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The increasing demand for TOEFL tutoring among graduate students: Understanding the motivations behind it.

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ABSTRACT

Private extra academic support, also referred to as shadow education has experienced growth, in Asian nations, such as Indonesia. However, despite its use this type of education often receives attention from the government compared to formal schooling. This research aims to explore the motivations that influence university students' choices to seek academic support specifically for TOEFL preparation—a vital step towards achieving an internationally recognized English proficiency score. Involving 60 university students for the data collection using questionnaire, this study identified factors that drive the demand for private TOEFL tutoring among Indonesian graduate students. Despite concerns about the absence of standardization and potential student exhaustion resulting from tutoring it continues to provide personalized instruction and assistance. This study highlights the role that private supplementary tutoring plays in meeting the growing demand for success and its impact on students' academic and career paths, in Indonesia.

Keywords: TOEFL, shadow education, tutoring, English proficiency, supplementary tutoring.

1. INTRODUCTION

In times there has been a rise, in private supplementary tutoring in specific Asian countries, including Indonesia. However, despite its similarities to schooling the government often tends to overlook this form of education and prioritize schooling instead (Bray, 2006). This highlights a research gap in understanding why the government intentionally disregards tutoring and its potential impact on the education system.

The objective of this study is to address this research gap by examining the definition proposed by Nam and Chan (2019) for tutoring, also known as shadow education. By investigating why university students choose to enroll in TOEFL tutoring the study aims to shed light on their growing desire to enhance their skills and proficiency in areas (Mahmud, 2021). However, there is research on the motivations and factors

influencing university students' decisions specifically when it comes to seeking private supplementary tutoring for TOEFL preparation. This gap in research underscores the need for a comprehension of the factors that drive students' choices and how it may impact their academic and career paths.

This study focuses on exploring how private supplementary tutoring plays a role, in helping Indonesian graduate students achieve a recognized score. The investigation aims to understand why graduate students choose to enroll themselves in tutoring programs.

The research focuses on aspects, including the amount of work students have the involvement of parents, their expectations, the financial strains, on families and the pressures that students experience from their parents, peers, and community.

The research, on tutoring of school and its impact on English proficiency in Indonesia is quite limited. The sources used in this paper mostly come from countries, which means there could be differences in societal, political, economic and educational contexts that might affect the results. Moreover different tutoring settings may vary in terms of how the tutoring lasts, when it takes place teacher quality and the financial resources available to parents.

With these limitations in mind the study suggests that private tutoring for TOEFL preparation, among Indonesian graduate students can effectively address their needs and boost their motivation. Additionally it has the potential to significantly improve their career prospects by helping them secure paying jobs.

1.1. TOEFL and career prospect

The Test of English, as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is widely recognized as a way to measure one's proficiency and its connection to career opportunities. In today's paced and competitive environment having additional skills that are considered essential in the workplace is crucial for finding employment. Excellent communication skills are highly valued, making English proficiency an important tool for interactions (Dustmann & Fabbri 2003). However, there is still a need for research on the relationship between TOEFL scores and career outcomes like job placement and salary levels. Understanding how TOEFL scores influence employment prospects and compensation would provide insights into the importance of proficiency in the workplace. It would also shed light on the role of tutoring in developing these skills.

On the hand individuals with limited English proficiency face difficulties in finding employment and earning competitive salaries (Leslie & Lindley 2001). This research gap suggests that further investigation is needed to understand how English language skills impact graduates earning potential and career paths. Exploring the connection between proficiency demonstrated through scores and employment outcomes would give us a better understanding of how important these skills are, in today's job market.

Moreover, it would emphasize the significance of tutoring outside of school in providing students with the language abilities to improve their chances, for success, in their professional endeavors (Krishnakumar & Nogales 2020).

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the motivations influencing university students' decisions to seek private supplementary tutoring specifically for TOEFL preparation?

3. METHOD

The research included a group of 60 university students who were enrolled in a course in Madura. All of these students were, in their sixth semester, with 21 males and 29 females. These participants came from departments representing both state and private universities during the data collection period. A summary of the participants demographic information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Variables	category	Frequency	percent
Gender	Female	29	
	male	21	
Duration of learning	Female	6	
	male	6	semesters
Learning setting	State	22	
	university	38	
	Private university		

The primary focus of the study was to investigate why students opt for an eight month course conducted through virtual meetings. The participants were requested to fill out a questionnaire and engage in structured interviews to express their individual motivations and the factors that influenced their choice of a private TOEFL course.

