



Exploring Tutor's Experience in Online Tutorial: Chances and Challenges

Siti Utami Dewi Ningrum¹, Mestika Sekarwinahyu¹, Nisa A'rafiyah Tri Wulandari¹, Mutia Kamalia Mukhtar¹

¹Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

 siti.ningrum@ecampus.ut.ac.id*

Abstract

Online tutorials are crucial for sustaining quality distance education in higher education. Evaluating tutor experiences is essential to determine the long-term viability of online learning in the future. This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of online tutorials from tutors' perspectives in the Universitas Terbuka General Courses Study Program in Basic Social and Cultural Science, Pancasila, and Civic Education courses. This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach to investigate the effectiveness of an online tutorial system. In the first phase, a survey was conducted to assess six key aspects; i) content quality, ii) ease of access, iii) interaction and communication, iv) evaluation and assessment, v) platform support, and vi) institutional support. The survey involved 344 tutors selected using accidental sampling. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0.1. In the second phase, a qualitative study was conducted to provide a deeper understanding of the survey results. Qualitative data were collected through document analysis of online tutorial reports and interviews with 30 tutors selected through purposive sampling. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes from the interviews. The study results showed that some of the main barriers tutors face include network and online tutorial page constraints and variations in student understanding of the material being taught. In addition, tutors also identified the need for training and technical support improvements to optimize the use of e-learning platforms. These findings suggest the need for improvements in technological infrastructure, regular tutor training, and the development of more interactive, adaptive learning methods. These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of online tutorials and contribute to a more efficient distance-learning process at Universitas Terbuka.

Article Information:

Received May 6, 2025

Revised June 24, 2025

Accepted July 25, 2025

Keywords: *Distance learning, evaluation, tutor, online tutorial, Universitas Terbuka (UT)*

How to cite:

Ningrum, S. U. D., Sekarwinahyu, M., Wulandari, N. A. T., Mukhtar, M. K. (2025). Exploring Tutor's Experience in Online Tutorial: Chances and Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)*, 8(3), 473-490.

E-ISSN:

2622-741x

Published by:

Islamic Studies and Development Center Universitas Negeri Padang

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly advancing digital era, open distance learning has become a primary solution for expanding access to education (Sabirova et al., 2022; Traxler, 2018). As a pioneer in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Universitas Terbuka (UT) leverages information technology to provide educational services to students across Indonesia, including those in remote areas (Budiarto et al., 2022; Yaumi, 2007). One of the services provided by Universitas Terbuka (UT) is online tutorials aimed at helping students understand course material (Chandrawati, 2018; Puspitasari et al., 2018; Zuhairi et al., 2007). In practice, online tutorials at Universitas Terbuka (UT) use a learning management system (LMS) called E-Learning. According to Belawati, an learning management system (LMS) can facilitate online learning implementation by preparing learning materials, enrolling tutors and students in designated classes, monitoring learning progress, assigning tasks, conducting assessments, and enabling discussions or providing motivation to students (Belawati, 2019).

Online tutorials have become students' most popular learning mode, including in the general courses program. This program manages national mandatory courses, such as Pancasila, civic education, religion, and Indonesian language, and compulsory institutional courses, including basic social and cultural sciences, English, learning in the digital era, and entrepreneurship in the digital era. As the program manager, the general courses program must ensure these courses are accessible to all Universitas Terbuka (UT) students across various majors.

Online tutorials involve tutors in their implementation. Tutors play a crucial role in supporting distance learning and ensuring that students have access to the academic support they need (Zuhairi et al., 2007). This role aligns with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 56 of 2022: "Tutors are educators who assist lecturers in distance learning and/or face-to-face learning processes in distance learning units at LPTK."

Although online tutorials have become an integral part of the distance learning ecosystem at Universitas Terbuka (UT), their implementation is not without challenges. Research has shown that the main obstacles students face in online tutorials include weak internet signal, difficulties accessing Universitas Terbuka (UT) website, which is sometimes unstable, limited student familiarity with internet use, and limited locations with internet access (Farida & Yuliana, 2014). For instance, Alex, a Law program student, shared his experience when trying to activate his online tutorial, where the E-learning website was inaccessible, hindering the learning process (Sativara, 2023). Additionally, it was found that students face challenges in online tutorials due to tutors' delays in providing initial materials (Dewatisari et al., 2010).

Upon deeper analysis, the limitations of technological infrastructure in several regions of Indonesia present a critical issue for students. A survey by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in 2024 revealed that from 2022-2023, Jakarta had the highest ICT Development Index in Indonesia, while Papua had the lowest (Badan Pusat Statistik in 2024). Meanwhile, in 2024, 52% of Universitas Terbuka (UT) students were from Java, 24% from Sumatra, 11% from Kalimantan, 6% from Sulawesi, 4% from Nusa Tenggara, 3% from Bali, 2% from Papua, and 1% from Maluku and abroad.

The results of this research and the data above show that students residing in areas with inadequate internet access often struggle to follow tutorials optimally. These technological limitations directly impact the quality of

interaction between students and tutors, as well as students' ability to actively participate in tutorials. Besides technical challenges, there are also issues related to students' varying abilities to understand course material. Universitas Terbuka (UT) serves students from diverse backgrounds, ranging from high school graduates to professionals continuing their studies (Lince & Zaidin, 2021). With such a variety of academic backgrounds and learning experiences, students' ability to follow and comprehend the material varies.

Tutors face the challenge of adjusting their teaching approaches to accommodate this diversity, while the online platform used has limitations in terms of teaching flexibility (Joubert & Snyman, 2018). This contributes to issues regarding the effectiveness of online tutorials in supporting quality learning (Barker, 2002; Enwereji et al., 2023). In this context, the role of tutors becomes even more central. They are not only required to have a strong mastery of the material but also need to facilitate effective learning in an online environment. Tutors' ability to leverage e-learning technology and design meaningful interactions becomes crucial (de Metz & Bezuidenhout, 2018). However, many tutors, especially those from outside Universitas Terbuka (UT), may lack sufficient experience in teaching online. This adds complexity to the challenges of maximizing the benefits of online tutorials. Given these challenges, evaluating the effectiveness of online tutorials from the tutors' perspective becomes essential.

