

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2022, Vol. 3, No. 9, 1848 – 1858

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.03.09.24>

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## Research Article

### Student Strategies in Overcoming Learning Difficulties during The Covid-19 Pandemic

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#### Article history:

Submission September 2022

Revised September 2022

Accepted September 2022

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#### ABSTRACT

Along with Indonesia, the COVID-19 outbreak has expanded across the globe. All facets of community life are affected by this disruption, including the educational system, which shifts from face-to-face instruction to online distance learning. To break the link of the COVID-19 outbreak's spread, the West Sumatra PGRI STKIP campus has made changes to the educational system. Without having to travel to a campus, students can learn online from the comfort of their own homes. However, this causes students to have issues with internet networks, quota availability, and understanding in the classroom. The goal of this study was to describe the methods used by students to deal with challenges presented by online learning in the COVID-19 program. The idea put forth between COVID-19 outbreaks. Constructivism theory was the one that was employed. Additionally, this study takes a qualitative descriptive technique to offer information about students' online learning strategies. Twenty students and five professors served as the study's informants. using Matthew Milles and Huberman's interactive model to analyze the data after gathering it through interviews and documentation. The study's findings show that students always provide a quota before classes begin, opt for a place where they can easily access the internet, question friends about concepts they don't understand, read articles and tutorials on YouTube, and always have memory available.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, learning difficulties, online learning, student strategy

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#### How to cite:

Wahyuni, Y. S, Rahayu, S., Fitriani, D., Harisnawati, & Perkasa, R. D. (2022). Student Strategies in Overcoming Learning Difficulties during The Covid-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 3 (9), 1848 – 1858. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.03.09.24

## Introduction

The current condition is indeed unexpected; namely, the Covid-19 disease outbreak has brought urgent changes to various sectors in society (Heyd, 2021). The virus immediately began to spread around the planet. Daily data from around the globe show how Covid-19 is becoming more and more prevalent and significant. Also experiencing a national emergency is Indonesia. Since it was first reported that there were persons who were positive with the Covid-19 virus in early March 2020, the death rate from Corona has been rising. This has an impact on upcoming adjustments and policy improvements. The COVID-19 pandemic is also being felt in the educational community. Chahkandi (2021) as the director of Ma'had and Islamic Studies Tazkia International Islamic Boarding School, Malang, was quoted from designers as saying that the world of education is now feeling the effect of the Corona Virus. This pandemic has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Thursday (Rizal, 2020) (5/3), that the Coronavirus outbreak has had an impact on the education sector. Nearly 300 million students disrupt their school activities around the world and threaten their future educational rights. The previous day, 13 countries, including China, Italy and Japan, had closed schools across the country in a bid to stop the spread of the virus. It affects nearly 290 million students. Most of the students came from China. Across the country, including Hong Kong and the special administrative region of Macau, more than 233 million students are not attending school because of the virus. Followed by Japan, which has nearly 16.5 million transfer students. In Indonesia, the world of education is also feeling the impact. Various activities of the comparative Foreign Study Program (abroad) must be cancelled. Our school, Tazkia IIBS Malang, had to cancel several important activities abroad, such as an Arabic debate competition in Singapore which had to be held in mid-February and cancelled by local authorities.

COVID-19 continues to spread in West Sumatra, of the 19 districts and cities remaining two areas that have survived the spread of this pandemic. The areas that still survive the

spread of the pandemic are Sawahlunto City and Sijunjung Regency. Total Positive Patients for Corona Covid-19 in West Sumatra from the latest data released by the task force, namely 240 confirmed cases. Of all areas in West Sumatra, the city of Padang is the area with the most positive patients with 270 people (Rizal, 2020). With the increase in cases of this pandemic, the government has made policies. A new policy also occurs in the world of education to change learning that must come to class and face to face, in this case, the campus, to be sufficient at home. A change must follow the government's recommendation to stay at home and physical and social distancing in the face-to-face learning mode to online (Lobe et al., (2020); Rashid & Yadav, (2020); Ali, (2020)). Various activities of the comparative Foreign Study Program (abroad) must be cancelled. Our school, Tazkia IIBS Malang, is a must.

Online learning is the implementation of online distance education by teachers to students, where the online learning system implemented by schools currently provides opportunities for teachers and students to take lessons via WA and email in the current state of Covid (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). Online learning requires independence, responsibility and personal diligence for students because in distance learning carried out by students at home, and no one controls when learning alone is different from learning that is carried out face-to-face at school (Qomarudin, 2020); (Misra & Mazelfi, 2021); Nash, (2021).

