

Research Article

Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Perceptions of Students at Bung Hatta University

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Abstract. This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students about their experience with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. A questionnaire using Google Forms was distributed to 130 students and 118 questionnaires were returned. The results showed that the most frequently mentioned advantages of the online learning experience were the ability to stay at home (27%), a smaller budget for studying (18%), time flexibility (17%), and access to online materials (16%), while the most frequently mentioned disadvantages were technical problems like internet access (22%), lack in understanding the subject (17%), lack of interactions with friends (15%), reduced interaction with the teacher (14%), poor learning conditions at home (13%) and lack of discipline (13%). This study also revealed that the preferred class format was a combination of meeting in a classroom setting and online (54%). The use of university portals and WhatsApp were the least preferred. A well-thought-out strategy and a more active approach are required for successful integration of online learning into the curriculum.

Keywords: student's perception, advantages, disadvantages online learning, COVID-19

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people live, especially in their activities. Many activities are now carried out online, one of which is teaching and learning activities. Reducing and even eliminating teaching and learning activities on campus is the right decision to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. However, has distance learning online during the Covid-19 pandemic been felt to have a positive impact on students or does it have a more negative impact?

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The case of Covid-19 in Indonesia was detected on March 2, 2020, when two people were confirmed to have contracted it from a Japanese citizen. To date, February 1, 2021, Indonesia has reported more than 1 million positive cases, making it the second largest number in Southeast Asia after Singapore and before the Philippines (Bangkok Post, 2020). To prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to keep the population from becoming infected, by issuing Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Educational Policies in the Emergency Period for the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19), The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia published a regulation allowing for online/distance learning in the field of education.

The new coronavirus was leading many governments to implement lockdowns in order to prevent the pandemic from spreading. Lockdowns disturbed social habits, forcing people to maintain physical distance in order to protect themselves from the dangerous infection. Furthermore, many people all over the world have switched their social and professional activities to online platforms in order to meet their requirements and needs. Educational institutions, too, used internet platforms to accomplish their goals and objectives. During the epidemic, providing instruction through online platforms and digital means grew in popularity[1].

A significant shift in the learning process from face-to-face to online learning demonstrates that all actors in the educational sector, including lecturers and students, must be prepared to adapt to conditions in which everything must be done online using technology and information [2,3]. To ensure effective learning, both lecturers and students collaborated with one another via conference calls, zoom meetings, Google Meet, WhatsApp, University's portal interactions, Telegram and emails. Following Covid-19, these online platforms made learning both safe and effective.

Not only in teaching and learning, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered people's lifestyles . Mostly all activities are now conducted entirely online. To avoid the spread of COVID-19, it is the proper decision to reduce, if not eliminate, teaching and learning activities on campus. Online learning systems can be asynchronous, synchronous, or a combination of both. On the internet, there are many examples of asynchronous e-learning, both simple and integrated through e-learning sites. Because the learning process is carried out live, teachers and students must be in front of the computer at the same time in synchronous e-learning [4].

The continuity of online teaching and learning activities still reap the pros and cons. Various positive and negative impacts come from lectures and students perspectives. Aside from the epidemiological advantages of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional advantages worth highlighting include enhanced convenience,

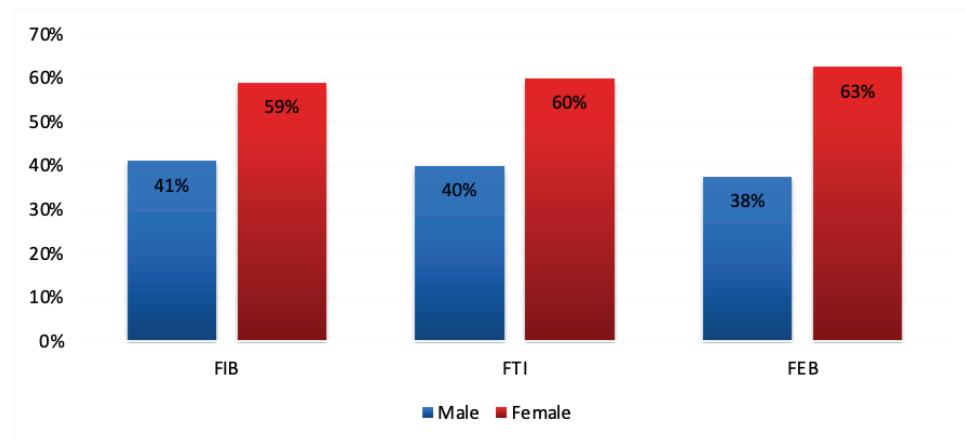


Figure 1: Percentage of Respondents.