Previous research has highlighted various challenges faced by tutors in distance learning. Joubert & Snyman, (2018) found that e-tutors encounter low participation and lack of commitment from students, who prefer direct interaction with lecturers, leaving e-tutors feeling isolated and inadequately trained. At the Open University in the UK, Segoe, (2014) emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations to enhance student satisfaction and tutor support quality, including tutors' roles as educational counselors and collaborative learning facilitators. Mapolisa, (2012) study at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) showed that although tutors provide motivation and research support, they still face challenges like limited guidance, infrequent meetings, and a lack of research skills, which calls for additional training. At Indonesia's Universitas Terbuka, Setyowati et al., (2020) highlighted the importance of recruitment systems and rewards to enhance tutor professionalism, while Teguh, (2016) added that low student participation can be addressed by active tutor engagement to motivate them during online tutorials.

These studies indicate that Open and Distance Learning (ODL) faces significant challenges in achieving successful learning outcomes, particularly on the part of the tutors. Tutors play a vital role in determining the success of distance learning (Barker, 2002). Therefore, understanding the effectiveness of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) from tutors with direct experience in online classes is essential (Halim, 2024; Kopp et al., 2012). In the context of Universitas Terbuka, this paper will focus on the experience of tutors. Although much research has been conducted on the effectiveness of online learning in general, this study highlights the importance of the tutors' perspective, which has been underexplored. The experiences and views of tutors in facilitating online tutorials, as well as the identification of specific challenges and improvement opportunities in the context of Universitas Terbuka (UT), will be discussed in depth.

This study provides significant contributions in evaluating the effectiveness of online tutorials from the tutors' perspective at Universitas Terbuka (UT). The primary benefit of this research is identifying the challenges tutors face in supporting distance learning and offering concrete

recommendations to improve the quality of online tutorial services. The novelty of this study lies in its explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which combines quantitative analysis through a survey of 344 tutors with qualitative analysis based on interviews and document studies involving 30 tutors. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of online tutorial dynamics, providing more comprehensive insights compared to previous studies. The objective of this research is to assess the effectiveness of online tutorials at Universitas Terbuka (UT) by focusing on tutors' experiences, while its benefits include improving technological infrastructure, enhancing tutor training, and developing more interactive learning methods that better adapt to students' needs. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for Universitas Terbuka (UT) and other distance education institutions in continuously improving the quality of online learning.

METHODS

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach, consisting of two phases (Agusti et al., 2018; Anggraeni et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2024). The first phase involves a quantitative survey, followed by a qualitative study to provide deeper insights into the survey results (Creswell, 2018; Plano Clark et al., 2010).

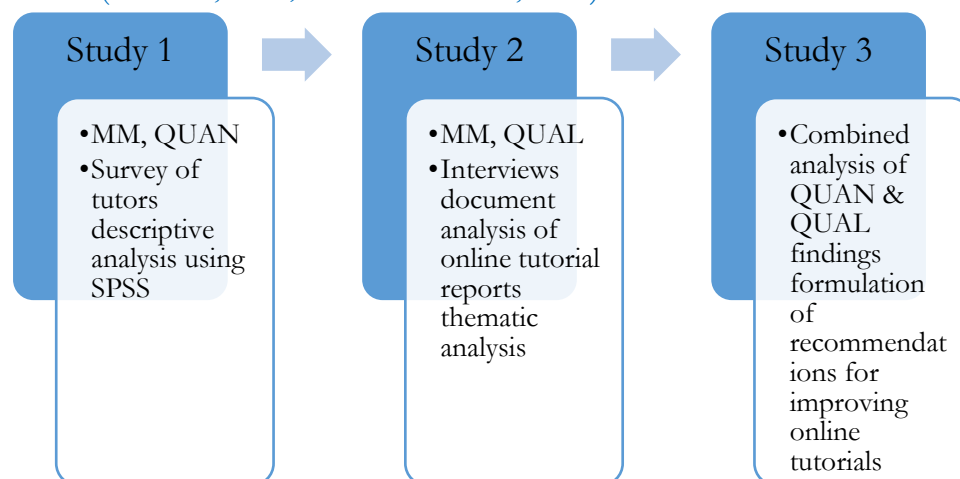


Fig 1. Explanatory sequential mixed-method phase

In the quantitative phase, a survey was conducted to assess six key aspects of online tutorials: i) content quality, ii) ease of access, iii) interaction and communication, iv) evaluation and assessment, v) platform support, and vi) institutional support. These dimensions were translated into 24 questionnaire items, consisting of 12 favorable and 12 unfavorable statements. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms through WhatsApp groups and remained open for two weeks. The study population consisted of tutors teaching Pancasila and Basic Social and Cultural Science courses in the 2023/2024 odd semester. The sample was selected using accidental sampling, and the collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics with IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0.1 to identify trends and patterns in tutors' experiences with online tutorials.

In the qualitative phase, further analysis was conducted through document analysis and interviews. The use of these instruments is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of tutors' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Tutor reports from the 2023 online tutorial period were used as supplementary data, providing insights into tutors' experiences in managing online tutorial sessions. A purposive sampling approach was applied to select tutor reports, ensuring a representative distribution of tutors based on the

number of classes they managed. Additionally, interviews were conducted with tutors, selected through purposive sampling, to explore challenges and suggested improvements in online tutorial implementation. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method involved identifying key themes and patterns emerging from the data, categorizing information into relevant groups, and conducting an in-depth interpretation of the findings. The thematic analysis provided valuable insights into challenges and opportunities for improving online tutorials.

Additionally, this study includes an analysis of tutors based on generational and regional distribution. The generational aspect was examined to understand how tutors' technological adaptability influences their effectiveness in online learning. The categorization of generations in this study is presented in table 1 below (Temel Eginli & Isik, 2020). This classification allows for a more in-depth understanding of how different age groups engage with online learning technologies.

