

Determine majors in vocational high schools based on fuzzy c-means algorithm

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ABSTRACT

The number of prospective students enrolling in vocational high schools is significant each year. Consequently, schools must efficiently manage extensive data, demanding high accuracy to minimize the possibility of human errors in calculations. Additionally, student interests and talents play crucial roles in major selection and influence student learning outcomes. This study aims to investigate the utilization of a decision support system called Fuzzy C-Means to assist schools in managing large datasets to determine majors and group students based on their interests and talents. Fuzzy C-Means was employed to categorize students into several alternative majors, including Catering (CT), Fashion Design (FD), Accounting and Institutional Finance (AIF), Online Business and Marketing (OBM), Multimedia (MM), Office Governance Automation (OGA), and Computer and Network Engineering (CNE). The research adopted a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design. Data were collected through interest-aptitude tests and documentation. The participants in this study were 58 students from State Vocational High School Barabai 1. Fuzzy C-Means successfully grouped students into seven clusters. Applying criteria of interests and aptitudes, every student had the opportunity to belong to all existing majors. Fuzzy C-Means was also compared with the K-means algorithm to demonstrate its superiority. The accuracy of Fuzzy C-Means was found to be 89.7%, while K-means achieved an accuracy of 84.5%. This indicates an increase in accuracy by 5.2% when compared to the K-means algorithm. The cluster validity value, assessed using the Partition Coefficient Index, falls within the 'good' category (0.6054). Considering cluster validation and the level of system accuracy, a decision support system utilizing the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm is deemed a feasible alternative for determining school majors.

Keywords: determine majors, fuzzy c-means and k-means, interest and aptitude, vocational high school

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INTRODUCTION

Admission of new students to vocational high schools takes place at the beginning of the odd semester. The student selection process is based on criteria established by the school. Each individual characteristic should be considered, as it influences the achievement of learning

outcomes (McDermott and Zerr, 2019).Students with a high interest in learning tend to have greater learning achievements compared to those with low interest (Sitanggang et al., 2019). Interest also affects students' learning difficulties (As'ad et al., 2021). Students not interested in certain lessons are likely to be passive and engage in conversations with classmates during class. On the other hand, students interested in the lesson are more likely to pay attention, experience pleasure and excitement, and have the desire to achieve better results (Setiawan et al., 2020; Permatasari et al., 2019). Interest should be considered alongside aptitudes to help students succeed in their majors. By understanding their aptitudes, students can identify majors that are either easier or more challenging for them to learn. Therefore, students need to carefully choose a major that aligns with their capabilities (Barret, 2009).

According to the Ministry of Education (Kemendikbud, 2018), vocational high schools in Indonesia offer a total of 146 majors. Some examples include Catering (CT), Fashion Design (FD), Accounting and Institutional Finance (AIF), Online Business and Marketing (OBM), Multimedia (MM), Office Governance Automation (OGA), and Computer and Network Engineering (CNE). Given the variety of alternative majors available to students, it is crucial for them to make thoughtful and informed choices.

Moreover, as vocational high schools have a large number of students (Kemendikbud, 2022), these schools commonly require high accuracy to minimize the possibility of human errors in calculations while processing students' data. Considering some of the challenges mentioned above, it is necessary to implement a decision support system using Fuzzy C-Means. In this present study, this system was employed with Matlab software to assist schools in determining majors based on students' interests and aptitudes. Decision support systems can enhance analytical skills and facilitate decision-making alternatives (Supriadi et al, 2021). They enable users to avoid spending excessive time on calculating extensive data (Susanto et al., 2021). Limbong (2020) stated that...

"... the characteristic of an effective decision support system is its ease of use and allows the user flexibility to choose or develop new approaches in discussing the problems faced".

