

Available and Affordable Campuses to Expand Learning Opportunities in Higher Education: a Study Of Meaning

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Abstract

People are very interested in studying at universities. Constrained by the cost of education, people bury their dreams of attending college. This study aimed to investigate how available and affordable campuses expand access to higher education. This study used a qualitative descriptive method. This study consisted of four samples: the Chairman of Sasmita Jaya Foundation, structural officials, students, and the general public. The instrument used in the interviews was distributed via questionnaires in Google Forms and through triangulation. After the data were obtained, they were analyzed using a narrative analysis technique. This research explores the meanings of campus availability and affordability from the perspectives of four actors: the Foundation Chair, structural officials, students, and the general public. This study concludes that the campus is available and affordable, providing the community with opportunities to pursue university-level education that are constrained by the cost of education. The contribution of this research is that, with higher education, people are increasingly prosperous and have an honorable social status.

Keywords: Available Campus, Affordable Campus, Learning Opportunities, Higher Education, Meaning

INTRODUCTION

Studying in college is a dream for everyone. In Ranjan et al.'s view, even a college dream can increase everyone's happiness index (Ranjan et al., 2022). The form of dreams realized in college involves planning academic and career goals (Ilieva et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2019). According to Eugene et al., educational planning has positive effects on a person's academic achievement, behavior, and mental well-being (Eugene et al., 2022). At the same time, a career is the last destination after activities are carried out professionally at every planning stage (Woulfin & Jones, 2021). Therefore, the presence of affordable campuses is an alternative solution for people to study at the university level. Thus, the dream of a brilliant career in the future becomes realizable (see also Sultan et al., 2021).

The available campuses are universities that are accessible to communities. In addition to providing services to students, the campus also improves relationships with the social environment (Min-Allah & Alrashed, 2020). The available campus is important because it provides educational opportunities and scientific insights to the community (Ferfolja et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the campus is not only available to the community but also affordable. Affordable campuses are essential because tuition fees are accessible to all levels of society (Crosswell & Yun, 2020). In Walton's view, it is time for higher education to provide affordable education to the community as an alternative to preparing for a better future (Simangunsong, 2019; Walton, 2021). The concept of an available and affordable campus does not mean sacrificing quality; quality remains the main factor (see also Duryea et al., 2023; Prakhov, 2023).

However, in reality, some people do not have access to higher education. The lack of access to higher education is a complex puzzle faced by the community in gaining the latest knowledge (Zulu, 2019). Imran et al. agreed that the difficulty of community access to higher education is a challenge that policymakers and university managers cannot ignore (Imran et al., 2023). This is a crucial argument of education observers, such as Okamoto et al., that universities should be more affordable for all levels of society (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020; Okamoto, 2013; Walton, 2021). Thus, there is no longer any reason for people not to study, given the absence of a campus and its affordable tuition costs. It must also be

recognized that universities that still rely entirely on student fees for educational and operational expenses charge high tuition fees. This is indeed very reasonable, as higher education covers its operational costs through student fees, which contribute to the high cost of tuition. For this reason, universities need to have business units so that funding is not entirely sourced from students (see also Arthur-Holmes et al., 2023; Chin et al., 2020; Imran et al., 2023; Şahan & Sahan, 2023).

This research is necessary because policies that make college affordable and accessible can help realize the public's dream of pursuing higher education. This research indicates that the public's future will be more prosperous and promising through affordable and accessible colleges. Therefore, this study seeks to determine, through a study of denotative and connotative semantics, how the concepts of "available" and "affordable" universities enable the broader public to access higher education. This is because the concept of affordable, easily accessible universities can expand access to higher education for those constrained by financial barriers, as evidenced at Pamulang University.

METHOD AND THEORY

Research on affordable campus issues can be conducted using qualitative descriptive methods. This method was chosen to illustrate the meaning of an affordable and financially viable campus from a semantic science perspective. Data on affordable and financially affordable campuses were obtained from four samples: the Chairman of the Sasmita Jaya Foundation, structural officials at Pamulang University, students, and the general public. For this reason, the total number of respondents across these four samples is 150. The reasons for selecting the sample are: the Chairman of the Sasmita Jaya Foundation was chosen as a research sample because the party is responsible for determining affordable campus policies.