Table 1. Generation Category by Eginly and Isik

Generation Category	Year of Birth
Silent Generation	1925-1945
Baby Boomers	1946-1964
Generation X (Gen X)	1965-1981
Generation Y (Millennials)	1982-1999
Generation Z (Gen Z)	After 1999

Furthermore, a geospatial analysis was conducted to explore how tutors' geographic distribution and regional internet infrastructure impact their ability to deliver online tutorials. To enhance data visualization, ArcGIS software was utilized to map tutors' locations and analyze their accessibility to digital learning platforms. By integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study provides a comprehensive evaluation of online tutorials at Universitas Terbuka. The explanatory sequential mixed-method approach allows for a detailed understanding of tutors' experiences, challenges, and areas for improvement. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective online tutorial strategies, considering technological factors, generational differences, and regional accessibility.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile and background of tutors in general courses program Universitas Terbuka (UT)

Tutors play a crucial role in higher education institutions that implement distance learning, as they serve as the main contact point for students who are geographically separated. Tutors not only act as a bridge between students and the university, but they also represent the institution, significantly influencing students' perceptions of the quality and appeal of the university. Therefore, the competencies possessed by e-tutors are essential to ensure the success of the online learning process (de Metz & Bezuidenhout, 2018).

At Universitas Terbuka (UT), tutors are not only recruited from Universitas Terbuka (UT) lecturers but also from external tutors who are selected through a recruitment process. The background of the tutors is one of the key components required during the recruitment process, including education, teaching experience, or practical experience in their respective fields, as well as IT proficiency. These requirements are outlined in the

documents reviewed by the selection committee. If the basic requirements are met, prospective tutors will undergo technical training to assess their ability to teach online.

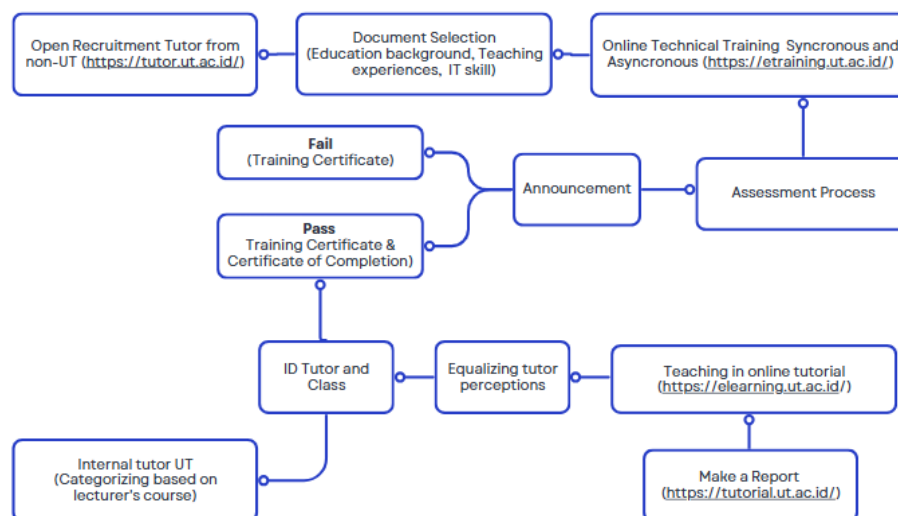


Fig 22. Recruitment flow to tutor report at Universitas Terbuka (UT)

Prospective online tutorial tutors are trained through an E-training program based on E-learning to ensure their readiness to support students effectively. This training emphasizes skills in classroom management, responding to student needs, and assessing assignments and participation. Tutors who complete the training are expected to have technical skills in using the e-learning platform and engaging in digital interactions, supporting the success of online tutorials, and ensuring that students receive optimal learning experience. Tutors who pass the training will receive certification and a tutor ID (“Rekrutment Tutor,” n.d.) As indicated by their tutor IDs, these tutors are managed by the faculty program teams at both the Universitas Terbuka (UT) Central and Universitas Terbuka (UT) Regional offices. They are then assigned classes to teach in online tutorials, face-to-face tutorials, or webinar tutorials.

The availability of tutors and the need for classes are outlined in the table below. In the 2023 online tutorial period, the number of classes assigned to each tutor varied from 1 to 4 classes, depending on the needs of each course. Additionally, the tutors' performance in the previous semester was considered when assigning classes. Technical issues can also influence the class assignment process.

Table 2. Number of tutor and tutorial online class

Number	Subject	Tutor (October 2024)	Tutorial online class (2023)
1	Basic Social and Cultural Science	846	572
2	Pancasila	178	97
3	Civic Education	1.071	1320

Tutors may also be assigned more than one course, depending on their academic background. Pancasila and civic education tutors are expected to have an academic background in civic education, politics, law, national defense, or other relevant fields. Meanwhile, basic social and cultural science, Pancasila

tutors are required to have an academic background in history, anthropology, sociology, or other related fields. Upon analysis, these three courses fall within the social sciences, making them closely related.

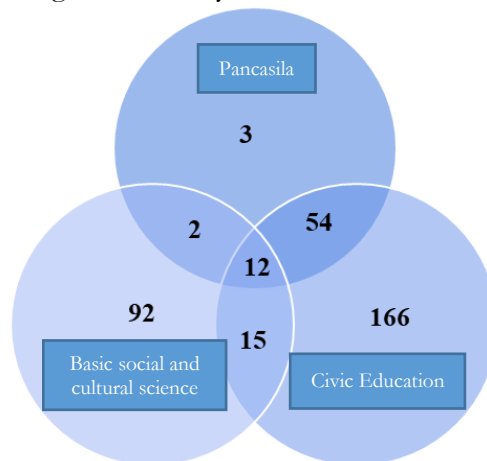


Fig 3. Courses assigned to tutors in 2024

The questionnaire data showed that 12 tutors managed three different courses, including Basic Social and Cultural Science, Pancasila, and Civic Education. The overlap between Pancasila and Civic Education tutors was high, with 54 tutors. However, the overlap between Basic Social and Cultural Science, Pancasila and Civic Education or Pancasila tutors was relatively small, with 15 and 2 tutors, respectively. Given the similarity in academic disciplines, the overlap in course assignments did not pose challenges for tutors in delivering the material. This is consistent with the questionnaire results regarding the relevance of the courses to tutors' academic backgrounds, where 94.2% of tutors stated that their background was relevant, and 5.8% considered it somewhat relevant.

Tutor competencies can also be assessed based on their educational background and work experience. According to the questionnaire data, most tutors held a master's degree (92.4%), while 7.6% held a doctoral degree. Their work experience was varied, as shown in the diagram below. In terms of percentage, 63% of the tutors were lecturers at public or private universities, 27% were teachers at public or private schools ranging from elementary to high school, and 10% were practitioners.