Fuzzy C-Means belong to the soft clustering classification. Soft clustering has an advantage in data membership restriction compared to hard clustering (Gustafson and Kessel, 1978). Fuzzy C-Means allows data to be part of several clusters (Rahmayanti et al., 2023). It differs from other algorithm concepts; data is not fully a member of a cluster, but it can be a member of several clusters simultaneously. It will be assigned as a member of a cluster based on the highest degree value, ranging from 0 to 1 (Anggoro et al., 2022).

The first step in performing Fuzzy C-Means calculations is to determine some initial parameters such as the number of clusters (c), Weighting Exponent (m), and the smallest error (e). Fuzzy C-Means divides the data set (X) into cluster groups (c) by minimizing the objective function (P)

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(Al-Dabagh., 2021). It has been widely used in various areas, such as finance (Guha and Veeranjaneyulu, 2019), electricity (Senen et al., 2023), medical diagnosis (Kim et al., 2021), wireless sensor networks (Hassan et al., 2020; Moussaoui et al., 2021), 3D modeling (Hamza et al., 2020), and isolation forest (Karczmarek et al., 2021). Additionally, Fuzzy C-Means was chosen because it demonstrates a good level of accuracy and a low error rate in calculations (Murugan et al., 2020).

Previous studies show that a decision support system using the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm could be employed in selecting majors in vocational high schools with three majors (Az-Zahra et al., 2018). Other studies also demonstrate that the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm is feasible for use in vocational high schools with four majors (Basorudin, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to examine decision support systems using Fuzzy C-Means for grouping more than 3–4 majors in vocational high school to determine whether the system is still feasible to implement. Fuzzy C-Means will also be compared with the K-Means algorithm to prove that Fuzzy C-Means is the best solution to determine majors in this study. The cluster validation used is the partition coefficient index. The purpose of this research is to implement a decision support system using Fuzzy C-Means to group students in State Vocational High School Barabai 1 based on the scores of interest and aptitude tests.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design. The design allowed us to focus on one group and provide intervention during the experiment. Unlike the experimental group, it did not include a control group (Creswell., 2020).

The experiment in this study aimed to test the validity of the cluster and the accuracy of the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm in selecting seven majors based on students' interests and aptitudes. Data were obtained from the research location, namely State Vocational High School Barabai 1, with 58 students participating in the study. Data collection involved interest tests, aptitude tests, and documentation. The interest test consisted of four subtests, while the aptitude test comprised nine subtests (Kemendikbud, 2016). Documentation in this study was used to obtain average scores, which were then employed to assess students' accuracy in selecting majors. The cluster validity used in this study was the Partition Coefficient Index. Additionally, this study will apply the k-means algorithm with the same data and analysis techniques for comparison with the fuzzy c-means algorithm.

The accuracy of the fuzzy c-means and k-means systems used for selecting majors will be compared to the no-system (manual) selection method currently implemented in the school. Subsequently, fuzzy c-means and k-means accuracy will be compared to determine which algorithm is suitable for implementation in schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hierarchical structure of this study comprises objectives, criteria, and alternatives. The ultimate goal of this hierarchy is to establish a decision-support system for selecting majors. The criteria in this hierarchy include the interests and aptitudes of students, while the alternatives consist of Catering (CT), Fashion Design (FD), Accounting and Institutional Finance (AIF), Online Business and Marketing (OBM), Multimedia (MM), Office Governance Automation (OGA), and Computer and Network Engineering (CNE). The hierarchical structure of the major selection process is presented in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Hierarchical Structure of Major Selection with Decision Support System

After obtaining the data on students' interests and aptitude, data normality was checked before calculating the Fuzzy C-Means. In the next step, several initial parameters in the Matlab software for Fuzzy C-Means calculations were set: the number of clusters (c) to 7, rank weight (m) to 2, the maximum number of improvements (ξ) to 10⁻⁵, the maximum number of iterations (MaxIt) to 200, and initial objective function (P₀) to 0. In this study, the calculation stopped at the 51st iteration. The objective function values obtained at the 50th and 51st iterations were 1367.51535 and 1367.51536, respectively. Therefore, the objective function at the 51st iteration is 0.00001, according to the parameters set at the beginning of the calculation.

