

PARENTAL PERSPECTIVE: THE CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF DISTANCE LEARNING DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

One of the effects of the existence of Covid-19 was that face-to-face schooling could not be conducted continuously, and so another possible way of learning had to be arranged. The difference between online and face-to-face learning has invited some perceptions and obstacles to the implementation. Thus, this study aimed to describe the parents' perception on the benefits and challenges towards the distance learning during the pandemic at school in Aceh, Indonesia. This study took a case in one junior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia. There were 25 parents taken purposively as the sample. The study used questionnaire and interview to collect the data. The questionnaire and interview guide consisted of 10 questions posted on Google Form. The results found that the implementation of distance learning has led to the benefits and challenges. A number of challenges faced by parents when assisting their children with distance learning included lack of access to technology. Furthermore, parents had lack of knowledge or skills to assist their children with their homework, especially if the subject matter was unfamiliar. The last challenge was time constraints among the parents, making it difficult to find the time to support their children's distance learning. On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic has also brought significant gains toward education. The benefits were to minimize the children to be infected by the Covid-19, to engage relationship between the kids and parents, and to encourage parents to use their creativity and digital literacy in implementing the learning material.

KEYWORDS: *Covid-19 Pandemic, Distance Learning, Parental Perspective.*

INTRODUCTION

A normal teaching learning process in education generally shows that students come to the school, sit on the chairs in the room, listen to the teacher's instruction, and learn material based on the curriculum. Commonly, all aspects needed in the learning process have been designed in a curriculum. There are some components as an education program in a curriculum that have been planned, such as the purpose,



content, organization, and strategy. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on normal schooling, with many schools and universities transitioning to distance learning as a means of continuing education while reducing the spread of the virus. This shift has brought both challenges and benefits for parents and students alike (Yuzulia, 2021).

It should be underlined that the curriculum can be perfectly implemented in normal education. However, it is also important for curriculum to be flexible and adaptable in order to meet the needs and learning styles of all students, regardless of the situations. Nevertheless, if a school experiences an unexpected disruption, such as Covid-19 pandemic, a flexible curriculum allows the necessary adjustments to be made in order to meet the needs of students in such situations.

Related to the phenomena stated above, many parents and students appear unprepared for the availability of online learning. In a remote region, where access to technology is restricted and knowledge of how to use it is scarce, this is something that students, parents, and even instructors must deal with. In Lase et al. (2022), most parents find it challenging because they lack supporting resources like smartphones, computers, and internet connection. Further, they may also have no experience in using the equipment. These factors—limited tech experience, a lack of desire, individual beliefs, difficult subject, inadequate assistance, a lack of community involvement, and learner boredom—have emerged as common ones throughout online learning.

Online learning is one innovation on the education world, which will anticipate the problem in learning process. Online learning, or virtual learning, is a kind of teaching and learning which delivers learning material to the students through internet media, intranets, and other electronic (Hartley, 2001). According to Kentnor (2015), distance learning may refer to an effort to connect learners with their study sources even though the students and teachers are physically separated. Rosenberg (as cited in Kamba, 2009) defines e-learning as a network phenomenon that facilitates both revision and distribution. Consequently, online learning can be interpreted as the delivery of educational content and instruction through the use of technology, such as the internet. Online learning allows students to access and complete coursework from any location with an internet connection, often at their own pace and on their own schedule (Connolly & Stansfield, 2006).

However, the characteristics are different between traditional and new paradigm. Online learning can also present challenges, such as the need for reliable technology and internet access, and the potential for isolation and lack of in-person support and interaction (Gilbert, 2015; Yusny et al., 2021). It is important for educators and students

to be aware of these challenges and to find strategies to overcome them in order to ensure a successful and meaningful virtual learning experience. The virtual learning concept is developed not to replace the face-to-face learning in the class. In addition, the combination between virtual learning with face-to-face learning will increase quality of the learning, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of education (Yusny et al., 2021; Yusny & Yasa, 2019). Therefore, any obstacle may present during online learning. This obstacle is very likely to occur because education, which is usually under the supervision of a teacher, has now shifted to parents at home.

Parental perception is an important aspect in young learners. It can be motivation and it can be reason of failure of education. In the online learning for young learners, parents taking role as an instructor for their children. When parents have more portion than educationalists in teaching for young learners, the problem may arise. Perception means a conclusion and interpretation of information or message from people experiencing about an object or an event (Ariawan, 2022). In short, perception can be interpreted as a view of situations, objects, and people.