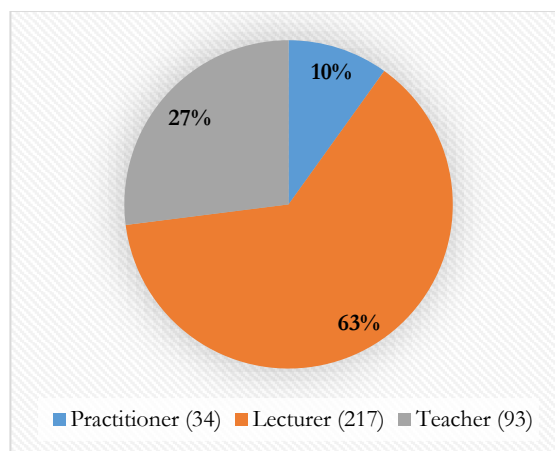


Fig 4. Tutor job background

Based on the findings above, the academic competence of tutors teaching Pancasila, Civic Education, and Basic Social and Cultural Science,

Pancasila courses at Universitas Terbuka is high and relevant. Most tutors have an educational background that aligns with the subjects they teach. Most tutors also possess advanced educational qualifications and diverse work experience. This indicates that the tutors have strong backgrounds, both academically and professionally, supporting their competence in delivering course material to students. Tutor qualifications are essential to ensuring the effectiveness of student support in online learning (Langesee, 2023).

The quality of teaching provided by tutors in the e-learning context is essential to ensure that students receive effective learning experiences. According to Niess, (2007) tutors with strong technical and pedagogical skills are more effective in enhancing students' understanding of the material. Additionally, external tutors may have practical experience in related fields, which can enrich the teaching material with real-world examples and relevant applications. In this regard, it can be concluded that the competencies possessed by the tutors meet the requirements set by Universitas Terbuka (UT) as the provider of online tutorials, both in academic and distance learning aspects.

Tutor experiences in online tutorials: a valuable learning evaluation

Online tutorials have become an essential component of distance learning at Universitas Terbuka. Research conducted by Jamil at Universitas Terbuka (UT) Makassar shows that the effectiveness of e-learning is influenced by tutorial services and accessibility to learning resources, both of which contribute positively to student satisfaction (Jamil, 2022). Another study by Lestari et al. on students taking an economic statistics course in the Faculty of Economics at Universitas Terbuka (UT) showed that using online-based teaching materials in online tutorials positively impacts student academic performance (Puji et al., 2015). However, despite this positive effect, student participation in online tutorials remains low. This is attributed to factors such as individual learning preferences and limited time to access e-learning (Pramudibyanto, 2024).

In distance learning, the effectiveness of learning is crucial to ensure that the materials taught are relevant and meet the expected learning goals. Online tutorial materials at Universitas Terbuka (UT) are pre-developed by course instructors or external developers and then included in master classes by each course instructor. These master classes are updated each semester and duplicated in the e-learning system to maintain quality. The master class includes enrichment materials, discussion columns, quizzes, and assignments to deepen student understanding and prepare them for exams. Tutors, as class managers, need to assess the effectiveness and relevance of the materials in Universitas Terbuka (UT) online learning support services. Analyzing tutor perspectives on this can help course developers and administrators evaluate and improve the quality of online tutorials.

The tutorial materials are provided by each course instructor and later included in the master class. The master class is updated every semester and duplicated through the E-Learning platform to maintain the quality of online tutorial services. Within the master class, there are enrichment materials that students can access to deepen their understanding. It also includes discussion boards, quizzes, and assignments that must be completed as practice before the final exams.

The questionnaire includes three questions that tutors need to reflect on: the effectiveness of online tutorials through the provided materials, the relevance of the materials to the learning outcomes, and the novelty of the materials. An analysis of the data reveals that the majority of tutors hold a

positive view regarding the alignment of online tutorial materials with the expected learning objectives, with 87.2% of respondents agreeing with this statement. This figure reflects a high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of online tutorial services in delivering materials that meet expectations. Additionally, 65.7% of respondents strongly agree that the materials are relevant to the learning objectives. This percentage is further reinforced by the statement of the informant:

In terms of quality, the materials, discussion topics, assignments, methods, and practice questions are already adequate to support the implementation of online tutorials. My recommendation would be to make the materials more applicable to students, ensuring that learning becomes more meaningful and enables them to implement the acquired knowledge and values within society (informant 4)

From informant experience, it can be concluded that although the quality of the materials is generally rated as good, there is still a need for improvement to further enhance students' knowledge. In addition to the content itself, several other tutors also believe that certain aspects should be improved. For example, in the initiation materials, Tutors suggested that the case studies presented should be more aligned with recent developments.

The case studies provided should be more up-to-date and aligned with the current era" (informant 5)

Beyond incorporating contemporary case studies, these examples should also be applied in discussion questions and assignments. By implementing this approach, Tutor hopes that students will develop critical thinking skills and gain a more meaningful learning experience.

The quality of learning materials, discussion topics, assignments, discussion methods, and practice questions should be presented in the form of case studies, problem-solving tasks, or project-based learning to train students in critical thinking and provide a meaningful learning experience (informant 3)

These perspectives align with the numerical data, which shows that 68.6% of tutors feel that the materials reflect the latest developments. This finding highlights that the relevance and novelty of the learning materials are critical aspects for course managers to consider. In terms of clarity of information related to discussions and assignments, 85.8% of tutors perceive these aspects as clear and easy for students to understand. However, 14.2% of respondents stated that the instructions are often unclear. Tutor B shared their experience and suggestions regarding instructions for discussions and assignments as follows.

Discussion: Additional instructions should be provided to encourage students to respond to one another so that discussions are not one-sided. Currently, students tend to only answer the discussion topic without engaging with their peers, which diminishes the essence of a discussion. Assignments: The issue is not with the content itself but with the need to equip students with guidance on how to complete different types of assignments properly. The majority of students struggle to produce well-structured assignments, and even when allowed to revise, only a few resubmit their work (informant 2)

This emphasizes the need for improvement in delivering instructions, particularly through simpler language, concrete examples, and step-by-step guidance so that all students can understand the instructions more easily. This aligns with what [Pramudibyanto, \(2024\)](#) stated, that to enhance the effectiveness of learning in the context of online tutorials, it is essential to provide clear participation guidelines for students. With such guidelines, students will have a better understanding of the expectations they need to meet in online tutorial discussions, which, in turn, can increase their engagement

and learning outcomes (Pramudibyanto, 2024).