1. Cluster center in the last iteration for fuzzy c-means

In the last iteration (51), the cluster center (V_{ki}) generated (by Matlab Software) is:

```
18.2526
18.0809
10.2480
28.0813
19.5116
13.3492
18.4547

23.8146
16.3047
21.0565
20.3166
20.7364
17.5546
21.9204

16.5598
17.3919
20.0918
16.8659
16.4415
15.0086
16.3760

22.9145
19.6472
17.7422
28.3554
33.9516
17.0015
30.6054

19.1322
17.8674
12.9339
22.6754
22.7443
15.1957
26.8510

20.8666
27.1714
19.5497
20.1791
21.1922
15.8794
21.7530

14.9757
14.7773
9.8391
14.8876
15.6256
23.7856
14.4361
```

Figure 2. Cluster Center in The Last Iteration for fuzzy c-means

For example, if the highest scores on student interest tests and aptitude tests are used as the basis for determining majors:

- a) In the first cluster (first row), the highest score is in the 4th column (Online Business and Marketing). The first cluster is identified as the group of Online Business and Marketing major.
- b) In the second cluster (second row), the highest score is in the first column (Catering Management). The second cluster is identified as the group of Catering major.
- c) In the third cluster (third row), the highest score is in the third column (Accounting and Financial Institutions). The third cluster is identified as the group of Accounting and Institutional Finance major.
- d) In the fourth cluster (fourth row), the highest score is in the fifth column (Multimedia). The fourth cluster is identified as the group of Multimedia major.
- e) in the fifth cluster (fifth row), the highest score is in the seventh column (Computer and Network Engineering). Therefore, so the fifth cluster is identified as a group of Computer and Network Engineering major.
- f) In the fifth cluster (fifth row), the highest score is in the seventh column (Computer and Network Engineering). The fifth cluster is identified as the group of Computer and Network Engineering major.
- g) In the seventh cluster (seventh row), the highest value is in the sixth column (Office Governance Automation). Therefore, the seventh cluster is identified as the group of Office Governance Automation major.

After calculations in the last iteration (51), clusters can be identified as groups in certain majors with the highest membership values based on test scores. Cluster identification is presented in Table 1.

No	Cluster	Majors
1	Cluster 1	OBM
2	Cluster 2	СТ
3	Cluster 3	AIF
4	Cluster 4	MM
5	Cluster 5	CNE
6	Cluster 6	FD
7	Cluster 7	OGA

Table 1. Identification of Clusters in The Last Iteration for fuzzy c-means

In the last k-means iteration (7), cluster identification is presented in Table 2.

No	Cluster	Majors
1	Cluster 1	OGA
2	Cluster 2	CNE
3	Cluster 3	MM
4	Cluster 4	OBM
5	Cluster 5	FD
6	Cluster 6	СТ
7	Cluster 7	AIF

Table 2. Identification of Clusters in The Last Iteration for fuzzy c-means

2. The membership degree partition matrix (μ) of the last iteration for fuzzy c-means

From the last iteration of the μ partition matrix, there is a tendency for the data to fall into certain major groups. The highest degree of membership among all clusters makes students members of certain clusters. The total degree value allowed in all clusters is 1. FCM has advantages over k-means in terms of providing information about the class to which a point belongs through a probability. This allows for a more accurate classification of each data point. Some of the membership degree data for each student in each cluster are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Some of The Membership Degree Data for Each Data Point in Each Cluster in fuzzy c-means