access to materials regardless of place or time, and cost and air pollution reductions.[5] Online classes have their own set of constraints, including issues with internet access, poor internet connection quality, and respondents' insufficient computer abilities. Some advantages, such as time flexibility, can also be a disadvantage, particularly for students who struggle with self-discipline [6]. The current study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. Has online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic to have a beneficial or bad impact on students?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What obstacles did the students face during online learning?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive method by using questionnaire survey to the students from three faculties at Universitas Bung Hatta namely Faculty of Humanities (FIB), Faculty of Economic and Business (FEB), and Faculty of Technology Industry (FTI). The reason for choosing these three faculties is that these faculties offered the English Subject in Even Semester 2021.

The distribution number of participants from each faculty are shown in Chart 1. The questionnaire was adopting and combining the questionnaire were designed by Bączek M, et all [5] and Hafizah [7]. The questionnaire was issued via Google Form to 130 students in order to learn about their perceptions and experiences with online learning. The findings of data analysis were obtained when 118 questionnaires were returned.

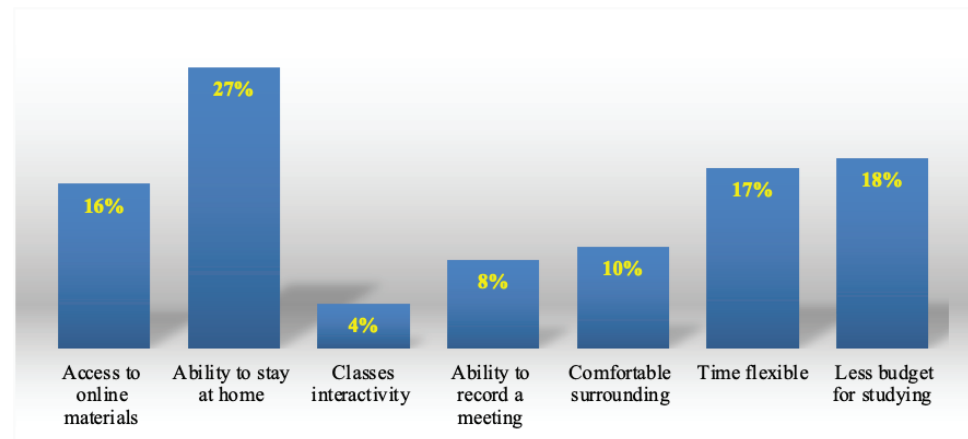


Figure 2: The Advantages of Online learning.

This part of survey which is used for this data consisted some options regarding on the advantage and disadvantage of on-line learning. The survey was piloted to some students before distributed to the respondents. Data was collected from the answer of questionnaires. The validity of the questionnaire was tested by using expert's opinions. Collecting data from respondents through the answers of questionnaires and analyzing data obtained.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first and second research questions asked if the student participants chose the options about the advantages and disadvantages of online learning during Covid-19 pandemic. For the questions about advantages, respondents were given seven sets of options regarding the advantages of e-learning, from which they could choose as many as were true for them. The result will show in the following chart and discussion.

The ability to stay at home was the most frequently mentioned advantage of e-learning by respondents (27%), continues to less budget for studying (18%), time flexible (17%), access to online materials (16%), comfortable surroundings (10%), ability to record a meeting (8%), and the last one is classes interactivity (4%). It is shown that the ability of stay at home is the highest advantage were chosen by participants. Majority of participants mentioned that: *"I can spend more time with my family and stay at home."* This finding is consistent with prior study, which found that online learning allows students to make better use of their time (Fidalgo et al., 2020; Jung & Rha, 2000; OECD, 2020; Husein E et al., 2020 [4]. While OECD (2020) argued that on line learning has cost effectiveness. This means that online learning is cheaper than face-to-face. From this study, 18% of respondents also choose less budget for studying. It

makes sense since they do not need to pay rent for the house, transportation and living cost.