Meanwhile, structural officials are chosen because they are actors who have implemented the policy. Students were selected as samples because they were policy users. The general public was chosen as a sample because, in addition to being a beneficiary party, it observed the availability and affordability of campus policies. Thus, these four samples were chosen to represent all respondents.

In this study, an open-ended questionnaire and a triangulation interview guide were used. The questionnaire instrument was formulated based on samples. For the General Public, the instrument consists of 9 main questions; for structural officials, 8; and for students, 13. To ensure data quality, this instrument has undergone expert validation by Prof. Irwan Abdullah to assess its feasibility and the clarity of the question formulation before dissemination. The questionnaire's questions are then integrated into Google Forms to expand data collection beyond time and place constraints. Google Form links are distributed digitally via WhatsApp (group and private) and Instagram. Furthermore, the questionnaire data were confirmed and deepened through source triangulation with four sample actors to verify the suitability of the facts related to the meaning of available, financially affordable campuses.

After the data is obtained, the next stage is the data analysis using narrative analysis techniques. This technique was chosen because the views of the four actors regarding the available and affordable campus are reflected in their life experiences of an event that has occurred. The analysis process comprises four main stages: coding, categorization, interpretation, and narrative reconstruction.

The first stage chosen was coding; interview transcripts from all four actors were read in depth to identify keywords, phrases, and segments of statements relevant to campus accessibility and affordability. Meanwhile, similar codes are grouped into specific thematic categorizations, such as "financial barriers", "future expectations", or "facility perception". The third stage is interpretive, the process of analyzing the relationship between categories and understanding the social or emotional context behind the actors' stories. Finally, all the results of these interpretations are assembled into a complete and chronological narrative reconstruction. Through this series of stages, narrative analysis succeeded in compiling the stories of the four actors into a deep unity of meaning regarding the reality of the available and affordable campus at Pamulang University.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

In this discussion, we present the meanings of available and affordable campuses as perceived by the four actors sampled in the study. The four actors are the Chairman of Sasmita Jaya Foundation, structural officials, students, and the general public.

Meaning, according to the Chairman of the Foundation and Structural Officer

Table 1 shows the meaning of available and affordable campuses according to the Chairman of Yayasan Sasmita Jaya. Table 2 explains the meaning of 'available' and 'affordable' campuses from the perspective of the structural officials at Pamulang University.

Table 1. The campus is available, and the campus is affordable, according to the Chairman of the Foundation

Informant	Meaning of Structural Officials	
	Campus Available	Affordable Campus
Chairman of the Foundation	Unpam has a building even though it has never been asked for building money. And maybe the only college that never asked for building money, but we were given the convenience to build buildings."	The Foundation's vision is to provide affordable services to all walks of life. That is why the cost of education is us. We pack as cheaply as possible so that they can afford to study in college, even though the school is cheap. Still, we are serious about preparing the necessary facilities."
	"Building a campus to provide this education is not based on its cash flow. It is usually seen as how many entry and exit industries, how much do we get?"	"We (Unpam) do not determine based on the ability of the community we will help because the community we will help is marginal. We determine the cost of education based on the level of support we can provide, so that our intention to help the community, especially the marginalized, can be delivered, and we adjust it to the community's ability to pay, so they want to go to school. Hopefully, it will be a way to improve life. Because education is the right of every nation, people should participate in realizing affordable education."
	"What we do becomes a model of educational equity. If there is affordable education in every district and province like in Unpam, we will soon be free from ignorance and poverty."	"They (students) from the economic side of underprivileged families, from their academic side, who are not accepted in the country, because they do not meet test scores, even though they are the ones who need help, they are also physically disabled, blind, deaf, who are exempt from all costs. Even the educational facilities needed by them are provided free of charge."