Nevertheless, not all kids and their parents, particularly in remote locations, are accustomed to online learning platforms. Additionally, parents' capacity to offer their children access to online learning resources is limited (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). Not all of them have access to reliable energy and the internet at all times. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the parents' perception toward online learning at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ONLINE LEARNING

Anderson (2008, p. 16) describes that online learning is a set of learning process which includes "e-learning, Internet learning, distributed learning, networked learning, tele-learning, virtual learning, computer-assisted learning, web-based learning, and distance learning". In line with Kamba (2009) online learning is a function of accessibility, efficiency and quality of learning and services as well as remote changes and collaboration. There are several definitions of online learning, and they all refer to technology-based learning and remote learning. Online learning is a complement to the world of education

Online learning, also called distance learning, forms education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication. According to Kuong (2015), online learning includes additional critical



elements such as adjusting the learning arrangements, designing the teaching activities, providing an experienced teacher, and giving a well-organized learning management system. It also converts the traditional learning model into a kind of electronic version. Additionally, online learning encourages students and teachers to engage in a more active and independent role in their day-to-day activity.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

One of the benefits of online learning is the ability to be flexible for individual learners (Dağ & Geçer, 2009). According to Zhong (2015), using online learning creates a more practical and adaptable instructional resource for students to learn from. Nevertheless, online learning would have a critical drawback, making it so that learners would struggle to participate in online learning if they were unable to connect to the network, were less skilled at using the instructional design, and were less adept at browsing online.

According to Gautam (2020), online learning offers several advantages, they are: 1) efficiency, which means that teachers can be efficient instructors by expanding the lesson plan beyond traditional textbooks to include online materials, such as videos, PDFs, and podcasts; 2) accessibility of time and place, which means that online learning enables learners to access the course materials at any time and from any location, allowing them to attend classes from anywhere they prefer; 3) affordability, which suggests that due to the availability of course materials online and the lower cost of transportation and food when compared to traditional classroom settings, online learning is significantly more economical. This results in an affordable and paperless learning environment; 4) improved student attendance, which means that there is minimal chance of learners missing classes because online classes can be attended from home or any other location; and 5) suits a variety of learning style, which indicated that with its variety of options and resources, the online learning system can be tailored in a wide range of ways. It is a great method for making an ideal learning environment that is tailored to the requirements of each learner.

On the other hand, Gautam (2020) also remarks that online learning also brings a number of disadvantages, they are: 1) inability to focus on screens, which suggests that students who are learning online may find it difficult to maintain their attention on the screen for extended periods of time as they are easily distracted by social media and other websites ; 2) technology issues, which means that although the use of the internet has increased dramatically over the past few years, it can be difficult to get a reliable connection with adequate speed in smaller towns

and villages; 3) sense of isolation, which is due to lack of in-person contact between learners and instructors in an online class, and thus learners frequently feel isolated when learning; 4) teacher training, which means that teachers who use online learning must have a fundamental understanding of using digital learning tools. Yet, teachers frequently only possess a basic understanding of technology. They occasionally even lack the equipment and resources needed to conduct online classes; and, 5) manage screen time, which means that the increase in screen time may cause learners to suffer from poor posture and other physical issues.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was a descriptive method in which the researchers described the parents' perceptions towards the implementation of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic era. The respondents consisted of 25 parents from a class in a junior high school in Banda Aceh City, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The study collected the data by disseminating a questionnaire to the respondents via Google Form. There were 10 statements in the questionnaire, in which the respondents were asked to choose whether they agreed or disagreed on the statements. In addition, the study also selected purposively four respondents to be interviewed further on the implementation of online learning. The researchers then analyzed quantitatively the questionnaire data by calculating the percentage of the answers. The interview data were analyzed qualitatively based on the benefits and challenges of online learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of this study taken from the questionnaire answered by the students' parents at a junior high school in Banda Aceh. The researchers presented the data based on the results in the following.

1. Parents' perception towards the advantages of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

This study found mixed responses among parents whether online home learning conducted by the schools has had a positive impact on their children. Around 45% of them agreed and 10% strongly agreed with the distance learning that it could help their children understand the learning materials given. In contrast, 33% of the parents surveyed disagreed toward the complete benefits of online learning, as their children were not able to understand the lessons to their fullest. Meanwhile, the rest of the parents were neutral on this topic.