This two options have correlation each other, since the students just stay at home, so they do not need to spend much cost to support their budget for studying. Almost all of them going back to their home town and this can save their money. Another high percentage is time flexible . 17% respondents chose this option. From open ended questions, many respondents mention that they do not need to spend much time for preparing and getting ready to attend the class and .

1. *“So far, I could say that online learning via zoom/google meet has some advantages, such as the ability to study whenever and anywhere I like, as opposed to studying on campus. I don't need to be getting ready to the class and it saves my time.*
2. *Zoom is the easiest way to study online, I can attend the class everywhere I want. And I can speak clearly all my opinion.*
3. *It's better to use zoom and Google meet because it's more efficient, although less understanding with these online lectures, but I've really enjoyed these online lectures.*
4. *I more understood about IT than before, more flexible time like everywhere I can keep study*
5. *I prefer to learning online because by this way we can meet and communicate one on others virtually. The Lecturer also can share the material and the student can do presentation so the class is going like usual.*

Besides that respondents claimed they were less have participation in online than in face to face classes. One of the reasons could be that there is not enough attention on interaction while creating e-learning courses. *“The challenge I faced was interacting with lecturers and classmates; I believe it would be easier to comprehend if learning took place in a face-to-face classes rather than an online learning, because online learning, in my opinion, was too monotonous, useless, and difficult to comprehend as a whole”*. During the COVID–19 outbreak, just 4% of respondents cited class involvement as a positive of e-learning. Less engaging e-learning methods are evaluated less positively.

Online learning is not without its disadvantages. There are seven options can be chosen by respondents to show their perception about the disadvantage of online learning. The result of questionnaire can be seen in Chart 3.

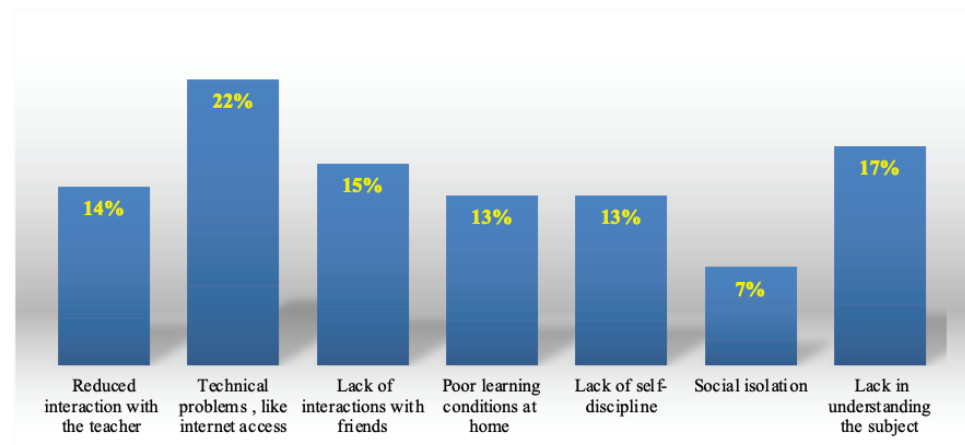


Figure 3: The Disadvantages of Online Learning.

Technical problems, like internet access was the greatest issue for respondents (22%) in our survey. It continues to lack in understanding the subjects (17%), lack interaction with friends (15%), reduces interaction with the teacher (14%), poor learning conditions at home and lack of self discipline (13%) and the least respond is for social isolation (7%). According to the data, majority of respondents do not have a strong internet connection at home. It can be assumed that they reside in an area with inadequate internet access, such as a rural or distant place where technology and internet connectivity are out of reach. Majority of those who chose this option indicated that it is because they do not have a wifi internet connection at home and rely solely on their mobile phone's internet allowance. The relatively large proportion of respondents who had challenges with technology and internet availability due to poor internet connectivity in some areas of West Sumatra and it is still cannot support online education activities. It is a shame that some of our students have to leave their homes in order to get a strong internet connection for their online classes. It is also one of big issue that the students's faced during the Covid outbreak.

These are majority comments of respondents about the lack of internet access.