3.1. Instruments

To gather information the researchers created a survey using Google Forms to understand why students choose TOEFL courses. They compared their findings to existing literature. The survey was given to participants after they completed the course. Additionally, the researchers explored the factors that influenced participants decision to take the course at stages of learning TOEFL; before, during and, after activities. This exploration utilized narrative inquiry, a research method that investigates experiences through storytelling (Creswell, 2014; Edwards Jones, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The researchers recorded the subjects' responses, perspectives and personal experiences using this approach.

3.2. Data analysis

To examine the data, the researchers utilized content analysis of the narrations. This process involved

condensing the data and drawing conclusions. The outcomes were subsequently conveyed using language.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research found three main reasons that motivate students take the TOEFL course preparation.

4.1. Meeting the learning requirements

Graduate students often enroll in tutoring to meet the learning requirements of the TOEFL. The TOEFL assesses proficiency, in reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. However not all students excel in these areas. It is important to note that the TOEFL is not mandatory in university curricula. Simply memorizing information is not enough for success; practical application and natural language abilities are crucial. This is why private supplementary tutoring serves as an opportunity for targeted skill improvement for students with lower scores or those in need of additional support (Wright, Lee & Feng 2018; Zhan, Bray, Wang, Lykins & Kwo 2013). Therefore, it is essential to consider the effectiveness of one-on-one tutoring in this approach.

Moreover, it's worth mentioning that shadow education goes beyond improving students' performance. As highlighted by Zhan et al. (2013) it also boosts learners' motivation and confidence while sometimes even providing a sense of enjoyment. Additionally, students often choose one, on one tutoring to enhance their achievement (Wright et al., 2018). For example, some people who struggle with writing may choose to have tutoring that specifically focuses on this skill of trying to improve all the skills required for the TOEFL. This personalized approach involves one student and one instructor allowing the instruction to be tailored to meet the needs of the learner (Bray, 2006).

However, shadow education is seen as a nonlinear method, which may not be suitable, for students in terms of their academic performance (Hof, 2014). This perspective mainly applies to tutoring where there is a lack of distinction between shadow education and formal schooling. Without a shared understanding between these two approaches there can be concerns about the quality of instructors and whether students will achieve the desired outcomes. Additionally, Liu and Bray (2020) highlight that many students often feel tired and constrained by time due to their involvement in tutoring. This is a consequence of this model as students frequently find themselves with limited time for physical exercise or relaxation after a full day, at their regular public school. Such situations can negatively affect students school performance. Hinder their ability to concentrate during study sessions.

Furthermore, individualized tutoring has benefits. One such advantage is the valuable feedback students receive, along, with an environment that encourages expression of thoughts and concerns related to the subject matter. The tutor plays a role as a trusted confidant allowing students to comfortably communicate their classroom experiences and address any difficulties they may encounter. This level of interaction is often lacking in school settings (Mahmud, 2021). For example, some students may feel hesitant to discuss their school experiences with their parents due to a generation gap or lack of understanding. However private tutors can bridge this gap by possessing knowledge and effectively assisting students in overcoming specific challenges while enhancing their targeted skills. As a result, private tutoring becomes an avenue for nurturing students' abilities and setting them on a career path, in the future (Casale & Posel 2011).

4.2. Enhancing career prospects.

English language proficiency is a requirement, for graduating from universities even if the achieved score falls below standards (Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018). As a result, one of the reasons why graduate students seek tutoring is to meet those standards. This is motivated by the recognition of how important it's to achieve a score that is recognized internationally. Additionally Indonesian students often need this certification for employment opportunities, scholarships, civil service applications, multinational company positions and promotional requirements. Hallsén and Karlsson (2019) highlight that the main reason for enrolling in shadow education is to acquire knowledge which can enhance career prospects in the run.

Furthermore, Zhang and Bray (2017) argue that learning experiences during tutoring contribute significantly to career development. These insights emphasize how TOEFL scores can have an impact, on graduates' future career paths. Consequently, students choose to enroll in tutoring as it is seen as the most effective way to improve their English language proficiency scores. For example, Indonesian universities require a minimum score of 450, on the TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) to graduate, which is equivalent to an IELTS band score of 5.0 or an Internet Based Test (IBT) score of 45. These scores are lower than the standards set at a minimum of 6.5 for IELTS 80 for TOEFL IBT or 550 for TOEFL ITP. As a result, students need to improve their proficiency to have job prospects that meet these international standards. Having a recognized level of proficiency is crucial in today's workplace. Similarly, university graduates from developing countries like Indonesia who

excel in English skills in writing and reading have the potential to earn wages.

However, focusing solely on achieving scores as an indication of future career opportunities can place a burden on students. Not all students have an interest in TOEFL and various factors such as time or financial constraints may hinder their ability to participate in one-on-one tutoring sessions. Hallsén and Karlsson (2019) propose that reliance on support can add more pressure on students and create divisions, between peers and the broader community.