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			Degree of	f Members	hip (µ) at			Data trands onton the
Student		Last Iteration						Data trends enter the
	(µ1)	(µ2)	(µ3)	(µ4)	(µ5)	(µ6)	cluster (μ7)	cluster
1	0.0406	0.0389	0.0719	0.0159	0.0347	0.0311	0.7670	7
21	0.6581	0.0505	0.0631	0.0296	0.0879	0.0510	0.0598	1
31	0.1070	0.0801	0.0702	0.0545	0.5540	0.0790	0.0551	5
32	0.0788	0.0867	0.0704	0.0461	0.0973	0.5805	0.402	6
37	0.0391	0.6766	0.1177	0.0207	0.0552	0.0575	0.331	2
38	0.0294	0.7473	0.0590	0.0300	0.0506	0.0606	0.232	2
45	0.0490	0.1107	0.0809	0.0393	0.0686	0.6193	0.0323	6
51	0.0853	0.2252	0.3213	0.0522	0.1058	0.1069	0.1034	3
53	0.1219	0.1765	0.1130	0.1462	0.2440	0.1039	0.0945	5

From the last iteration in k-means, the data becomes a full member of the cluster. Some of determination cluster membership is presented in Table 4.

Student	CT (cluster 6)	FD (cluster 5)	AIF (cluster 7)	OBM (cluster 4)	MM (cluster 3)	OGA (cluster 1)	CNE (cluster 2)	Data trends enter the cluster
1	13	13	10	13	14	25	11	1
21	16	18	7	29	16	13	17	4
31	16	18	10	19	23	14	27	2
32	20	28	16	22	23	18	20	5
37	24	15	21	19	18	17	20	6
38	25	16	24	20	22	19	22	6
45	23	29	23	20	18	16	23	5
51	14	13	26	20	17	20	20	6
53	17	13	15	20	31	19	22	6

Table 4. Some determination of cluster membership in k-means

3. Accuracy of a decision support system using the fuzzy C-means and K-means algorithm

The determination of majors using the system was compared to the manual determination method that has been implemented in the school. The accuracy of the results is determined based on the following criteria:

- a) If the manual determination is the same as the determination by Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans, and the average test score obtained is greater than or equal to (>=) the minimum completeness criteria/standard (>= 75), the determination using Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans is declared accurate.
- b) If the manual determination is the same as the determination by Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans, and the average test score obtained is smaller than (<) the minimum

completeness criteria, the determination using the Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans algorithm is declared inaccurate.

- c) If the manual determination is not the same as the determination by Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans, and the average test score obtained is greater than or equal to (>=) the minimum completeness criteria, the determination using Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans is declared inaccurate.
- d) If the manual determination is not the same as the determination by Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans, and the average test score obtained is smaller than (<) the minimum completeness criteria, the determination using Fuzzy C-Means/Kmeans is declared accurate.

The accuracy of the data and the results produced by the Fuzzy C-Means and K-Means algorithms is presented in Table 5-6.

Student	M	ajor	Student Grade Point	Descrift
	Manuals	C-means	Average	Kesuit
1	OGA	OGA	77.4	Accurate
21	OBM	OBM	74.9	Not accurate
31	CNE	CNE	78.43	Accurate
32	CNE	FD	74.87	Accurate
37	CT	CT	80.95	Accurate
38	CT	CT	79.25	Accurate
45	FD	FD	74.85	Not accurate
51	AIF	AIF	80.12	Accurate
53	MM	CNE	80.6	Not Accurate

Table 5. Data of Major Determination Using Fuzzy C-Means Algorithm

Table 6. Data of Major Determination Using K-Means Algorithm

Student	Μ	ajor	Student Grade Point	Result
Student	Manuals	K-means	Average	Kesuit
1	OGA	OGA	77.4	Accurate
21	OBM	OBM	74.9	Not accurate
31	CNE	CNE	78.43	Accurate
32	CNE	FD	74.87	Accurate
37	CT	СТ	80.95	Accurate
38	СТ	СТ	79.25	Accurate
45	FD	FD	74.85	Not accurate
51	AIF	СТ	80.12	Not accurate
53	MM	СТ	80.6	Not accurate

Table 7 shows the results on a dataset with 7 clusters. Fuzzy C-Means performed 51 iterations, whereas K-Means performed 7 iterations. The accuracy of Fuzzy C-Means was 89.7%, and the accuracy of K-Means was 84.5%.

