitating participatory governance and mediating policy impacts. These efforts will contribute to creating a more equitable and sustainable higher education financing system at Universitas Brawijaya.

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