

# Students' Perception toward the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Policy (Case Study at a Private University in South Tangerang)

Clara Evi C. CITRANINGTYAS  
Agustinus Agus SETIWAN  
Dr. Edi PURWANTO

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**Clara Evi C. CITRANINGTYAS**, PhD (English), Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Science, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, South Tangerang, Indonesia

**Agustinus Agus SETIWAN**, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, South Tangerang, Indonesia

**Dr. Edi PURWANTO**, (Development Studies), Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, South Tangerang, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This research presents a case study of students' perceptions, comprehension, and interest in the "Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka" (MBKM) or freedom to learn program. The goal of this research is to acquire an understanding of students' comprehension, experience, interests, challenges, satisfaction, criticism, and suggestions concerning the MBKM program at a private university in South Tangerang, Indonesia. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) approach was used to collect student opinions from 78 students across 10 undergraduate programs, including science and social humanities. Respondents were chosen through purposeful sampling. According to the data, students are generally interested in participating in the MBKM program but lack a comprehensive information of it. The most significant challenge they encounter is a lack of socialization. Students' comments and recommendations provide promise for improved and more clear socialization and information. This insight has the potential to improve the program.

**Keywords:** students' perception; MBKM program;

## Introduction

The Independent Learning Independent Campus Program abbreviated as MBKM is one of the Indonesian government's flagship initiatives for eliminating unemployment and ensuring graduates' relevance in the industrial sector. Nadiem Makarim, the Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology is concerned about the low rate of employment among university graduates. Data reveals that graduate employment rate in Indonesia is a mere 10.8 percent until February 2021 [1-4].

Furthermore, there are many additional obstacles that students will encounter in the future, including technological disruption and automation in the workplace, giving rise to a variety of new employment. As a result, the MBKM curriculum is required to prepare students for these challenges. The primary idea of MBKM is to provide university students learning independence. The Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka program's goal is to equip students to compete in a global environment. This is done by encouraging students to excel in a variety of disciplines [5-9].

Students enrolled in the MBKM program may take courses outside of their study program for three semesters and off campus for two semesters. The Indonesia international student mobility award, student exchange, campus teaching, village development, internships, research, humanitarian initiatives, independent study, and entrepreneurship are among the nine MBKM programs (source: pddikti) [10-15].

Through this program, students are projected to be able to first-hand experience the ecosystem of the world of work, which will serve as a provision for their abilities in living in the world of work in the future. This is the type of transformation that the government desires in the world of education, namely the quality of graduates who are relevant to the world of work and are highly competent. The program and its implementation are governed by a ministerial regulation known as "Permendikbud" No. 3 of 2020 [16-20].

Since its launch, however, there has been little study on how students view the MBKM program. The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive picture of students' perceptions of the MBKM program at a private university in South Tangerang, Indonesia. The research was carried out throughout the university's ten undergraduate programs. The anticipated benefit of this research is that it may be used as a reference for future policy making on the implementation of the MBKM program, as well as a means of improving the implementation of the MBKM program at universities [21-26].

## Methodology

This research employs qualitative approach, and is a case study. As case study research, this research attempts to understand a problem in a specific setting. This study was conducted at a private university South Tangerang, Indonesia that has ten study programs: Management, Communication Sciences, Accounting, Psychology, Architecture, Communication Visual Design; Product Design; Informatics Engineering; System Informatics; and Civil Engineering. Since its establishment in 2011, the university has enforced a policy of student freedom to study outside of its study program, which is facilitated by the notion of a "class for all" curriculum. This demonstrates that the MBKM program is not uncommon to the university's academic community. However, in order to more extensively legitimize the MBKM policy in accordance with Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020, the process of implementing the MBKM program at the university level has been governed through the Rector's Decree No. 113/KEP-REK/UPJ/04.20 concerning the independent learning [27-31].

The study used primary data, which was gathered directly from respondents. Data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with student representatives from each study program at the university. Participants in the focus group discussions were deliberately chosen to ensure that all study programs were represented. This was accomplished by involving each study program in sending students to the FGD. The researcher became a non-participant and was not involved in the FGD. The FGD was held online in December 2021.

Students were asked to respond to the following questions during the FGD:

1. How well do you comprehend the MBKM program?
2. How effective is your study program or university in socializing the MBKM program to the students?

3. Are you interested in participating the MBKM program? If interested, what benefits do you expect from participating in the MBKM program?
4. What challenges do you experience in gaining entry to the newly formed MBKM program? What are the challenges in gathering information about MBKM activities?
5. How satisfied are you with the MBKM program offered by your study program or by your university?
6. What are your comments (criticisms and suggestions) on the implementation of MBKM program?