STKIP PGRI West Sumatra as a private PT also affected by Covid 19 also implements online learning. Lectures and teaching and learning processes are carried out at the STKIP campus using the existing E-learning platform provided at STKIP, and lecturers can also use other platforms such as google classrooms, WA zoom meetings and others to support online learning. This activity makes students have to study online and remotely from their respective villages, and lecturers as lecturers must be ready to provide and direct students to understand learning during the pandemic period because we are also participating in breaking the chain of spreading this epidemic.

However, in line with the lectures being carried out, it turned out that the West Sumatra

PGRI STKIP students prefer face-to-face learning and according to them face-to-face learning makes them more understand learning compared to online learning. Face-to-face activities according to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 22 of 2006 are learning activities in the form of a process of interaction between students, learning materials, teachers, and the environment. Face-to-face learning is a set of actions designed to support the learning process of students face-to-face directly, by taking into account external events that play a role in a series of external events that take place in students that can be known or predicted during the face-to-face process. Face-to-face activities are the learning activities in the form of a process of interaction between students and educators and with the surrounding environment. Learning interactions are in the classroom. Burden, (2020); Gherheş et al., (2021); Chen, (2021) argues that in general, face-to-face learning has various advantages over teachers and students, including 1. Formal discipline applied to face-to-face learning can form mental discipline; 2. Make it easy to provide reinforcement (reinforcement) immediately; 3. Facilitate the assessment process by the teacher; 4. Become a vehicle for learning to interact with students. Another advantage is the ability to socialize between lecturers/tutors and students, as well as among friends. Not only that, lecturers can directly observe the attitudes and behaviour of students in receiving the material: online learning programs or e-learning systems or online learning.

However, to break the chain of the spread of covid, educational institutions continue to carry out lectures online (Nugroho, Basari, Suryaningtyas, & Cahyono, 2020). Then problems arise that resulted in difficulty for students but also has made students hard to cope with material. With online learning problems that are often encountered at the student level are related to the availability of networks in their area, generally in areas where students live it is very difficult to access the internet and conduct lectures online. Students also stated that the network is also affected by the frequent rainy weather and also frequent power cuts. So this is not comforting to the learning process carried out online. Besides, the

presence of this disease outbreak also destroys and disrupts the economic structure of the community. To attend lectures online, students also need a sufficient quota so they can access and download material from the lecturer. Meanwhile, many parents do not work at the time of the pandemic. They had to stay at home, and also the price of the harvest had dropped significantly. This condition is the obstacle we find and the difficulty of students in online lectures. Of the 24 students in 1 KLS, 5-10 people cannot take part in e-learning because of network disruption in the regions. So that lecturers are also looking for other alternatives such as via WA or send assignments to email for students who cannot take part in e-learning.

Previous research Batubara et al., (2021); Djalante et al., (2020); Djalante, Nurhidayah, et al., (2020) regarding education during the Covid-19 pandemic, a global epidemic has hit the world, as well as what happened in Indonesia, so they stay at the home program was implemented as an effort to suppress the expansion of covid-19. At the Open University, March is the beginning of the 2020.1 registration period tutorial semester, both online tutorials (tutors) and face-to-face tutorials (TTM). UT Semarang is entering the first tutorial for students taking the TTM learning mode. Please comply with the government program; the learning mode has been changed to virtual classrooms so that students still have their right to gain knowledge but remain safe at home. The TTM class is replaced using the web mode (webinar tutorial). The new model was obtained by students, thus encouraging this research to be carried out. How is the readiness of students with the renewal of learning mode? How is the mastery of technology needed by students in facing their learning? The research method used is a quantitative method with a questionnaire. The population was taken from 100 UT Semarang students, working group District Batang from various semesters. The results of the study showed that 82% of students supported and were increasingly enthusiastic in preparing the technology for a new model of learning using Tuweb. Student suggestions and input also make evaluations in service more excellent to UT and the world of education in the

global situation that is currently being hit by this outbreak.

