

EXPLORING BLENDED LEARNING METHOD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: STUDENTS VIEWS

Enni Erawati Saragih & Muhamad Rizky Bahtiar

Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor

ennierawati.saragih@uika-bogor.ac.id, muhamadrizkybahtiar@gmail.com,

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all countries, including Indonesia, which has restricted all outside activities. It is also prominent in the field of education, where blended learning is used in the learning process, resulting in a variety of views for students. The researchers wanted to know the students' point of view of using this method. The aim of the research is to describe students' perspectives on the use of blended learning during the pandemic. This study used a descriptive qualitative research method, with questionnaires and interviews are used as the instruments in collecting the data. The participants of the study were 14 second-year university students who used blended learning method. The results of the study show; blended learning method is affective to be implemented because of time flexibility and cost-effectiveness, however limited internet and unsupported environment become obstacles in implementing blended learning in online mode.

Keyword: *Blended learning, Covid-19, Student's perspectives*

INTRODUCTION

All countries have experienced the coronavirus pandemic, including Indonesia. The coronavirus or better known as COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on all elements, without exception in the field of education itself. The existence of a significant impact on the world of education, making all arrangements in the field of education must also immediately adapt and make peace with a new life. In every area of life, including education, the effects of this epidemic have a significant, abrupt, and profound impact (Rahmi, 2020).

In March 2020, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Educational Policies in the Emergency Period for the Spread of COVID-19, in the Circular it was explained that the learning process was carried out at home through online and distance learning (Prawiyogi, 2020). One of the solutions for online or distance learning is using a blended learning method. Previous research conducted by Karma (2021), Blended Learning is an Educational Innovation and Solution during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Therefore, Innovation and policy go hand in hand and cannot be separated

from one another (Rahmi, 2020). This is important because innovation will produce meaningful new information, but policy is made up of ideas, rules, and techniques that will make innovation stronger. Government-led efforts to combat crime include learning advances. It is anticipated that the adoption of Covid-19 will bring a novelty and utility for the implementation of effective and efficient schooling. Teachers, students, and parents have acquired a lot of new knowledge about technology learning through the use of technology-based online education, particularly for individuals who are technologically illiterate.

Blended Learning

Semler (in Soekartawi 2006) said that blended learning is a combination of the best aspects of online learning, structured face-to-face activities, and real world practice. Online learning systems, classroom training, and on-the-job experience have major drawbacks by themselves. The blended learning approach uses the strengths of each to counter the others' weaknesses.

The blended learning mixes online and offline instruction, which can help students avoid the health risks associated with crowding and the Covid-19 virus. The purpose of learning is still to increase knowledge, skills, and attitudes through blended learning. Online learning can broaden perspectives and information, and offline learning can improve abilities, particularly in niche fields where mastering knowledge does not immediately result in mastering those particular talents.

In his research, Karma reveals that the blended learning method can be considered the most appropriate solution during the pandemic (Karma, 2021).

Blended learning is a combination of face-to-face and online instruction (Grgurovic, 2011). This method is appropriate applied by teachers during the pandemic. Covid-19 offers a chance to support high-quality future education and make the country competitive on a global scale (Rahmi, 2020)

Students' Perspective

The research is focus on students' perspectives; meanwhile, perspective is as an internal process when external inputs are selected and regulated. Students' sentiments and thoughts will automatically provide meaning to the existing stimuli when it is caught by one's senses (Sujarwo et.al, 2020). In addition, we also have to know what students feel and experience about the benefit, constraint, effectiveness and impact while using the method.

Because students learn best when they have some influence over their learning, blended learning allows them to determine their learning pace, and it also saves their money (Biewener, 2021). The effectiveness is not only the learning pace but also about study independently without regard for location or time constraints (Watrianthos et.al, 2021)

The Advantages of Blended Learning

According to the needs of the learning, the percentages of online and offline or face-to-face instruction can be changed. At least there are two advantages of using blended learning; 1) reusing learning materials, 2) saving time and, 3) Time flexibility. Furthermore, Having facilitators that are familiar with information and communication technologies is just one of the things that must be ready before implementing blended learning. (Nurhadi, 2020)

According to Wihartini (Wihartini, 2019), based on her research findings, it can be said that blended learning method can be used; 1) to enhance student learning outcomes, 2) boost learning motivation, and 3) develop students' critical thinking abilities.

This research aims to describe students' perspectives on the use of blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the research are hoped to inform the reader or researcher more about the method include; the benefit, constrain, effectiveness and impact.