**Result and Analysis**

This section covers the data recapitulation of the results of the student representatives' Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Based on the data recapitulation, a response was received about student perceptions of the MBKM program.

The FGD was attended by 78 students, comprising 27 from the social humanities and 51 from design and technology. Twenty-eight of these respondents, or 36%, had taken part in the MBKM program. The following is the detail on the number of students in each study program and the number of people who have participated in the MBKM program:

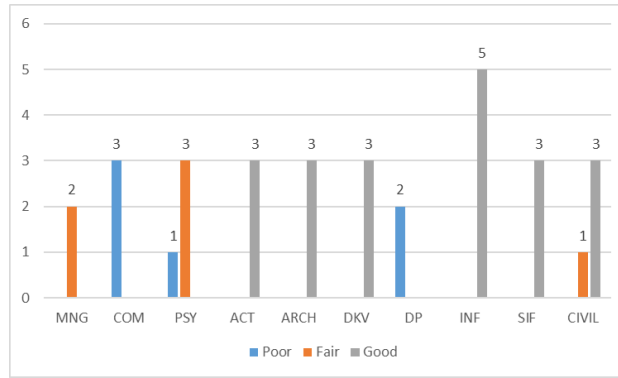
*Table 1*

Respondents from each study program

No	Study Program	Number of students attended FGD	Have joined MBKM program
1	Management	6	2
2	Communication Sciences	4	2
3	Psychology	9	4
4	Accounting	8	1
5	Architecture	13	5
6	Visual Communication Design	10	3
7	Product Design	2	0
8	Informatics Engineering	9	4
9	Information Systems	5	3
10	Civil Engineering	12	4

The students attended the FGD in groups, according to their study programs. It denotes that they are in a familiar environment with their peers. Prior to the start of the FGD, the moderator or interviewer stated that there were no correct or incorrect answers to the preceding questions. Students were asked to freely express their thoughts based on their feelings or experiences, and there is no need for them to be fearful or concerned.

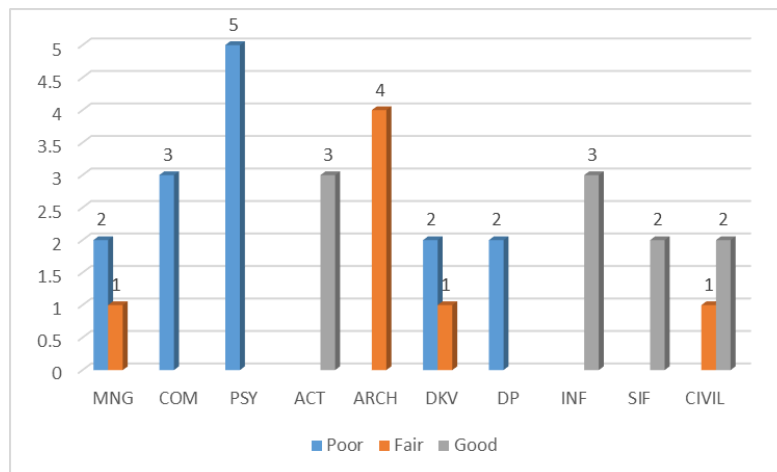
The following is a summary of their responses.



**Figure 1: Students' Comprehension of MBKM Program**

In response to the inquiry about their degree of comprehension of the MBKM program, a total of 20 respondents were recognized as having a good understanding of the MBKM program. It implies they can list three or more MBKM programs; describe what the MBKM program is; and explain the program's origins, aims, and advantages. Six respondents were identified as having a fair understanding of the MBKM program. It implies that you can list one or two MBKM programs and describe them briefly.

Six respondents were found to have a poor understanding of the MBKM program. They admitted to a lack of comprehension; they could not mention the MBKM program; or they merely heard the term MBKM but had no idea what it meant.



**Figure 2: Effectiveness of Socialization**

In response to the question concerning the effectiveness of the MBKM program's socialization in their study program or university, ten respondents responded that it was effective. They claimed to have been well informed. Seven respondents felt that their study program's socialization is adequate. It means that socialization has occurred, but not in a broad or complete manner. Fourteen respondents were found to be dissatisfied with the MBKM program's lack of socializing in their study program. They claimed that they had never heard anything about the program.