Accessibility of e-learning in online learning

Distance learning provides greater flexibility for students in accessing education, but it also presents challenges related to engagement and interaction between tutors and students. The issue of interaction is not solely caused by physical or time separation but also by psychological and communication aspects. This separation creates the potential for miscommunication or "transactional distance," which is determined by three key factors: the design of the learning structure, the interaction between instructors and learners, and the learners' independence in their studies (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

According to Moore & Fodrey, (2018), there are four key components of technology infrastructure in the context of distance education: systems, objectives, evaluation, and personnel. This is supported by Moore & Kearsley, (2011), who emphasize that the quality of interaction in online learning largely depends on technological infrastructure and the tutor's ability to use available learning tools. Moreover, internet connectivity also plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth execution of online tutorials.

The tutors' ability to use technology has also been assessed during their tutor training. In terms of age, the majority of tutors belong to the millennial generation, comprising 83%. When considering technological proficiency based on age or generation, technology skills are not a major issue for tutors. Younger generations, such as Generation Y or millennials, tend to have better technological abilities compared to older generations like Generation X (Iswadi et al., 2023). The generational gap in technology adoption is influenced by attitudes and abilities related to age-related changes in cognitive function (Charness & Boot, 2009). Temel Eginli & Isik, (2020) identify fundamental differences among these generations, focusing on their level of comfort and proficiency in using technology. Younger generations (Gen Y and Gen Z) tend to possess higher digital skills compared to older generations, who are still in the process of adapting and often encounter difficulties in utilizing the latest technological devices.

Table 3. Tutor age based on generation classification by eginly and isik

Generation Category	Year of Birth	Total
Silent Generation	1925-1945	-
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	2
Generation X (Gen X)	1965-1981	28
Generation Y (Millennials)	1982-1999	285
Generation Z (Gen Z)	After 1999	29
Total		344

Based on this background, tutors already possess the key resources for delivering tutorial services. This aligns with the findings, which indicate that data regarding the accessibility of materials through the e-learning platform from the tutors' perspective presents a very positive picture. The data indicates that the majority of tutors feel that the accessibility of materials through the e-learning platform is quite good, with 85.5% of them stating "Strongly Agree" and 12,2% "Agree" that the materials can be easily accessed by students. This indicates that the materials provided by Universitas Terbuka (UT) through the e-learning platform are easily accessible. Although the platform received positive feedback regarding its overall functionality, approximately 2.4% of tutors reported experiencing difficulties in accessing the materials, including

issues related to quizzes, as highlighted by Tutor.

“The system is generally good, but it could be further improved, especially regarding quizzes, which often encounter issues (students are unable to access them) (informant 1)

This issue arises due to the incompatibility of the H5P quiz application with Moodle e-learning, resulting in frequent errors when students attempt to access quizzes. Despite the challenges in accessing materials, most respondents rated the e-learning platform as functioning well during tutorial sessions, with 92.5% giving positive evaluations. One of the tutors, shared their experience regarding the accessibility of the e-learning platform as follows:

In general, the implementation of online tutorials has been running well, and the LMS platform used is also easy to follow (informant 6)

However, about 30.8% of respondents reported experiencing technical disruptions, indicating that some challenges still exist, even though the majority do not feel them significantly. It is related to platform instability due to high traffic, causing the e-learning system to go down at peak times. To address this, several tutors have suggested increasing e-learning bandwidth capacity.

Increase the bandwidth for the e-learning website because it becomes very difficult to access at certain times, especially on weekends (informant 7)

Weekends are a popular time for students and tutors to access the e-learning platform, as both have various activities outside of their academic commitments. This leads to a significant increase in traffic. To ensure an optimal user experience, the platform administrators recommend that students and tutors check the system periodically and make use of times when traffic is more stable.

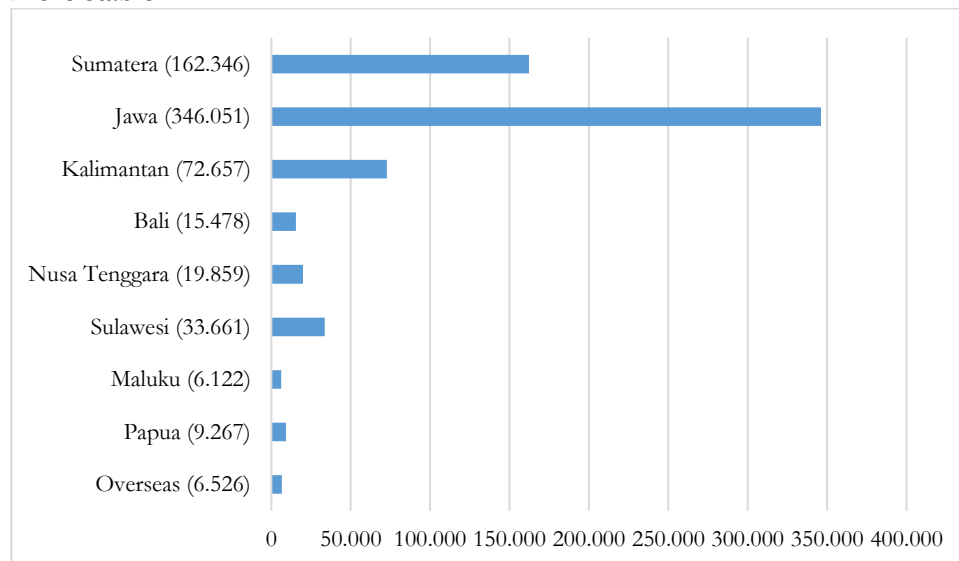


Fig 5. 3 Number of students based on island

Besides bandwidth, signal issues are also a common obstacle for students and tutors in accessing e-learning. On September 27, 2024, at 6:15 a.m. WIB, the number of registered students for the odd semester of 2024 was 671,967. Of these, 52% were located in Java, 25% in Sumatra, 11% in Kalimantan, 6% in Sulawesi, 3% each in Bali and Nusa Tenggara, 2% in Papua, and 1% each in Maluku and overseas. Data shows that tutors are spread across various regions of Indonesia. West Java is the province with the highest number of tutors, totaling 74, followed by Central Java with 46, and East Java with 31. According to a survey by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), these regions fall under the medium category in the ICT Development Index, so internet issues may pose a significant challenge in distance education for the

low category (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024).



