

## MERGERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATUR REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses sustainable development issues in the higher education sector from the higher education perspective. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are important actors in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. This paper aims to conceptualize impacts of higher education institutions (HEIs) on sustainable development (SD). This review aims to provide the available constructive literature on merger higher education with a theoretical and empirical background published during the past 5 years, from January 2019- November 2024, to identify impact merger higher education to sustainable development and factors merger higher education. The author searched for articles in two databases(Scopus and Proquest). The contribution of this research becomes a reference in understanding impact merger higher education to sustainable development and determining the factors of merger in higher education.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, Mergers , Higher Education

### ABSTRAK

Makalah ini membahas isu pembangunan berkelanjutan di sektor pendidikan tinggi dari perspektif pendidikan tinggi. Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi (HEIs) merupakan aktor penting dalam mencapai Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) dan Agenda 2030 yang ditetapkan oleh Majelis Umum Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa pada tahun 2015. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengonseptualisasikan dampak institusi pendidikan tinggi (HEIs) terhadap pembangunan berkelanjutan (SD). Tinjauan ini bertujuan untuk menyediakan literatur konstruktif yang tersedia tentang pendidikan tinggi merger dengan latar belakang teoritis dan empiris yang diterbitkan selama 5 tahun terakhir, dari Januari 2019-November 2024, untuk mengidentifikasi dampak merger pendidikan tinggi terhadap pembangunan berkelanjutan dan faktor-faktor merger pendidikan tinggi. Penulis mencari artikel dalam dua database (Scopus dan Proquest). Kontribusi penelitian ini menjadi referensi dalam memahami dampak merger pendidikan tinggi terhadap pembangunan berkelanjutan dan menentukan faktor-faktor merger dalam pendidikan tinggi.

**Kata kunci:** Pembangunan berkelanjutan, Penggabungan, Pendidikan Tinggi

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### INTRODUCTION

Higher Education have a crucial role in imparting the values, knowledge, and abilities required for sustainable development, especially in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.(Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2021). Higher education institutions have become change agents as a result of the growing social need for more sustainable practices in these

institutions.(Berchin et al., 2021). Globally, the higher education sector has experienced a paradigm shift in terms of governance and state regulations (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015), high competition (Musselin, 2018), supply and demand challenges (Riddell, 2018) and the debate about the efficiency and effectiveness of the education sector (Jiju Antony et al., 2019).

Research on the merger in higher education is still limited compared to research in the private sector (David & Amey, 2020). Higher Education mergers have become a popular way to overcome challenges in the education sector. An increasing number of institutions are considering mergers as a preferred strategy to influence growth, innovation, and financial sustainability at a time of increasing challenges in the higher education sector (Weiss, 2018). When compared with China, which has a larger population, it has relatively fewer universities than Indonesia (Chadidjah et al., 2021) and has a better education system (Wahab Syakhrani et al., 2022). *Merger is a strategic approach to obtain resources and gain competitive advantage. Mergers allow organizations to grow by building economies of scale, reducing costs, developing new products and expanding market share* (Azziz et al., 2017).

Based on Law No.12 of 2012 concerning higher education (Republik Indonesia, 2012) Higher education is divided into two types, namely state universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS). Higher education under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) informs that the total number of universities in Indonesia in 2022 will be 3,107 with a percentage of 93.98%. namely private status, numbering 2,982 and 125 are state universities (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2023).

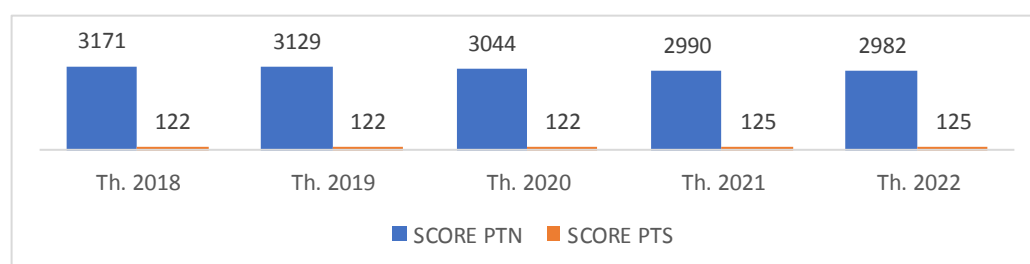


Figure1. Comparison of Public and Private Universities in Indonesia  
2018-2022

Figure1. shows the comparison of the number of public and private universities in Indonesia in 2018-2022 under the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education.

Based on higher education statistics data from 2018 to 2022, private universities experienced a decline of 5.9%. In 2019 it was 1.3%, in 2020 there was a decrease of 2.7%, in 2021 it was 1.7%. and in 2022 it will be 1.5%. The biggest decline occurred in 2020 due to high competition and uncertainty in demand, (Blocker et al., 2011; Casidy, 2013), Covid 19 which had an impact on the world of education (Dawadi et al., 2020; Jena, 2020), the entry of foreign universities (James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017) and several selection routes carried out by state universities such as national selection based on achievement (SNBP), national selection based on test (SNBT) and independent selection.