Firman & Rahayu, (2020) concerning learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, they said that this time is so difficult. This research is qualitative research which aims to obtain an overview of the implementation of online learning in the Biology Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), University of West Sulawesi (Unsulbar) as an effort to suppress the spread of covid-19 in the campus environment. The research subjects were students of the Biology Education Study Program that were collected by telephone interview. Data analysis was performed using interactive analysis techniques Miles & Huberman. The results showed that: (1) students already have the basic facilities needed to take part in online learning; (2) online learning has flexibility in its implementation and can encourage independent learning and motivation to be more active in learning; and (3) distance learning encourages the emergence of social distancing behaviour and minimizes the appearance of student crowds so that it is considered to reduce the potential for the spread of Covid-19 in the campus environment. Another study by Atsani, (2020); Rajhans et al., (2020); Zaini et al., (2021); Dwivedi et al., (2020) is about the Transformation of Learning Media during the Covid 19 period. The Covid-19 pandemic has a major impact on various sectors, one of which is education. The world of education also feels the impact. Educators must ensure teaching and learning activities continue, even though students are at home. The solution, educators are required to design learning media as an innovation by utilizing online media. This trend is following the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia regarding Circular Number 4 of 2020 concerning Implementation of Education Policies in the Emergency of the Spread of Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19).

The learning system is implemented through a personal computer (PC) or laptop connected to an internet network connection. Educators can learn together at the same time using groups on social media such as WhatsApp (WA), telegram, Instagram, zoom applications or other media as learning media. Thus,

educators can ensure students follow the learning at the same time, even though in different places. Educators can also give measurable assignments according to the objectives of the material presented to students. However, cases often occur when the application of this online learning system include the unequal distribution of students and parents who are good at operating online media. Not all parents of students can afford internet quota, internet signals in students' homes are not reachable, most of the students' parents whose economic conditions are mediocre, also do not have smartphones or smartphones as a means of online learning for their children, and are less controlled because they are not directly facing to face. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to describe students' strategies in overcoming learning difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Methods

The approach used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is defined as a research method that collects and analyzes data in the form of words (spoken or written) and human actions and researchers do not try to calculate or quantify the qualitative data obtained thus do not analyze numbers Afrizal, (2014); Rose & Johnson, (2020). The type of research used is descriptive. Descriptive research is data collected in the study in the form of words, pictures and not numbers. According to (Burhan, 2011) descriptive research is research that is intended to obtain a deep, systematic, factual and accurate picture of the facts and the relationship between the phenomena being investigated. The reason for using qualitative research, and this descriptive type is so that what is obtained during the research can be described in more depth and detail. This study aims to describe the strategies used by students in overcoming problems in learning online. According to (Afrizal, 2014) research informants are subjects who understand the object of research. To obtain data in this study, the technique used in the selection of informants was purposive sampling, meaning that the informants could provide the desired information following the research problem.

Purposive sampling is sampling based on the researcher's subjective judgment based on certain characteristics which are considered to be related to the characteristics of the population that have been known before with certain considerations (Afrizal, 2014). The informants in this study were 20 students of Sociology class 2019 and 5 sociology lecturers. The data collected utilizing in-depth interviews with informants was carried out online via WA. And also the researchers collected secondary data in the form of documentation related to the strategies and methods students did in overcoming the problems being faced in the form of documentation from students. The data collected were analyzed using the interactive model of Milles and Huberman, starting from data collection, data reduction, data presentation and concluding. The location of this research is on the campus of STKIP PGRI West Sumatra for Sociology Education students.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the results of research obtained by the difficulties encountered by students in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. So that students have various strategies to overcome difficulties and problems that are encountered when learning online during the Covid 19 outbreak. The strategies undertaken by students are:

### ***Students ensure that the Internet Quota Package is always available***

Internet quota is an important problem for students in online lectures. Because the quota is sufficient, students cannot access learning materials. To conduct lectures online, the obstacles and difficulties for students are when accessing the material, because they must always have a data package. Because lecturers send learning materials in the online form so that students can read the material sent, of course, students must always be on standby with data packages. Based on the data obtained in the field, the way students always have a data package is to choose a card that can easily get a network at an affordable price. Because buying this data package is a complaint about students. On the one hand, online learning can increase

students' knowledge of IT, but on the other hand, it is not very easy for students in purchasing data packages. Because generally, students come from the region and the economy is moving downward. Like they are using the unlimited Smartfren internet quota, this card is quite cheap compared to the Telkomsel card, considering the current economic difficulties of students switching to Semartfren. The use of this card is quite easy to access, although sometimes when the lights go out, and it rains the network is lost. During this pandemic, there were many problems in learning. Students need internet access, in this case, students or students learning online must always provide Internet packages, in order to take part in this online learning, getting internet quota is not easy, for Students who are economically and above may find it easy to get a quote from their parents. In contrast, students who have a lower-middle economy will find it difficult to get money to buy a quota. This stage is a statement from one of the students. In a week, students spend 75 thousand to buy a data package of 15 Gb. They do this by using the remaining scholarship money to buy a quota in addition to paying for boarding. And also sometimes assisted by parents. Before participating in the online learning process, students always check the data package before going to college because if the package is finished, students will not be able to take part in this learning. Furthermore, not all students find it easy to get money to buy packages, ways to fulfil package needs that students can do to sell fried foods and doughnuts, and the solution is that students can sell online to add snacks and buy packages, so as not to burden parents too much. Because the cost to buy a package is not small, for just one month students need a package fee of 80 thousand per month, that is only for packages.

