Exploring the Feelings of Teacher, Student, and Parent: When Learning Virtually during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has forced students to study at home, including those with special needs who require physical and non-physical assistance. Meanwhile, online learning has been a bitter choice in creating a variety of experiences. Hence, this study examines the online learning experience in Islamic Religious Education subjects at SLB Ma‘arif Muntilan. Furthermore, a qualitative and phenomenological approach was used while the data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation of teachers, students, and parents who experienced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that teachers, students, and guardians experience dissatisfaction and difficulties, but adjustments are made through coping strategies to understand the situation and build serenity.

Keywords: Feeling; Special Needs; Learning Experience; Students’ Voices

ABSTRAK


Kata-kata Kunci: Perasaan; Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus; Pengalaman Belajar; Teori Sosial Budaya; Narasi Siswa
INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has lasted for about 17 months since it was first announced by WHO (Putri, 2020). In fact, as of April 17, 2020, 91.3% or approximately 1.5 billion students worldwide are unable to attend school. This number includes approximately 45 million students in Indonesia, or about 3% of the affected global population (Azzahra, 2020). The widespread of this covid-19 has forced the government to close schools and promote distance learning. Meanwhile, various initiatives were carried out to ensure that learning activities continued even though there were no face-to-face sessions.

One of the initiatives taken is using technology, specifically the Internet, smartphones, and laptops to support distance learning. In Indonesia, a telecommunications service provider recorded a 16% increase in broadband flows during the covid-19 crisis, due to the sharp rise in the use of distance learning platforms (Azzahra, 2020). Generally, anxiety and fear make learning activities unsettling; hence adaptations and innovations need to be carried out by teachers and students to ensure effective learning (Wardany & Sani, 2020). A study by Xue, Li, Li, and Shang (2020) reported that the impact of covid-19 in China has brought significant changes to learning. For example, online education has caused a decrease in the frequency of interaction with each other and leads to psychological disorders (Puspitasari et al., 2020).

This impact of covid-19 on the psychological health of students is felt at various levels of education, including the ones with special needs. For example, a study by (Hermanto & Supena, 2020) at Inclusive Elementary School Sangiang Pulau shows that in online learning, blind students need more attention than before, and one solution to the limitations of face-to-face is to make video recordings.

Apart from the teachers in schools, parental involvement in caring for children with special needs is crucial for their development. Erlin Fitria, et al., (2021) revealed the need for psychological reinforcement for parents of students with special needs to ensure the online learning process is more focused and full of motivation. Consequently, parents are always required to accompany their children in online learning. However, some do not understand how to motivate their children, which makes the ones with special needs learn less optimally, because they often rely heavily on their parents' involvement in every activity. Hence, there is a need for education on how parents accompany their children to study at home.

The study by Albertus Magnus Prestianta et al., also shows that teachers, students, and parents are likely to experience difficulties in carrying out learning activities. For example, when teachers do not have sufficient provisions for teaching online, schools do not have LMS that supports online learning. Also, learning tends to be difficult when teacher-student and teacher-parent communications have not been developed optimally (Prestianta et al., 2021).
However, some parents have a positive impression of online learning because it makes the relationship closer (Atiqoh, 2020). A study by Jannah et al. (2020) showed that parents of students with special needs are often anxious when their children cannot participate in online learning because they lack the skills in operating cell phones. But on the other hand, the children feel new experiences in learning online. Recently, learning in schools has undergone many adjustments in terms of methods and media (Datul Ishmi, 2021). In fact, there are studies that discuss anxiety; however, the ones related to the factors supporting how students with disabilities survive to learn have not been documented. This is because the differences in social and family backgrounds may influence the decision-making process in dealing with learning challenges.

The novelty offered from this study is related to the feelings of teachers, parents, students with special needs who are blind in learning online. Based on these reasons, the following were examined, (1) the way Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in SLB (Special School) narrate learning during a pandemic, (2) the feelings that arise in students' narratives during a pandemic, and (3) the meanings teacher, parents, and students with special needs want to convey when learning online through narrative.

**METHOD**

A qualitative method with natural objects is used in this study to understand the meaning, find hypotheses, and construct phenomena. The data were obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2019). Basically, there are five methodological approaches in a qualitative study, namely biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, case studies, and ethnography. The perspective used for this study is phenomenology, and the aim is to accurately describe the phenomenon but remain true to the facts (Groenewald, 2004).