Fig 6. Tutor's Domicile Area

This analysis underscores the importance of ensuring the reliability and stability of the e-learning platform to enhance the overall user experience. While the platform generally functions well and supports the tutorial process, technical disruptions faced by some tutors must be addressed to maintain it. To improve the effectiveness of online learning, Universitas Terbuka (UT) should focus on strengthening technical support and continuously monitoring system performance. Although material accessibility is generally adequate, the challenges encountered by some students and tutors cannot be overlooked. By optimizing technical aspects, all users can fully utilize the platform, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning while ensuring equitable support across all elements of the online learning process.

Synergy in communication and technical support

The success of online learning services, including e-learning, heavily depends on the synergy between effective communication and adequate technical support. In the context of distance learning, where physical interaction between instructors and learners does not occur, efficient communication and reliable technical support become a key factor in ensuring the smooth running of the teaching and learning process. Well-organized communication between tutors, students, and educational technology service providers is essential to maintain active engagement and to ensure that the materials delivered are accessible and well-understood.

The questionnaire findings indicate that most tutors perceive the communication features on the e-learning platform as effective in facilitating interaction, with 94.2% of respondents giving positive evaluations. This is largely attributed to the availability of various features designed to support effective communication between tutors and students.

In the introductory session, tutors and students can familiarize themselves with each other through the dedicated introduction forum. Tutors also have the option to upload introduction videos in the initial session and greeting videos from session 1 to session 8, fostering a sense of connection between them. Additionally, various two-way communication features are available, including private chats, tutor-created group chats, and feedback columns in both discussions and assignments. Towards the end of the online tutorial, students are required to evaluate the tutor's performance throughout the learning process.

However, despite the overall satisfaction, 5.9% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, indicating the need for further enhancements in the communication features. This analysis underscores the importance of optimizing communication tools to ensure more inclusive and seamless interactions for all students and tutors.

...Additionally, any updates—such as students modifying their discussion answers or submitting assignments—should generate notifications for tutors via WhatsApp. Similarly, tutors' feedback on student responses should trigger notifications for students, allowing them to respond promptly, especially when revisions are necessary" (informant 8)

Based on tutor's experience, the addition of a notification feature would play a crucial role in enhancing communication between students and tutors. With this feature, both parties could respond more quickly to activities conducted within the e-learning platform. Regarding technical constraints in communication through e-learning, data shows that while 36.6% of respondents believe that communication via the platform is often hindered by technical issues, the majority (63.4%) do not experience significant barriers. This suggests that although some tutors face technical difficulties, these challenges do not substantially disrupt overall communication when utilizing the available features effectively.

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is committed to improving the quality of online tutorials through training and development for tutors (Zuhairi et al., 2007). Although tutors receive technical training during the initial recruitment process, continuous training is essential to effectively facilitate learning in an online environment (Motaung & Makombe, 2021). Each semester, before online tutorials commence, Universitas Terbuka (UT) conducts refresher training for tutors. This refresher aims to help tutors recall the use of e-learning tools so that technical issues can be addressed as early as possible. The refresher involves the learning support services unit and coordinates with instructors from the relevant faculties.

The majority of tutors perceive the refresher training as adequate in preparing them for online tutorials, with 97.4% of respondents finding it highly beneficial, indicating its effectiveness in equipping tutors with essential skills. Additionally, 87.5% of tutors reported gaining tangible benefits from the training, which likely enhances the quality of learning they deliver in online tutorials. Despite these positive evaluations, Universitas Terbuka (UT) should continuously update training materials and methods to address the diverse and specific needs of tutors, particularly for those who feel they are not fully benefiting from the current training. Tutors also expressed a desire for in-person sessions to ensure shared understanding and more interactive communication with the Universitas Terbuka (UT) coordinator.

There should be offline (face-to-face) tutor training to establish a common perception and foster a more dialogical communication between tutors and Universitas Terbuka (UT) tutorial coordinators (informant 9)

Tutor satisfaction with the refresher program aligns with their positive perception of technical support, with 96.2% stating that Universitas Terbuka (UT) support helped them navigate the e-learning platform. While the majority found the assistance beneficial, a small percentage of tutors still faced difficulties, highlighting the need for ongoing monitoring and improvement of technical support. Beyond scheduled support, assistance services are available to help tutors during online tutorials. The Learning Support Services Unit manages UT's e-learning and provides technical information, while WhatsApp groups, coordinated by program heads, serve as forums for tutors to exchange

experiences and resolve issues. For critical problems, coordinators provide direct guidance. These efforts have positively influenced tutors' perceptions, with 85.2% feeling that the information provided is sufficient for tutorial implementation. However, some tutors still feel uninformed, emphasizing the need for continuous information dissemination. Similarly, 84.3% of tutors find assistance services easily accessible, but 15.7% still experience difficulties in reaching support when needed. While the system functions well, improvements in responsiveness and availability are necessary to ensure equitable access to support for all tutors.

Tutors require accessible communication services to swiftly address technical issues, ensuring that any challenges can be resolved efficiently (informant 10)

The importance of effective communication extends beyond the delivery of learning materials; it also includes providing communication features within e-learning to enhance engagement during the learning process. In the context of technical support, services such as help desks and routine technical training must be provided to ensure that tutors can maximize the use of the e-learning platform without encountering significant technical issues. In practice, solid collaboration among teaching teams, technology providers, and students facilitates the creation of an effective and efficient learning environment, allowing remote learning processes to proceed without significant hindrances. This synergy not only ensures that learning materials are easily accessible but also maintains an interactive teaching and learning process that supports the achievement of educational objectives.