From the interview, most parents agreed that having the children study from home could prevent them from the Covid-19 transmission. Using online learning was also an effective way to help their children learn. However, they mentioned that teachers sometimes explained homework to parents, but did not explain the material clearly before. Online learning could provide flexible learning system because students could learn whenever and anywhere they wanted. Still, some parents believed that their children were not truly productive in learning since they did not fully understand the lessons. In some cases, the parents could help their children access the internet to get more materials for a better explanation. In addition, students familiar with the internet could easily find the learning materials, which was one of the benefits of learning online. Below are the excerpts of the interview:

"Yes, my child and I are emotionally closer, it's just that it's [online learning] been a very long time, and it's been too long at home. But, since it's for the sake of goodness and health, yeah, we have to follow the government rules." (Respondent 1)

"Indeed, at the time of Covid-19, you could say it was positive... I wasn't close to him before, and when there were school assignments, I may not know about all those things... Well, that [online learning] made me closer to him, I knew that, "Oh it turns out my child is like this". Previously, maybe I didn't know one hundred percent, but now I know him better." (Respondent 2)

2. Parents' perceptions towards the challenges of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

According to the questionnaire, 90% of the parents strongly agreed that they faced several challenges and difficulties during the online class and overwhelmed with the situation. The first challenge they faced was lack of time in handling their children learning activity. Another difficulty of having online learning was learning ineffectiveness. For the interview, the parents mentioned that they considered it an overwhelming situation as they found it difficult to monitor the progress of their children and to ensure that they were engaged in the learning process. It was also difficult to ensure that their children used the resources they were given in a meaningful way. Additionally, it was difficult to develop a personalized learning experience for their children tailored to their individual needs and interests. Then, the ineffectiveness of online learning during Covid-19 was also because the parents had to spend more money to facilitate their children learning support such as buying the internet data.

In the interview, the parents described their children learning productivity. In normal face-to-face learning, they understood that the children productivity was better

because their child received lessons at school and also received additional knowledge from their parents while at home. According to the parents, online learning affected the performance of children because it was difficult for their children to understand the materials, and online learning made their children feel bored and less enthusiastic during the learning process because they had no friends, unlike at school. Below are the excerpts of the interview:

"Actually, in my opinion, it [online learning] was lacking because um... the difference is like this, if they [children] go to school, maybe they have more friends. So, online learning is a bit lacking because it's less effective... and moreover, he's still small, he still likes to play, so learning [online] is less enthusiastic." (Respondent 2)

"I personally don't agree [with online learning]. It's because when I look at my child, um... he is more diligent at school rather than at home, maybe because he is with friends at school." (Respondent 4)

3. Parents' perceptions towards their children activity in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

The children boredom has become the most problematic issue on distance learning. Based on the results of the interview, the study found that the children were less motivated while participating in online classes. The children did not want to do their best to learn the material provided by the teachers. In addition, they were often distracted by games or videos unrelated to their lessons. About 75% of parents say that their children preferred to use the smartphones to play online games than to learn. Therefore, such situations have made the parents believe that their children have become lazy or inattentive in learning. This assumption could lead to children being neglected in the future if they are not properly disciplined. In particular, since the parents also had to work, they had no time to help their children with their tasks or homework. This issue is considered the last challenging factor for online learning among the parents surveyed. The following are the interview excerpts:

"With me, he [the child] mostly plays... and he likes to be lazy at home." (Respondent 2).

"Well, because I work... I don't have time to teach my children at home...." (Respondent 3)

The findings of this study correspond to those in Sarair et al. (2022) and Yuzulia (2021) that parents encountered a number of problems during distance learning including the

children's lack of enthusiasm, lack of technical knowledge, and lack of time to comprehend the learning materials delivered through online classes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the distance learning during Covid-19 has been mostly challenging for the parents of junior high school students. Parents may have a variety of problems when it comes to assessing online learning for their children. The problems include the difficulty in keeping up with the technology, in ensuring their children staying on task and engaged in the learning process, and in understanding the learning materials. Additionally, they may have difficulty in finding supplemental resources to help their children understand the material better.

On the other hand, a positive response from the parents toward the online learning is that it is a great opportunity for parents to be more involved in their children's learning, and to support their education in a new and innovative way. Online learning can provide parents with an opportunity to work with their children in a more interactive way, and to monitor their progress more closely. It also allows parents to access resources from around the world, thus broadening the scope of their children's education.

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