METHODS

This study describes students' perspectives on using blended learning in learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A descriptive qualitative research design was adopted to investigate this research, where university students in a private university in Bogor were the research participants. This research was conducted on December 27 - December 31, 2021. Data in the form of transcription were obtained from 14 second year university students who used blended learning method. The data collections were questionnaires and interviews. There are eight statements for questionnaires containing the effectiveness, benefits, constraints, and effects of blended learning on student learning activities. The questionnaire was conducted using the *Google Form* application. Besides, the interview was contained with several questions relate to the students perspectives on using blended learning, particularly asking about students perspective toward the effectiveness, benefits, constraints and effects of blended learning method. In this research, the

structure interview was used by using 5 W + 1 H questions. The interview was done by using video call (VC) in *Whatsapp* application.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Through the data from questionnaire and interviews, the finding is described more in words than in numbers. It is explained further as follows;

1) The effectiveness of blended learning during COVID-19

The blended learning method is considered effective to be applied during the COVID-19 pandemic. 13 out of 14 students said that this learning method was effective. There are many reasons from students why blended learning is effective. Some of them are flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and technology.

Some students noted the reasons for the effectiveness of blended learning during the COVID-19. Student 10 noted the blended learning method gives students flexibility in choosing the time and place to access learning materials. The limitations of learning space and time during the pandemic can be overcome by applying online learning (Suhairi, 2021).

The effectiveness of blended learning during COVID-19 is easier communication. Student 8 noted blended learning makes it easier for students to access communication, and students who are far from campus can save on accommodation costs. According to Suhairi (2021), the strength of blended learning lies in more efficient learning because teachers and students can communicate both offline and online.

Flexibility is also one of the effectiveness of blended learning. Student 3 mentioned that the blended learning method is very flexible. The submission of assignments is thought to be pleasant and flexible, without the need to wait for lecture times, as is the case with conventional learning, which is limited to lecture meetings.

“The learning process becomes more flexible and scheduled.”

It is clear from the responses that the blended learning method is considered effective because of its flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and technology.

2) The benefits of blended learning during COVID-19

Majority of the respondents said that they gained benefits from blended learning. The benefits of blended learning for students are that learning becomes more flexible, can be done anywhere, time being more flexible, and is cost-effective.

*“The learning process becomes more **flexible** and scheduled.”(S3)*

“Because blended learning makes it easier for students to choose the time and place to access learning materials.” (S9)

“It can save my money..”(S7)

When asked about the benefits of blended learning during COVID-19, the respondents felt that blended learning is more efficient. Student 11 noted this learning method during the pandemic:

“Time-efficient and the learning process is more flexible. Learning can be done anywhere.”(S11)

Efficiency and flexibility in time and place are the benefits of blended learning.

Because blended learning uses media and technology during learning, making the learning process can be done anytime and anywhere. This finding is in line with the previous study by Watrionthos, et.al (2021) that blended learning leads the students to study independently without regard for location or time constraints.

In addition, for students who are far from campus, they do not need to pay for travel and boarding. It means that it saves their money/ cost-effective as stated by Biwener (2021) on his article about the benefit blended learning.

3) The constraints on blended learning during COVID-19

Changes in the learning environment certainly have an impact on students. 12 out of 14 students said they had problems with the blended learning method. Changes in the learning process, technology and media, and limited internet access appear to be some of the obstacles in blended learning.

On the questionnaire question about the constraint of blended learning during COVID-19, the respondents said that the problem is in the availability of network facilities and signals. Student 11 noted this learning method during the pandemic:

“Because there are problems when you want to do online learning, the existing technology is inadequate, the signal is not stable, etc.”(S11)

Because the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, students do more learning activities at home with online learning rather than at school. The problem faced by students is their lack of focus on learning activities due to distractions at home. Student 14 mentioned that if she studies at home, she can't concentrate

because she is often distracted by people at home.

Technology and media, and limited internet access are the constraints of blended learning during COVID-19. To overcome these challenges, the government must act quickly and schools must cooperate. All of this is done in order for the learning process to continue. Fortunately, government through Minister of Education and Culture (*Menteri pendidikan dan kebudayaan*) Nadiem Anwar Makarim inaugurated the 2020 internet data quota assistance policy, virtually. This policy is expected to help access information for teachers, students, and lecturers in undergoing Distance Learning (*Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh*) during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemdikbud, 2020).