Chances and challenges of online tutorials in the future

The provision of learning support services through online tutorials is one of the mechanisms relied upon by Universitas Terbuka (UT) to enhance students' understanding of course materials. Therefore, the effectiveness and quality of online tutorials are essential and must be pursued. As part of the effort to evaluate the learning and implementation of online tutorials, Universitas Terbuka (UT), as the organizer of online tutorials, provides a column in the online tutorial report for tutors to write suggestions for improvements based on the challenges they face. It is hoped that these suggestions can then be utilized by policymakers. The recommendations included in the tutor reports are integrated with data from questionnaire responses. From the recommendations given, these suggestions can be grouped into more structured themes, including the quality of learning materials, evaluation of discussions and assignments, teaching methods, e-learning platform facilities, and tutor competency development.

Suggestions provided by tutors regarding the quality of learning materials include the addition of video and multimedia-based content, updates to materials in accordance with current issues, and the preparation of contextual materials that support meaningful learning. This can be coordinated by Universitas Terbuka (UT) with course instructors to periodically update tutorial materials before they are included in the master tutorial classes. Additionally, instructors can also conduct radio tutorials on themes that discuss current issues. Links to these radio tutorials can then be used as supplementary multimedia video materials in online tutorials. This effort can facilitate students' contextual understanding and strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the materials presented in online tutorials.

In terms of evaluation of discussions and assignments, tutors have proposed a variety of tasks to reduce plagiarism, the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions, and the provision of clear assessment rubrics to enhance evaluation standards. To improve the evaluation standards

of online tutorials, similar to the materials, discussions, and assignments can also be updated by course instructors. To minimize the use of repetitive questions, various types of questions should be developed for both discussions and assignments, which can be applied on a rotating basis each semester. To minimize plagiarism and encourage originality in students' answers, simple project-based assignments or reflections based on students' observations can also be developed. With the updating of questions, assessment guidelines should also be revised by instructors to help tutors accurately assess students' answers. This update will also assist in presenting more interactive teaching methods, as it discusses topics related to social issues and current phenomena, prompting students to think critically rather than simply taking answers that are already available in modules or on the internet.

Regarding the facilities of the e-learning platform, recommendations include increasing bandwidth, automatic notifications, and ease of access for students. To meet these recommendations, Universitas Terbuka (UT) needs to strengthen its infrastructure by adding bandwidth and server capacity to ensure stable access, especially during peak hours. Additionally, the development of integrated automatic notification features will help students and tutors stay informed about assignments, discussions, and material updates, making them more responsive. Universitas Terbuka (UT) should also provide usage guides in text or video format that are easily accessible to both students and tutors. Implementing these steps will help improve the accessibility, interactivity, and reliability of the platform, which in turn can support the success of online learning at Universitas Terbuka (UT).

Universitas Terbuka (UT) has made efforts to enhance teaching quality by providing regular training for tutors, especially in supporting the implementation of online tutorials. This is done to equip tutors with the competencies to teach online using e-learning. However, some tutors feel that the training provided is still inadequate in giving them a deep understanding of online tutorial methods. Suggestions from tutors indicate a need for further competency development focusing on enhancing skills in online interaction, managing virtual classrooms, and adapting materials to suit e-learning needs. Therefore, Universitas Terbuka (UT) can improve its training programs by developing specific modules that cover digital pedagogy techniques, online discussion management, and optimal use of e-learning platform features. Inviting experienced mentors or tutors as companions in training can also provide new tutors with more comprehensive practical insights. Additionally, Universitas Terbuka (UT) can conduct thorough evaluations and surveys to identify the main challenges faced by tutors in online tutorials so that the training conducted is truly relevant, targeted, and capable of enhancing the effectiveness of online teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the essential role of tutors in enhancing the effectiveness of online tutorials in distance learning at Universitas Terbuka (UT). While online tutorials provide accessibility and flexibility, challenges such as technical limitations, student engagement, and comprehension gaps persist. Tutors, especially those recruited externally, require continuous training in digital pedagogy and online classroom management to optimize their instructional strategies. Strengthening tutor support, improving interactive learning materials, and enhancing communication guidelines are crucial steps toward improving student participation and learning outcomes. To further enhance online tutorials, technological infrastructure must be improved,

including expanding server bandwidth, integrating plagiarism detection, and providing automated notifications. Future research should focus on assessing the long-term impact of tutor training programs and exploring innovative teaching strategies for online environments.

REFERENCES

- Agusti, F. A., Zafirah, A., Engkizar, E., Anwar, F., Arifin, Z., & Syafril, S. (2018). the Implantation of Character Values Toward Students Through Congkak Game for Mathematics Instructional Media. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 35(2), 132–142. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jpp.v35i2.13947>
- Anggraeni, F., Andayani, S., & Rahmawati, D. (2025). Analysis of Students' Mastery Levels in Using Integer Operations in Elementary School Mathematics Learning. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)*, 8(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ijmurhica.v8i1.283>
- Barker, P. (2002). On being an online tutor. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 39(1), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13558000110097082>
- Belawati, T. (2019). *Pembelajaran Online* (Vol. 0). Universitas Terbuka.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Budiarso, I., Suhendraya Muchtar, H., H Soro, S., & Mardiana, D. (2022). Online Tutorial And Webinar Tutorial Management On Distence Learning Process At Indonesia Open University. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 3(4), 1708–1714. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v3i4.470>
- Chandrawati, T. (2018). How Online Tutorial can Help Distance Education Students to be more Active in Their Learning. *4th International Conference on Early Childhood Education. Semarang Early Childhood Research and Education Talks (SECRET 2018)*, 152–156. <https://doi.org/10.2991/secret-18.2018.24>
- Charness, N., & Boot, W. R. (2009). Aging and information technology use: Potential and barriers. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18(5), 253–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01647.x>
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Mixed methods procedures*. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*.
- de Metz, N., & Bezuidenhout, A. (2018). An importance-competence analysis of the roles and competencies of e-tutors at an open distance learning institution. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(5), 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3364>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research[1]. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* (Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 57–59). <https://doi.org/10.1108/17465640610666642>
- Dewatisari, W. F., Suptijanto, A., & Sugiyanto. (2010). *Hambatan Pemanfaatan Tutorial Online Mahasiswa Non Pendas UPBJJ-UT Bandar Lampung Masa Ujian 2010.1*. Hambatan Pemanfaatan Tutorial Online Mahasiswa Non Pendas UPBJJ-UT Bandar Lampung Masa Ujian.
- Engkizar, E., Alhadi, M., & Akyuni, Q. (2024). *Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards Program: Chances and Challenges*.
- Enwereji, P. C., van Rooyen, A., & Terblanche, A. (2023). Exploring Students' Perceptions on Effective Online Tutoring at a Distance Education Institution. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning*, 21(4), 366–381.