Iteration Fuzzy C- means	Iteration K-means	Accuracy Fuzzy C- means	Accucary K-means
51	7	89.7%	84.5%

Table 7. Comparison of results between fuzzy c-means and k-means

4. Cluster validity for fuzzy c-means

The cluster validity used in this study is the Partition Coefficient Index (PCI). PCI is a valid measure of overlap in clusters. The range of this validity value is 0–1. If the validity value is close to 1, the quality of the cluster is getting better. The PCI value obtained in this study is 0.6054. The determination of majors plays an important role in students' lives at school. When the choice has been made, various consequences await in the future. Some fail, and some succeed and live prosperously in the future. For this reason, the determination of majors in schools must be done precisely and accurately. In this study, a decision support system is proposed using the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm. Fuzzy C-Means can produce smooth results because the data do not only belong to one cluster but to other clusters with different membership levels. The data tend to be a member of a particular cluster with the largest membership value among the others. The system is run using Matlab software, a leading tool in the field of mathematics, offering various algorithms in its toolbox, making it easier for scientists to achieve their goals.

Aiming to make it easier for students to determine majors, a decision support system using the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm can divide students into seven clusters based on their interests and aptitudes. With the criteria of interest and aptitude, every student has the opportunity to belong to all existing majors. Separation among all majors is determined by the number of degrees of closeness to the centroid on each interest and aptitude test score. The higher the interest and aptitude test scores in a particular major, the higher the chance of becoming a member of that cluster. There were 8 students in cluster 1 (OBM), 6 students in cluster 2 (CT), 7 students in cluster 3 (AIF), 5 students in cluster 4 (MM), 6 students in cluster 5 (CNE), 10 students in cluster 6 (FD), and 16 students in cluster 7 (OGA).

The results of determining majors using the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm for first-year students (grade X) show that 52 (89.7%) out of 58 students selected their majors correctly, while determining majors using the K-Means algorithm shows that 49 (84.5%) out of 58 students chose the major correctly. When comparing the accuracy of the two algorithms for determining majors,

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there is a difference of 5.2% (89.7% - 84.5%). Based on the results with datasets and data analysis techniques, Fuzzy C-Means is more accurate than K-Means, indicating that the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm is better.

After the Fuzzy C-Means calculation process is complete, cluster validity was tested using the Partition Coefficient Index (PCI). With a larger number of clusters than in previous studies, the PCI validity value obtained is still in the good category. The PCI validity value will decrease to close to 1, or it is not feasible with an increase in the number of clusters given (Rajkumar et al., 2019; (Afzal et al., 2021). The validity value of PCI with seven clusters in this study is 0.6054, meaning that the cluster has a good status.

The Fuzzy C-Means method makes it easier for schools to group new students because determining majors using the manual method requires high accuracy and the possibility of human error in calculations. Additionally, interest tests and aptitude tests can be used as criteria in determining majors for schools since the tests will provide an overview of which majors are easier and which may be more difficult for each student. Paying attention to their interests and aptitudes, students can consider majors that are easier to deal with than others.

Based on cluster validation and the system's accuracy level, the decision support system using the Fuzzy C-Means algorithm is deemed feasible to provide guidance for determining majors in vocational high schools. This system simplifies the process for schools to handle the large number of new students who enroll each year and assists students in selecting majors from the available alternatives.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that a decision support system using Fuzzy C-Means is superior to the k-means algorithm and can effectively determine majors in vocational high schools that offer up to seven majors. However, this study was conducted at one vocational school. Further research should apply this system in vocational schools with more majors and compare it with other algorithms.

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