The data source came from 3 participants who happen to be female and are very easy to work with because they have deep experience in online learning. The first is the Islamic Teacher at SLB Ma'arif Muntilan with the pseudonym Tin, the second is a 6th-grade blind student called Aya, and the parents are called Tara. Tara is the biological mother of a student named Aya.

From a scientific point of view, Tin is very experienced in teaching children with special needs after receiving special training from the state. While Aya is a blind student who is currently in 6-grade of SDLB Ma'arif Muntilan and the eldest of 2 siblings. The mother and father are divorced, but the mother has remarried; hence Ayu lives with the mother, sister, and stepfather.

Furthermore, Tara is the biological mother of a student named Aya, who is 37 years old and works as an entrepreneur. The recruitment of these three participants was due to the personal closeness factor with one of the researchers. Hence, they gave their permission and expressed willingness to participate in the study. This reason makes data
Data collection was carried out for one month, from mid-June to mid-July 2021. The interview technique used was semi-structured, and the questions presented were able to meet the needs of data to understand the emotional state of the participants (Mita, 2015). Based on the agreement with the participants, the interview process was carried out using Zoom and WhatsApp media. Meanwhile, the confidentiality of the participants' identities was ensured by keeping all names anonymized. The time selected for the interview was adjusted to the three participants' free time. They provided the opportunity for researchers to ask questions according to the data needed.

The recorded data was transcribed to facilitate the process of data reduction and coding, thereby making the result to be accurate. In addition, a more detailed analysis was conducted by reading the results of the interviews repeatedly to ensure the main findings. To further facilitate this process, thematic data analysis was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is intended to find key points of trends that often arise. Consequently, the analysis procedure is presented in the following stages, listening to the recording repeatedly, rewriting it in the right order, analyzing the data by interpreting each participant's words and sentences, determining whether the data is in accordance with the participants' intentions, building the credibility of the data by asking for feedback on data interpretation from participants.

Qualitative data is interpretative, and the analysis is inseparable from the values, theories, and behavior of researchers; hence the interpretation is open and dynamic (Ellis, 2010). Also, through data interpretation, identification of actions, behavior, speech, and thoughts is often carried out. Similarly, the reduction process is carried out to meet the data needs that are relevant to the objectives of the study (Rijali, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study produces a theme map of how participants adjust and coping strategies that are influenced by culture and self-motivation. The description of the participants' feelings is as follows.
1. Survival in Adversity

The change in learning conditions from in-person to online due to the pandemic was a shock that affected various sectors, including the fulfillment of learning facilities and infrastructure. For example, to take part in online learning, an Android phone with the WhatsApp application must be available. This difficulty is described by the participants in the following interview data:

*Online learning is really difficult [difficulty] because the students are not directly monitored; hence it is hard to teach them. Moreover, when they learn to read prayers, it must be repeated else it will be quickly forgotten [dissatisfaction]. But, if there is no meeting like this, the student finds it difficult to replicate the reading independently [inclination]. (Tin, interview via Zoom, 2 July 2021)*

The above data illustrates that the participant is someone who has a high teaching responsibility and feels guilty for any inability to provide services to students. For example, the phrase “it is really difficult” indicates that the participants have difficulty in guiding their students to study. Similarly, it takes a great effort to make children with special needs to receive knowledge from teachers. Even when it is not the pandemics period, some extra effort is still required, specifically in online learning, which tends to put pressure on the participants. Also, the phrase “If there is no meeting like this, it will be very difficult” shows that the participants want a meeting with their students. Furthermore, direct communication aims to create a positive impression and maintain good relationships with other people and also helps to reduce tension (Awi et al., 2016). However, the communication established is not optimal, thereby causing difficulties and failures.

2. Disappointed with Change

Aya, who is a student, feels deep disappointment because studying has to be completed from home due to the pandemic. Hence, the following narration was given about the impact of covid-19 on the learning process.

*“Online learning is boring [dissatisfaction], especially not being able to meet friends often get someone upset [dissatisfied]. The teacher gave a simple task and how to do it by sending a video or audio”. (Aya, interview via WhatsApp, 6 July 2021)*

The phrase "boring and often get upset" showed that the participants preferred face-to-face learning. Besides, empirical data reveals that before the pandemic, participants often partake in singing competitions because their vocal talents were extraordinary. Other competition entails the ones between cities, provinces, and even provinces...
nationally, which is considered a fun activity because of the chances of meeting new friends, visiting new places, and even increasing in pocket money.