### ***Finding a Location with Easy Internet Access***

The implementation of online learning allows students to take lectures from their respective homes. This condition encourages the emergence of social distancing behaviour and minimizes the possibility of a crowd of students on campus. These two things are the steps recommended by WHO in reducing the spread of

Covid19. However, online learning in areas not covered by the internet must be monitored because it has the potential to generate crowds in certain areas which increases the likelihood of the spread of Covid-19. Regarding the network, it can be seen that many students are living in villages who find it difficult to get a signal, this causes students to be late in sending/making assignments, students do not understand, and become lazier. On the way, several schools in various regions complained about Internet connection constraints and wasteful quotas due to the economic background of underprivileged parents, which made students experience problems accessing online learning resources. This trend is because students are looking for a place or location with an adequate internet network so that they can also form a small group at that location. However, we hope that the spread of this virus will not reach students who are struggling to get learning even though it is long distance. Unfortunately, online learning also has its challenges. One of them is the availability of internet service. The research data shows that most students access the internet using cellular services.

Many students who are from locations with no network, they have to go to the borders area.

At the same time, some go to the riverbanks, rice fields, and also oil palm plantations. This trend is an effort made by students in order to get an internet network and be able to attend lectures online. Because their conditions are different from students who are in urban areas where it is easy to access online learning, this becomes our common concern for the efforts made by students. This difficulty is what one student put it: The writer always there and trying to find good networking places to follow online. The strategy that the writer did was not only that; she had to always be on standby with a cellphone and had to save money quota so that it could last a long time. Why is that, because in her village the only network that can be accessed is the Telkomsel network and we all know that the Telkomsel quota is quite expensive, sometimes even if the lights go out, the Telkomsel network is lost or very slow, so when she goes online she has to prepare everything including the durability of the cellphones and laptops that she uses. They also try to keep the lectures well followed. Below is one way to find an internet network that is easily accessible to students. The condition of the network in the regions is indeed a cause for concern for students who take online lectures.



*Figure 1. Students are at finding Internet connection Internet nearby riverbanks*



*Figure 2. Students are searching internet connection in top land palm farming*

Some students also stated that if it rained heavily and the network lights were gone, they also disappeared, so sometimes they could not enter e-learning sand so on. The solution is she has to be vigilant and anticipate for cellphone and laptop chargers to be full if it rains heavily,

she cannot come out to his lectures are a bit disturbed. Their readiness with network disruptions is a form of the seriousness of students to take lectures online. Troubled networks often occur during a blackout, heavy rain, disasters such as falling trees hitting

cables around electric poles, and others. When the internet network was lost, there was panic in the lecture process. Such as the fear of being absent being alpha, afraid of missing the material and the lecture process, and fear of not understanding the material being explained by the lecturer. This condition made her have to go to a relative's house whose house was 2 km from her house, where the electricity lines were not the same. When the lights in the path of her house went out, she would go straight to the brother's house so that she could still attend the lecture process.

### ***Read references from online journals***

Online lectures as a whole will have a communication pattern between students and lecturers which is dominated by a remote system via the web/internet, and there will be no face-to-face meetings. All teaching materials, assignments, consultations, exams, and other learning activities are delivered via the internet, (2) the Web-Centric Course, which combines distance learning and face-to-face online in this model of lectures, partially provided on the web and partly face-to-face, and complementary functions, (3) Web-Enhanced Course, namely lectures that are enhanced through the use of the web/internet. The learning takes place reciprocally between lecturers and students as well as web/internet centred learning (Dewi, 2020) Online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, students are not used to it. However, over time and changes in the learning system, of course, students must also be able to accept and make various alternatives to over-

come difficulties in learning. One way to overcome difficulties in understanding learning online is besides students asking their friends. Students also do this by downloading videos on YouTube and reading material from reference books, journals. Besides, the strategy is to read various learning sources, whether through journals, E-books, or other media that can support the learning process, because if students have lots of learning resources, it will also make it easier to link the material provided by the lecturer. According to Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky in the early 20s who had the view that knowledge and understanding are not acquired passively but in an active way through personal experience and experimental activities. The main concept of constructivism is that learners are active and seek to make understanding of what they understand, this means learning requires to focus on problem-based scenarios, project-based learning, team-based learning, simulation and the use of technology (Agus purwanto, rudy pramono, masduki asbari, choi chi hyun, 2020). Besides, according to Cooper, "constructivists" view students interpret information and the world according to their reality, and they learn through observation, processing, and interpretation and shape the information into their knowledge. In a constructivist view, students will learn well if they can bring learning into the context of what they are learning into the application of real-life every day and get benefits for themselves (Ali Muhson, 2010). Bellow is one form or way of students repeating the material given by the lecturer who is poorly understood.