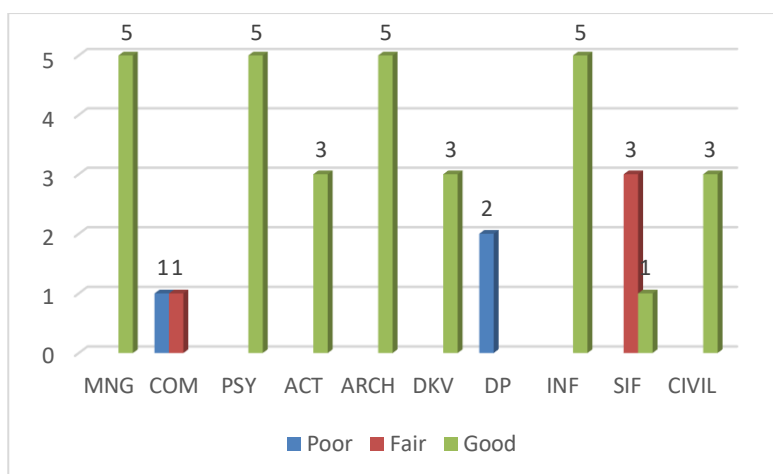


Figure 3: Students' Interest

In response to the question regarding whether they were interested in participating the MBKM program, 30 respondents expressed their interest. This is a significant number that exceeds the number of responders who have enrolled in the program. Four respondents expressed a fair desire to join the program, while three respondents were found to be uninterested in the MBKM program as part of their study program.

The following are the expected benefits of the MBKM program for respondents who expressed an interest:

1. Four respondents desired to broaden their experiences.
2. Three respondents desired to broaden their contacts.
3. Three respondents desired to broaden their knowledge and skills.

Students encountered the following challenges during their participation at the MBKM program:

Challenges faced by participants of MBKM program

Table 2

Type of challenge	No. of respondents experiencing the challenge
Information (lack of information / disparities of information)	12
Time management	4
Supervisor at the partner institution are difficult to contact	2
Administrative requirements	2
Adaptation	2
Courses at the destination campus are too advanced	2
Inability to write a good CV	1
Length of time	1
Credit conversion	1
Not having enough background knowledge needed to participate in the MBK internship	1
Scheduling	1
Partner industry's lack of knowledge on MBKM	1
Regulation	1
Lecturers' of lack of response	1
Award conversion	1
Tiredness	1

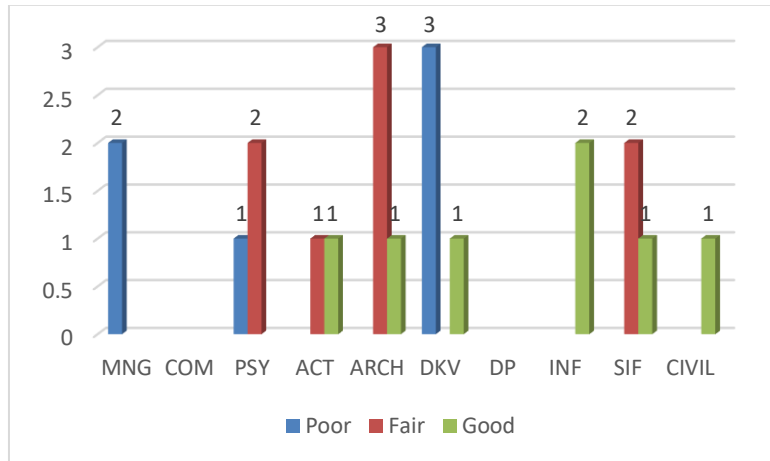


Figure 3: Students' Saatisfaction

In response to the question regarding their satisfaction with MBKM program, seven respondents said they were satisfied. When asked to rate their degree of satisfaction, respondents gave a score ranging from 8 to 10. Eight respondents were found as being somewhat satisfied with the MBKM program. They give a rating ranging from 6 to 7. Six respondents were found to be dissatisfied with the MBKM program. They assigned a score of 5 or less.

The suggestions and inputs given by students are as follows:

Table 3

Suggestions and Inputs

Suggestion	No. of respondents giving suggestion
Sozialization	13
Supervision or mentorship by those who have joined the program	4
Partner readiness	2
Junior classmates not to be hesistant in joining the MBKM program	1
Tuition fee information	1
Credit conversion clarity	1
Administration	1
Scheduling	1
Clearer output	1

Conclusion

The following are the conclusions that may be taken from this FGD:

1. The students that took part in the FGD had a thorough comprehension of the MBKM program.
2. Students believe that the MBKM program's socialization from Study Programs, Faculties, and Universities is still insufficient.
3. The students are enthusiastic in participating in the MBKM program.
4. The greatest anticipated advantage of students enrolled in the MBKM program is the opportunity to gain experience.
5. The majority of students who participated in the MBKM program reported they were pleased (30%) or very satisfied (38%).

6. The key proposal for future improvements to the MBKM program is to improve the program's socialization.

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