The above conditions encourage the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, Technology (Ditjen Dikristek) in an effort to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia, to accelerate the program of merging and uniting private universities (PTS). This is in accordance with the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology 2020-2024. (Iptek & Lipi, 2015). The merger of higher education institution has been regulated in (Permen Dikti No.3, 2018). Merger of Private Universities is the merger of several private universities, each managed by 1 (one) organizing body, into 1 (one) new private university managed by 1 (one) new organizing body. The program of merging or uniting private universities (PTS) is expected to provide optimal support for national competitiveness, continuous quality improvement of higher education, and improve governance and sustainability of the implementation of quality higher education (Khairusy et al., 2022) .

Merger higher education has significant potential to support sustainable development by creating synergies between various scientific disciplines and existing resources. Through mergers, educational institutions can increase the efficiency of budget use (Armijos et al., 2024), and facilitating stronger research collaborations (Han et al., 2022) In addition, the merged universities can expand their impact on society by developing community service programs that focus on education and awareness of sustainability issues. Although challenges such as differences in culture and academic focus may arise, the right integration strategy can ensure that this merger not only improves the quality of education, but also contributes significantly to the achievement of sustainable development goals at the local and global level.

## **Research Question**

The orientation of the systematic literature covers the following topics: (1) The Merger Higher Education impact Sustainable Development and (2) The factors that influence university merger.

**Table 1 presents the three research questions (RQ).**

ID	Research Question (RQ)
RQ1	Merger Higher Education impact Sustainable Development
RQ2	Factor University Merger

## LITERATUR Search

In this review, the author examined the literature published within the last 5 years (from Jan 2019 to Nov 2024) and indexed three databases for the following keyword: “Sustainable Development” and (“Mergers in Higher Education” or “University Mergers”) The number and percentage of studies available in each database are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Search results in databases using the keywords**

Database	Number of Studies	% Studies
Proquest	969	30,45%
Scopus	2213	69,55
Score	3182	100%

## METHOD

The author used a systematic review procedure to determine the primary scientific foundation for university mergers because there is a wide range of descriptions and measurements of the idea. The primary distinction between traditional narrative reviews and systematic reviews is that the former employ a transparent, scientific, and reproducible methodology. However, a systematic review is not the same as a meta-analysis because it does not employ statistical and econometric techniques to analyze data and synthesize findings. Three steps were taken in this study:

1. Outlining research topics and review procedures is part of planning a review.
2. Performing an analysis that addresses certain inclusion/exclusion standards, data extraction, and article selection

3. A presentation and discussion of the findings are required for some of the reported evaluations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Answering the Research Questions**

#### **RQ 1: Higher Education Mergers impact Sustainable Development**

**University mergers** A formal combination or unification of two or more colleges or institutions is referred to as a higher education merger. Usually, these mergers are done to accomplish a number of strategic goals, like acquiring a competitive edge, resolving institutional problems like enrolment declines, and boosting productivity and cost reductions. (Romanenko & Froumin, 2020).

The main challenges in integrating higher education for sustainable development include the integration of poverty principles in the educational context. (Gorski et al., 2023), empowering a new generation with a clear vision of responsibility for sustainable development (Ahmad et al., 2023). The potential economic benefits of integrating higher education for sustainable development include the development of technical skills, and contributions to economic growth. (Menon & Suresh, 2020). Integrating higher education for sustainable development can contribute to environmental conservation by fostering a sustainable mindset, integrating sustainability into the curriculum, and incorporating sustainability into students' daily routines and campus life. Best practices for integrating sustainable development into higher education curricula include the application of transformative pedagogical methods, teaching methods that go beyond general competencies, and the development of tools to support education staff in integrating sustainable development into the curriculum.

#### **RQ 2: What Factors Influence University Merger**

<b>Publication</b>	<b>Factors</b>
(Han et al., 2022)	Funding input for scientific research, development of scientific disciplines, development in higher education.
(Refae & Belarbi, 2024)	Efforts to gain recognition from international accrediting bodies, the drive to improve global academic rankings, Increasing pressure to internationalize higher education.

Publication	Factors
(Savović, 2020)	Human resource management, leadership qualities, academic culture.
(Hong et al., 2024)	Governmental objectives to enhance competitiveness, integrate research and education, address institutional problems, declines in enrollment and demands for efficiency.
(Rocha et al., 2019)	Funding-related issues , financial incentives, economic gains.
(Freire & Teixeira, 2024)	<i>Academic quality in the long term, increasing the averages of students</i>


	15.932	Keyword: Sustnaible Development OR Sustnaible Development Goals AND Merger Higher Education OR Merger University
	3182	Only Open Access Journals are taken
	183	Adding the word AND explanation or concept AND element OR component
	28	Selection of the appropriate

Figure 2. SLR Funnel Diagram

## CONCLUSION

The ramifications of university mergers are complex and include legal, academic, financial, and regulatory factors. They can result in economies of scale and cost savings, but they also pose problems for student experience, faculty productivity, and cultural integration. Effective human resource management, high-caliber leadership, and attaining cultural conformity of combined institutions are all critical to the success of university mergers. It is crucial to remember, however, that depending on the particular situation and the institutions involved, the effects of university mergers can differ.

This study, like previous systematic reviews, has limitations. just a small number of publisher journals—Scopus and Proquest, were used. It is anticipated that future research would broaden its scope to encompass additional datasets. Second, only scientific studies

were included in the literature review. Future research can take into account different kinds of literature. Third, the inclusion and exclusion of papers and their classification were based on the subjective opinions of the writers and prior research. It is anticipated that future research would be more objective and involve focus groups or in-depth conversations with experts

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