*Figure 3: Student is at accessing online session*

### ***Asking friends back to the lecture material that has passed***

The development of information technology has an impact on an increasingly effective learning process. The development of information technology can be seen in computer-based learning. The real use of this online technology network is the use of the internet as a means of interactive communication. In the macro context, the use of this network has a very broad impact on the productivity of human work, because it makes it easier for people to do something. But this is also ineffective in learning because some students cannot understand online learning. The strategy is carried out so that students understand the learning

provided by the lecturer through e-learning, so students try to go back to ask their friends 1 class and one session regarding the material that has been discussed and sent via e-learning. Online learning is more about searching and reading in order to understand the material provided. Besides, students are united in sharing material, for example, creating study groups, making it easier to understand more deeply the material. However, if we share this will make it easier for us as students to understand the material provided by the lecturer. Below is a form of students working together and sharing with their friends related to material that is poorly understood.



*Figure 4. Students at collaborative learning*

Online learning systems that are different from face-to-face make students have more freedom in learning. Usually, they are put under pressure by lecturers and classmates. The difficulty of students understanding the learning material is because the lecturer does not directly convey it verbally to students. So it does require students to learn more independently. Online distance learning is also able to foster student learning independence. Learning without direct guidance from the lecturer makes students independently seek information about course material and assignments given

to them. Some of the activities carried out are reading reference books, online articles, scientific journals, or discussing with peers through instant message applications (Firman & Rahayu, 2020). Constructivism itself considers humans capable of constructing or constructing knowledge after interacting with their environment. In the same environment, humans will construct their knowledge differently depending on their previous experiences. (Windhiyana, 2020) states that in learning, teachers can motivate students to use critical techniques to apply concepts that are



meaningful to themselves. This action means learning does not occur linearly, but through a series of repeated cycles (Kusnayat, 2020); (Husamah, 2015). According to constructivists, perceptions of knowledge will influence perceptions of learning. For constructivism, knowledge is subjective and not absolute. The experience of the subject shapes knowledge. Therefore, knowledge will forever change according to the human experience as a subject who always interacts with its environment. It is because of his experience that humans build that knowledge through a process of organization and adaptation (Windhiyana, 2020). Starting from the nature of that knowledge, according to constructivism learning is defined as the active activity of individuals who learn to interact with their environment, so that they can appreciate and build meaning for these experiences (Smart, K., L., & Cappel, 2006). From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the relationship between theory and research problems is based on the viewpoint of this constructivist theory, students can build their activeness in the learning process and build knowledge after interacting with their environment, so in the learning process stude.

## Conclusion

This study draws a number of findings from the data and analysis. The first step in creating a blended-based learning model was to conduct initial research to learn more about the needs of students. This involves looking at the assessment frameworks and semester catch-up plans employed by the UIN Alauddin Postgraduate Ulumul Quran Study Program as learning resources. Second, an Ulumul Quran Post-graduate UIN Alauddin learning program based on blended learning is created by integrating web-blog and printed materials. Third, the content or material validation and the learning model in stage I are not implementable and require numerous adjustments. Although various adjustments are required, testing the stage II validation is achievable. Stage III validation has been classified as testable without modifications. The average student survey responses revealed the findings on the blended learning model's appeal. These data have a highly intriguing category and vary

from 81% to 100% scores. Students' learning outcomes on the pretest and posttest provide additional evidence of the blended learning model's success. This data was examined using a different pair of paired t-test samples. The post-test and pretest scores were 80 and 72, respectively, according to the results. As a result, the blended learning model successfully satisfies learning goals. The time gap between the classical and blended learning models illustrates the effectiveness of the blended learning paradigm according to research findings. The lower length of time measured suggests that the students are aware of the topic. Several ideas exist for creating a mixed learning model. It ought to be integrated, for instance, with other online tools like Google Classroom, Schoology, or Moodle. On campus, specialists from internal and external parties should evaluate the creation of a web blog about Quran lectures. The information or material on the web blog should be integrated with video conferencing. Additionally, suitable digital sources should

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