<https://doi.org/10.34190/ejel.21.4.3131>

- Farida, I., & Yuliana, E. (2014). Sikap Mahasiswa Memanfaatkan Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi Dalam Pembelajaran Terbuka Dan Jarak Jauh. *Jurnal Pendidikan Terbuka Dan Jarak Jauh*, 15(2), 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.33830/ptjj.v15i2.594.2014>
- Halim, P. (2024). Tutor Competence in Online-Learning Service within Distance Education. *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, 13(2), 1671–1682. <https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.464>
- Iswadi, I., Yulisman, H., Samsuar, S., & Suryani, S. (2023). Between Gen X and Y: How Do Generational Differences Affect Science Teachers' TPACK Abilities? *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*, 9(7), 5532–5539. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v9i7.3027>
- Jamil, J. (2022). Optimalisasi Layanan Tutorial Online dan Aksesibilitas Terhadap Kepuasan Bantuan Belajar Online Mahasiswa UT. *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran*, 5(1), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.30605/jsgp.5.1.2022.1714>
- Joubert, Y. T., & Snyman, A. M. (2018). Challenges Experienced with Online Tutoring in an ODL Institution. *Progressio*, 39(1), 126–145. <https://doi.org/10.25159/0256-8853/2139>
- Kopp, B., Matteucci, M. C., & Tomasetto, C. (2012). E-tutorial support for collaborative online learning: An explorative study on experienced and inexperienced e-tutors. *Computers and Education*, 58(1), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.08.019>
- Langesee, L. M. (2023). From qualification to competencies: defining a task-based competency profile for e-tutors in higher education. *International Journal of Management in Education*, 17(2), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMIE.2023.129256>
- Lince, R., & Zaidin, M. A. (2021). Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Daya Tahan Kuliah Di Universitas Terbuka. *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran*, 4(3), 692–706. <https://doi.org/10.30605/jsgp.4.3.2021.1433>
- Mapolisa, T. (2012). Provision of research support services to ODL learners by tutors: A focus on the Zimbabwe open university's bachelor of education (Educational Management) research students' supervision experiences. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 13(2), 58–68.
- Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (2011). *Distance Education: A Systems View of Online Learning*. Cengage Learning.
- Moore, R. L., & Fodrey, B. P. (2018). Leading and Managing e-Learning. *Leading and Managing E-Learning*, December 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61780-0>
- Motaung, L. B., & Makombe, R. (2021). Tutor experiences of online tutoring as a basis for the development of a focused tutor-training programme. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 16(2), 101–112. <https://doi.org/https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-jitl1-v16-n2-a9>
- Niess, M. L. (2007). Developing Teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) with Spreadsheets. *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2007*, 2238–2245.
- Plano Clark, V. L., Creswell, J. W., O'Neil Green, D., & Shope, R. J. (2010). Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches: An Introduction to Emergent Mixed Methods Design. In *Handbook of Emergent Methods*. The Guilford Press.
- Pramudibyanto, H. (2024). Analisis Perilaku Mahasiswa dalam Menemukan Literatur Rujukan Materi Diskusi Tutorial Online. *Pustaka : Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Budaya*, 24(1), 104.

<https://doi.org/10.24843/pjiib.2024.v24.i01.p14>

- Puji, E., Gunoro, L., Etik, N., & Riyani, I. (2015). Pengaruh penggunaan bahan ajar online terhadap prestasi mahasiswa Universitas Terbuka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Terbuka Dan Jarak Jauh*, 16(1), 1–9.
- Puspitasari, S., Hanafi, S., & Asmawati, L. (2018). Hubungan Minat Dan Aktivitas Dalam Tutorial Online Dengan Hasil Belajar Mahasiswa. *JTPPM (Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran. Edutech and Instructional Research Journal*, 5(2), 2. <https://doi.org/10.62870/jtpm.v5i2.7484>
- Sabirova, F., Gura, A., Belyanova, E., & Sukhorukih, A. (2022). World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues. *Distance Education*, 14(5), 2588–2593.
- Sativara, I. K. N. (2023). *Tanggapi Keluhan Mahasiswa Terkait Gangguan Server*. UT Pusat Siapkan Langkah Antisipasi Jelang Perkuliahan Semester Baru.
- Segoe, B. (2014). Journal of Human Ecology. *The Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, 32(4), 89–89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20165251a>
- Setyowati, T., Setiani, R., Sambada, D., & Surasmi, W. A. (2020). Improving the Quality of Tutorials to Create a Quality Culture Through an Integrative Selection of Tutors. *Studies in Philosophy of Science and Education*, 1(3), 104–112. <https://doi.org/10.46627/sipose.v1i3.31>
- Susanti, W., Vanessa, A. D., Akhir, N. A. B. M., Utami, R. D., Putri, S. D., & Anas, K. (2024). Professionalism Stage of Educators in Private Islamic Collage: Student Perspective Analysis. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)*, 7(3), 177–195. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ijmurhica.v7i3.235>
- Teguh. (2016). Tugas dan tanggungjawab tutor dalam pelaksanaan tutorial online Universitas Terbuka. In *Prosiding Temu Ilmiah Nasional Guru* (Vol. 8, Issue 2). Universitas Terbuka.
- Temel Eginli, A., & Isik, S. (2020). Generational differences In digital age a research on technology experiences of generations. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9(2), 3150–3154.
- Traxler, J. (2018). Distance learning—Predictions and possibilities. *Education Sciences*, 8(1), 35. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8010035>
- Yaumi, M. (2007). the Implementation of Distance Learning in Indonesian Higher Education. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, 10(2), 196–215. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2007v10n2a6>
- Zuhairi, A., Adnan, I., & Thaib, D. (2007). Provision of student learning support services in a large-scale distance education system at universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 8(4), 44–64.

Copyright holder:

© Ningrum, S. U. D., Sekarwinahyu, M., Wulandari, N. A. T., Mukhtar, M. K. (2025)

First publication right:

International Journal of Multidisciplinary of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)

This article is licensed under:

CC-BY-SA