Table 2. Campuses are available, and campuses are affordable, according to Structural Officials

Informant	Meaning of Structural Officials	
	Campus Available	Affordable Campus
Informant_1 (w, 42 yrs)	"A campus that provides higher education opportunities for all levels of society"	"With affordable tuition fees, students can register for college."
Informant_2 (m, 55 yrs)	"The meaning of Available is a form of commitment from Unpam with its motto Sharing for the Country, namely by always striving to facilitate all and all forms of fulfillment of a higher education governance to realize the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education through education, research, and community service carried out by academic people."	"The meaning of affordable is a translation of the hopes and desires of an ideal to provide opportunities to all people or communities who dream of having the hope of a good and quality life, especially for marginalized communities."
Informant_3 (m, 47 yrs)	"Unpam is present for all levels of society, with all physical limitations and backgrounds, without distinguishing ethnicity, religion, or race, with standard quality in governance, Tri Darma of higher education, and facilities and infrastructure."	"Unpam is affordable for all levels of the economy without compromising the standard and quality of education."

Informant_4 (m, 50 yrs)	"Campus, according to SN DIKTI"	"Pocket-friendly campus"
Informant_5 (w, 41 yrs)	"The campus available here refers to infrastructure facilities in the academic and non-academic fields. The academic field of Pamulang University has its own building and several facilities, including laboratories, libraries, lecture halls, faculty rooms, reading rooms, and more. At the same time, non-academic facilities include large parking lots, mosques, clinics, etc."	"Affordable campus is a campus with affordable costs for all walks of life, and quality in this case based on the accreditation of both study programs and institutions."
Informant_6 (Lk, 39 yrs)	"The campus is here for solutions for all."	"A campus that reaches all walks of life"
Informant_7 (m, 38 yrs)	"The available campus is a self-actualizing campus with a verified representative campus from the availability of lecture buildings and other supports such as libraries, laboratories, banks, IT-based academic services, and others. In addition to qualified Human Resources."	"Affordable campus is a campus with cheap tuition fees and can be reached by all circles of society, especially free of building money, and tuition fees can be paid in installments."
Informant_8 (m, 41 yrs)	"It is a campus that provides facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process."	"It is a campus with costs that all levels of society can reach."
Informan_9 (m, 33 yrs)	"The availability of UNPAM for the country is that UNPAM can facilitate people to get higher education for all groups."	"Affordability UNPAM has the cheapest higher education costs and without building money, so that it can be affordable for all levels of society, especially the lower middle layer."
Informant_10 (m, 52 yrs)	"Education that all walks of life can reach"	"Affordable costs for the lower community"

Meaning, according to the students

Table 3 explains the meaning of the terms "available" and "affordable" as perceived by students.

Table 3. Students interpret the campus as available and affordable

Informant	Student Meaning	
	Campus Available	Affordable Campus
Informant_1 (S-2 Semester 3)	"A campus is always there for students from various walks of life, including those with disabilities."	"Affordable in terms of location, time, and cost."
Informant_2 (S-2 Semester 1)	"The time for college can be chosen."	"Affordable both in terms of finance and travel location."
Informant_3 (S-1 Semester 5)	"In my opinion, the available campus is a campus that is included in the ranks of campuses, and the consideration of the campus is based on its good prestige."	"I believe an affordable campus is cheap and accessible even to the lower middle class. It seems that the campus is not necessarily cheap."
Informant_4 (S-1 Semester 1)	"Campuses that provide tuition hours and majors"	"Cheap campus but not cheap."
Informant_5 (S-1 Semester 1)	"A campus that has its buildings and complete facilities"	"a campus with costs that can be reached by all people, so that everyone has the opportunity to study"
Informant_6 (S-1 Semester 1)	"In my opinion, the available campus is a campus that has various facilities and also aspects that meet the needs of students."	"In my opinion, an affordable campus is a campus that is still within reach for students, both in terms of finance and distance and education."
Informant_7 (S-1 semester 7)	"Kampus, which provides a variety of educational resources ranging from lecturers and the courses they teach, as well as facilities that support education in it"	"All levels of society can reach campuses with administrative costs."