For example, if other students find out that someone is taking tutoring it could create expectations and added pressure for that person to easily achieve the desired score. These assumptions can negatively impact the student's well-being. Additionally, those who didn't engage in support might feel like they're not, on the path to success further deepening divisions within the community (Hallsén & Karlsson 2019).

As explained earlier having a good command of English greatly affects employability and often correlates with earnings and various job-related advantages (Roshid & Chowdhury 2013). Moreover, graduates who don't meet the score face difficulties in securing their desired job positions (Low, 2020). Obtaining a proficiency certificate like TOEFL is crucial for achieving income levels since, without it individuals may struggle to find employment opportunities that align with their passions and interests.

4.3. Being persuaded by parents

One of the reasons why students enroll in supplemental tutoring is because their parents encourage them to do so. As mentioned earlier parents have a desire for their children to achieve the possible outcomes (Azam, 2016). The financial capacity of parents also plays a role, in determining the demand for tutoring especially considering the costs associated with additional education in Indonesia. Consequently, when students sign up for tutoring sessions it puts a financial burden on their parents (Ireson & Rushforth 2014). Parents have term goals for their children and want them to excel academically which they believe will lead to better career opportunities. They hope that private tutoring can address any existing weaknesses that their children may have. Additionally engaging in education provides students with opportunities to achieve high scores and advance academically ultimately leading to higher earning potential (Bray, 2006). Furthermore, parents see tutoring as a way to prevent academic underachievement in specific subjects among students (Mahmud, 2021).

On the hand the decision to invest in one-on-one tutoring often depends on factors such, as the system, geographical location, cultural influences, socioeconomic status, and specific circumstances (Mahmud, 2021). Parents who choose to invest in tutoring, for their children bear the responsibility that comes with it. This is because there are differences in capacities among parents leading to inequalities between families from socioeconomic backgrounds. Wealthier families have more resources available. Can easily hire the tutors to cater to their children's specific academic needs. On the hand privileged families face limited options when it comes to enrolling their children in private tutoring (Azam, 2016). Affluent parents can ensure that their children receive attention in subjects through privatized education. Additionally, students who participate in tutoring may experience stress due to the pressure of achieving scores on exams and meeting their parents' academic expectations (Mahmud, 2021).

Considering these aforementioned reasons, it can be concluded that parents strongly believe that private supplementary tutoring is a way to enhance their childrens performance and success in school (Mahmud, 2021). Achieving scores for their children is a concern for all parents even if it means investing in private tutoring and potentially impacting their financial resources. Recognizing that not all students can master every skill on their own parents often choose to enroll them in tutoring programs, with the hope that tutors can provide guidance and help find solutions to challenges. One reason why parents choose to enroll their children in tutoring is because they believe that extra educational support has an impact, on their childrens academic success. Parents have faith that investing in tutoring will improve their childrens skills and contribute positively to their achievements (Ireson & Rushforth 2014).

5. CONCLUSION

The practice of tutoring of regular schooling has seen significant growth, in developing countries, like Indonesia. There is a growing demand among graduates to achieve scores on the TOEFL exam to secure well-paid jobs. One on one tutoring has proven to be an approach for improving students' scores in this regard. Students recognize the challenges of mastering all the skills for TOEFL and often pinpoint areas that need improvement to reach an international standard score. As a result, private tutoring has become an option to bridge this gap.

While some experts question the effectiveness of this form of education due to its lack of patterns and curriculum students benefit from receiving feedback from their tutors. In contrast traditional classroom settings rarely provide students with the level of

evaluation due to larger student teacher ratios. Students who participate in tutoring often have limited time for physical exercise or socializing with peers after regular school hours. However, one, on one tutoring nurture a teacher student relationship giving students someone they can trust and share their experiences with. These reasons collectively contribute to students being able to focus on their needs particularly when it comes to improving their scores and progressing towards achieving their goals.

The TOEFL exam plays a role, in shaping the careers of students serving as evidence of their English language skills. In Indonesia most job opportunities require this certification making it impossible for learners to ignore its importance. As students strive to achieve their target score, they face a burden. Fully understand its significance. A higher TOEFL score improves their chances of securing desired employment. Even opens doors for salary negotiations.

Due to the value placed on TOEFL many parents actively encourage their children to obtain this certificate. They see tutoring, known as shadow education as a way to reach this goal. Parents believe that through intensive TOEFL focused studies provided by tutors their children can receive tailored instruction and valuable feedback. Despite the costs associated with tutoring parents firmly believe that this certification significantly impacts their childrens future careers. Therefore, they are willing to invest more in their childrens education as they see it as a steppingstone, towards a career path.

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