4) The impact of the blended learning on student learning activities during COVID-19

The blended learning method turned out to have quite an impact on students' learning activities. 10 students said blended learning had an impact on their learning activities and 4 students said no. The question in this section is about the blended learning method affects their learning activities during the pandemic or not. Student 10 noted that the learning becomes more expressive and not passive with blended learning. Aside from that, the other student, student 12 mentioned with blended learning the learning becomes fun and varied. Blended learning is a combination of face-to-face and online instruction (Grgurovic, 2011), it is thought that by combining these methods, it will be able to overcome the drawbacks of both

face-to-face and online learning. However, some student feel bored with this method. Student 14 mentioned that because they frequently conduct online studying, they frequently become bored and felt that the task become overwhelming. It is hoped that lecturers balance face-to-face and online learning activities.

Discussions

From the research findings, blended learning facilitates students to use or access the subject matter again. In addition, time flexibility and cost-effectiveness were also the reasons for the use of the method so far. Flexibility includes the easiness of accessing materials and learning from wherever they are, while what is meant by cost-effective is that students do not need to spend money to go to school to study, because the learning process can be done from home.

These findings are in line with previous research conducted by Nunung (Nurhadi, 2020) and Kiki (Wihartini, 2019), who said that some of the benefits of using the method are; the ease of accessing post-learning re-learning materials, flexible and saving costs.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of blended learning during COVID-19 shows that this learning method provides effectiveness, benefits, constraints, and also impacts for students. Blended learning is effective during COVID-19 because of its flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and technology. Students have benefited from it. Learning to be more flexible is one of the advantages, as it can be done anywhere, at any time, and a low cost.

Flexibility includes ease of accessing materials and learning from wherever they are, while what is meant by cost-effective is that students do not need to spend money to go to school to study, because the learning process can be done from home. However, there are certain constraints in putting it into practice, such as changes in learning activities and the lack of technology and internet networks. Blended learning also has an impact on students. Students feel that with the implementation of this learning method, learning becomes more active, fun, and varied. Students, on the other hand, are bored because online learning is more often done than face-to-face instruction.

REFERENCES

- Astini, N. K. (2020). Tantangan Dan Peluang Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi Dalam Pembelajaran Online Masa Covid-19. *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(2), 241-255.
- Biewener, Dan. November 11, 2021. *5 Big Benefits of Blended Learning*. Accessed on April 14, 2021, From <https://www.simplilearn.com/benefits-of-blended-learning-article>
- Grgurovic, M. (2011). Blended learning in an ESL class: A case study. *Calico Journal*, 29(1), 100.
- Karma, I. D. (2021). Blended Learning is an Educational Innovation and Solution During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International research journal of engineering, IT & scientific research*.
- Kemendikbud.go.id. September 2020. *Kemendikbud Resmikan Kebijakan Bantuan Kuota Data Internet 2020*. Accessed on April 14, 2021, from <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/09/kemendikbud-resmikan-kebijakan-bantuan-kuota-data-internet-2020>
- Prawiyogi, A. G. (2020). Efektivitas Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh Terhadap Pembelajaran Siswa di SDIT Cendekia Purwakarta. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 11(1), 94-101.
- Soekartawi (2006). Blended e-learning: alternative Method Pembelajaran Jaraj Jauh Di Indonesia. *Seminar Nasional Aplikasi Teknologi Informasi 2006* ISSN: 1907-5022 Yogyakarta, 17 Juni 2006
- Suhairi, S. &. (2021). Method Manajemen Pembelajaran Blended Learning pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Syntax Literate; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia*, 6(4), 1977-1996.
- Sujarwo, et.al. (2020). An Analysis of University Students' Perspective on Online Learning in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 53(2), 125-137.
- Watrianthos, Ronal, et.all. (2020). Effectiveness Blended Learning During Pandemic in Indonesia: A Meta-Analysis. *Jurnal Pendidikan MIPA*, 22(2), 270-278.
- Nurhadi, N. (2020). Blended Learning dan Aplikasinya di Era New Normal Pandemi Covid-19. *Agriekstensia*, 19(2), 121-128.

Rahmi, R. (2020). Inovasi Pembelajaran Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *AL-TARBIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan (The Educational Journal)*, 30(2), 111–123.
<https://doi.org/10.24235/ath.v30i2.6852>

Wihartini, K. (2019). Analisis Manfaat Penggunaan Model Pembelajaran Blended Learning Dalam Proses Pembelajaran. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Universitas Negeri Medan*, 3, 1001–1003.
<http://digilib.unimed.ac.id/id/eprint/37313>