Informant_8 (D-IV Semester I)	"In my opinion, the available campus is a campus that can facilitate the needs of all students, such as decent classrooms, complete libraries, canteens that are large enough for students, and mosques for Muslims to worship."	"For me, there are two views of affordable campuses. First, the distance is affordable, maybe for those whose houses are close, there is no need for fees; second, campuses are affordable for education and costs, such as Unpam, with affordable education costs, all can study."
Informant_9 (D-III Semester I)	"A campus that provides adequate facilities needed by its students."	"A campus classified as suitable for any people, wants from the upper, middle, and lower classes."
Informant_10 (D-IV Semester I)	"A campus that provides all facilities for its students"	"A campus where tuition fees can be reached in all circles so that people can study even higher."

Meaning, according to the General Public

Table 4 presents the meanings of available and affordable campuses from student perspectives.

Table 4. Campuses are available, and campuses are affordable, according to the general public

Informant	General Public Meaning	
	Campus Available	Affordable Campus
Informant_1 (m, 52 yrs)	"Something that is already obvious."	"Affordable in terms of distance, cost, or what is unclear."
Informant_2 (w, 52 yrs)	"Campuses are available to accommodate students in the area."	"A campus that costs well to the local community"
Informant_3 (m, 25 yrs)	"Equipped with supporting facilities such as information boards and the like."	"Affordable campus means that in terms of physical buildings and operational costs, the campus is very affordable."
Informant_4 (m, 52 yrs)	"There are programs/majors suitable for those who study."	"Campus facilities"
Informant_5 (m, 40 yrs)	"A campus that is available to everyone regardless of religious background and social organization."	"Affordable for people whose economy is mediocre but still guarantees the quality of education."
Informant_6 (m, 48 yrs)	"The best campus for small communities"	"Good and best university"
Informant_7 (m, 56 yrs)	"Scholarships and student exchanges"	"Low cost"
Informant_8 (m, 21 yrs)	"Just heard."	"It is expected to support education."
Informant_9 (m, 41 yrs)	"Don't know"	"Cost issues that can be affordable to all people"
Informant_10 (m, 24 yrs)	"A campus that emphasizes the importance of community service"	"A multi-talented and affordable student campus"

DISCUSSION

Everyone has the same right to receive quality education on campus (Herawati & Ermakov, 2022). Duryea et al. stated that quality campuses open up great opportunities for students to develop skills even though they come from low economic backgrounds (Bowyer & Kahne, 2020; Duryea et al., 2023; Fromm et al., 2021; Khiatani et al., 2023; Maatuk et al., 2022, 2022; Ulenaers et al., 2021). A quality campus is positively correlated with student achievements (Chien et al., 2020; Dinarte-Diaz et al., 2023; Kanoksilapatham, 2021; Makransky et al., 2019; Watt et al., 2023). Based on a study by Prakhov, quality educational institutions contribute significantly to society and serve as bargaining power for graduates seeking good salaries (Prakhov, 2023). Prakhov's views are worth the gains his graduates have achieved because they have met teaching standards supported by strong leadership commitment (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Kaden, 2020; Lambert, 2022a; Oke & Fernandes, 2020). The leader's responsibility is significant in achieving a quality campus because they serve as a model for imparting knowledge to their students (Lambert, 2022b). Thus, this leader's commitment has become

an academic and non-academic experience that students enjoy in their education (Oliveira et al., 2021; Osman et al., 2023; Rebelatto et al., 2022; Ulenaers et al., 2021).

The campus business unit supports the provision of representative campus facilities, infrastructure, and affordable educational costs. The presence of business units on campus not only affects the affordability of the education fees charged to students but also shapes student behavior in the spirit of entrepreneurship (Chin et al., 2020; Todorinova & Wilkinson, 2019). Duryea et al. emphasized that the affordability of education costs has implications for equitable access to education and for improving students' skills, especially for economically disadvantaged students (Duryea et al., 2023). Ilieva et al. (2018) highlight cases in New York and several American cities where affordable campuses are the main gateway and provide opportunities for low-income students to pursue higher education. On that basis, this is the time for affordable education to be accessible to all circles of society, as it helps advance the nation's civilization (Alves, 2022a, 2022b; Walton, 2021). Therefore, policies regarding affordable education affect social mobility and improve community welfare (Duryea et al., 2023; Khundi-Mkomba et al., 2023; Sotomayor et al., 2022). Thus, affordability is closely related to welfare, because it indirectly affects all aspects of human life (Debrunner & Hartmann, 2020; Mininni, 2022; Sotomayor et al., 2022).