1. *I live in the village with poor internet connection. That is my big problem during online learning.*
2. *Signal is the big obstacle. I always inform the lecturers when I am unable to attend the class, and I occasionally generate concern for their trust due to networking concerns. Despite the fact that the network is down and there is no way to access anything. There are many different types of network cards used here, but none of them are working properly. It just vanishes without a trace”.*

3. *The network in my village is very bad when it is in the afternoon, It is good only in the morning, so if the class in the afternoon I often unable to join the class because of the signal.*
4. *Entering Zoom or Google Meet requires a strong network, whereas in my village, the network is often weak or non-existent. One of the lecturers advised me to prepare to enter class, but to find a network when the network was lost, I had to travel by motorbike for about half an hour, and the motorbike was not always available, and it rained occasionally.*
5. *The network is the only barrier during online lectures, because in my village, if the lights go out or it rains, the network goes away.*
6. *very boring because you can't interact freely with friends and lecturers because of the internet network.*
7. *Unfortunately, many of my friends find online learning using the zoom/google meet problematic, such as getting a good connection, especially if they live in the village region.*

A lack of comprehension of the subject was the second most prevalent response (17%). Many students are unable to follow the class for the entire class because their internet connection is not operating properly. As a result, they are unable to grasp the lecturer's explanation and are unable to comprehend the lecturer's explanation. Another outcome is that there is a lack of interaction. Where respondents indicated that they had limited time to communicate with lecturers and friends. There is no significant difference in percentage between lack of interaction with friends (15%) and reduced interaction with the teacher (14%). This indicates that respondents prefer interaction between students and lecturers, despite the fact that students do not actively participate in face-to-face classes. The use of the Gamification approach is one way to stimulate class interaction in which "game design features are employed in non-game contexts,". It is one popular strategy for increasing interaction in online classes [7]. Deterding (2011) suggested that a possible strategy could be social and collaborative learning in his study [8]. This method allows students to interact socially with one another as well as educators. Besides that, Similar numbers of figures are found in option poor learning conditions at home and lack of self-discipline (13%). According to Aristovnik (2020) as cited in Bączek M (2021), having more self-discipline and determination to complete online lessons is especially helpful during the early stages of the program while students are adjusting to the new system [5].

1. *It's difficult to concentrate because my parents always ask me to assist them while I do online learning class. This is a justification for children whose parents work in the trading industry (especially for man)*
2. *To be honest, many lecturers give to much assignment with the short time due date. Some parents are unfamiliar with online lectures. When I was at home in online lectures, my parents told me to do this and that. "Meanwhile, I'm the type of person who finds it difficult to catch the lesson, and if I leave it, it's difficult for me to understand the lesson." I've told my parents that I'm still having lectures, but my parents frequently ask, "Just leave it for a while?"*
3. *I don't have any motivation to study, because many of lecturer do not present the lectures interestingly, it make me bored.*

These data illustrate that there are numerous obstacles that students face while studying at home, whether they are external or internal. As a result, the subject's comprehension isn't at its best. According to one of the participants in this study, *"I am very lazy if studying at home. Always sleepy and always wants to sleep"*. Several participants commented that the issue of distraction is especially important when learning online. A students whose parents have the small shop at home, for example, stated that it was extremely difficult for her to focus while she was studying online, her parents always ask her to help them." These comments appear to contradict several of the students' earlier remarks regarding the benefits of online learning, such as staying at home, time efficiency, and flexibility. The fact that kids' learning styles, home surroundings, and socioeconomic conditions differ greatly could explain this apparent discrepancy [5].

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the data, more than half of respondents were unsatisfied with their online learning experience. The findings show that technical problems of internet connection is the greatest issue for respondents, lack in understanding the subjects, lack interaction with friends, reduces interaction with the teacher, poor learning conditions at home and lack of self-discipline and the least respond is for social isolation are the most important factors underlying students' discontent with online learning. While the ability to stay at home was the most frequently mentioned advantage of e-learning by respondents. This study offers a number of suggestions and solutions for improving online learning

and increasing student happiness. Self-learning necessitates self-discipline on the part of the student, which can be difficult to achieve without direct supervision from the lecturer. A lack of clarity about the learning's aim and goals, as well as less engagement between learners and lecturers, can obstruct the learning process.

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