The operational costs of university education are still sourced from students. Raghuram et al. (2020) present a case in South Africa in which financially disadvantaged campuses can apply for national subsidies so that the financial burden does not fall on students. Universities collaborate with several companies to cover students' educational costs (Okamoto, 2013; Todorinova & Wilkinson, 2019). A campus committed to affordable tuition fees and quality education is an alternative for students to study at universities (Owusu et al., 2023). Pokhrel and Chhetri recommend that, since students' economic backgrounds differ, there is a need for affordable educational innovations at all levels of society (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). This aligns with the findings of Ilieva et al. (2018), who found that affordable campuses provide broad access to higher education. For this reason, the meaning that can be drawn from an affordable campus policy is to prepare a bright future for society through higher education (Alves, 2022b; Bashir et al., 2023a; Krier et al., 2019, 2019). This is the time for higher education to innovate; therefore, educational operational costs need not be entirely borne by students (see also Dinarte-Diaz et al., 2023; Raghuram et al., 2020; Walton, 2021).

The cost of higher education remains unaffordable for some people. This is reasonable because unaffordability intersects with low public funding, thereby affecting participation in higher education (Ilieva et al., 2018; Okoye Ifeanyi, 2023). However, Todorinova and Wilkinson (2019) recognize that the benefits of higher education far outweigh the costs. Higher education provides broad access to communities (Friend, 2023; Mawonde & Togo, 2019; Navarro-Cruz et al., 2023; Prakhov, 2023; Walton, 2021). Higher education guarantees broad access to employment because students at higher education institutions are trained to succeed with the knowledge they already possess (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2023). Student involvement through discussion forums proves students' path to success (Newman et al., 2019; Taylor & Mitra, 2021, 2021; Waheed et al., 2020). This further confirms that the affordability of higher education learning brings greater benefits to students (Simangunsong, 2019; Todorinova & Wilkinson, 2019).

Unaffordability is a barrier to accessing higher education. Unaffordability is closely related to an individual's economic background, which affects access to higher education (Chen et al. 2019). Inequality, and its intersection with one's financial background, also significantly affects access to education, health, and consumption, as well as income equality (Pavlidis et al., 2021). Routhier and Lima added that the other impacts of unaffordability include overcrowding, mental health, child development, and social support (Lima, 2020; Routhier, 2019). It should be through higher education that a person's economic background is strengthened, but people cannot access higher education due to its unaffordability (Dinarte-Diaz et al., 2023; Ren, 2023; Xing et al., 2023). Therefore, there needs to be a policy about available and affordable campuses, because higher education plays an essential role in preparing for a better future for society (Alam et al., 2023; Bashir et al., 2023b; Han & Abdrahim, 2023; Khatani et al., 2023; Sanjakdar & Premier, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the narrative of campus availability and affordability policies semantically represents a deconstruction of the myth that universities are exclusive elitist spaces.

The theoretical contribution of this research enriches textual semantic theory, especially in understanding how public policy is articulated and interpreted by grassroots actors as an instrument of economic liberation. This research strengthens the argument that the meaning of a policy is not static in the regulatory text but dynamic in the interpretation space of its speakers. In terms of semantic implications, the concept of "available and affordable campuses" has undergone a semantic extension. The term no longer refers to the denotative lexical meaning (the existence of physical buildings and low costs). Still, it has shifted to an associative connotative meaning, namely as a metaphor for "structural access justice" and a symbol of vertical mobility that guarantees a bright future.

However, this study has limitations: the data corpus analyzed is sourced from only one location, namely Pamulang University, and the range of actors is limited to the Foundation's Chairman, structural officials, students, and the general public. Given that linguistic variation and socio-cultural contexts influence the construction of meaning, the recommendation for further research is to conduct a comparative semantic analysis of policy narratives across universities or even countries. Future research is also suggested to use the Cognitive Semantics or Critical Discourse Analysis approach to dissect the mental schemas and power relations hidden behind the actors' choice of metaphors.

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