Furthermore, the participants felt disappointed during the covid-19 because formal and informal activities could not be carried out as before. This dissatisfaction experienced is reflected in the following narrative data: Online learning is boring, especially not being able to meet friends.

Therefore, this empirical data illustrates the participants' feelings of disappointment and discomfort with the conditions that occur. For example, the phrase “boring” reinforces Aya's feelings of disappointment over what happened during the covid-19 pandemic. However, a certain level of anxiety makes every individual to be more alert (aware) because when the threat is considered harmless, the person will not practice self-defense (Vibriyanti, 2020).

3. Trying to Take Advantage of Opportunities

Continuous online learning results in acute burnout, where the teachers, students, and parents experience stress due to the inability to control the situation. Moreover, due to the existing social restrictions, everything is carried out at home. For example, Tara, in addition to accompanying Aya, who is tired of studying online, decides to sell online because Aya often holds the cell phone; hence, this narration was given,

"Everyone works from home; I accompany the children to study at home. When my child is with me, she often feels uneasy to tell something, later becomes emotional. If I am emotional, I give up. Online learning makes me often take my cellphone with me while selling hijab. I posted on WhatsApp status; the results were pretty good too." (Tara, WhatsApp Interview, 10 July 2021).

From the data given above, participants strongly object to online learning, because there are often conflicts between themselves and their children. In fact, it shows that Aya's emotions are less stable but was optimistic and therefore takes advantage of the opportunity for selling products online. Specifically, selling or trading has its own value in the view of Islam (Muzaiyin, 2019), as in the hadith of Mu'adz bin Jabal radhiyallahu 'anhu, who said: The Prophet Sallallahu alaihi wasallam said:

"Indeed, the best income is that of traders who do not lie when speaking, does not betray when trusted, do not break a promise, do not lie, do not criticize when buying, do not delay in paying back debt, and do not make things difficult for people in trouble (Al-Baihaqi, 2021).”

4. Getting Support from Teachers and Families

The support from family and school keeps Tin, Aya, and Tara to be independent and optimistic about the future, and these qualities are developed through practice. The
school always tries to serve its students with online learning and several meetings through zoom meetings. While the family environment often provides supports in the process of doing school assignments.

“Face-to-face learning ought to have been learnt [hopefully], but it is dangerous for both parties because when the children meet the teacher, they tend to hug immediately; therefore, face-to-face learning is still postponed. For the sake of everyone's health and cheerfulness, the students were greeted on the zoom [solution]" (Tin, interview via zoom, 4 July 2021).

The data above shows that the school wants to serve its students to the maximum. Moreover, the children with special needs are slow or retarded, thereby facing difficulty to succeed. Hence, they require specific services that are different from those given to normal children in general (Desiningrum, 2007). However, the behavior of those who like to hug the teacher is positive but dangerous because Corona Virus transmission occurs through direct, indirect, or close contact with an infected person's secretions such as saliva and respiratory droplets that are released through coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings (WHO, 2014; 2020), (Yuliana, 2020), and (Wahidah et al., 2020).

The family also supports the school's decision by accompanying their children to study online at home.

“I keep accompanying my child to study [support]. Otherwise, I will become more emotional because I have too much free time. It cannot be helped; the world is in disaster." (Tara, interview July 17, 2021).

The phrase “it cannot be helped” shows parents' acceptance of the difficult situation they are facing. However, the existence of communication and warm relationships between parents and children can increase the spirit of learning (Yuliya, 2019). Also, Mahardhika et al., (2018) reveals that parental support makes children to be more active and enthusiastic in learning.

These findings show a strong relationship between the feelings of discomfort (anxiety) due to the covid-19 pandemic and the attitudes shown by the three participants. Two participants, namely Tin and Tara, have good emotional management because they can motivate each other and survive in the face of frustration (Sudirman, 2019). The ability to manage conflict enables Tin and Tara to remain active and productive, while Aya being a teenager who is still unstable, has not been able to accept the situation because of the boringness of the situation for a long
period. Therefore, the findings describe 1) persistence in adversity, 2) disappointment with the change, and 3) the support received from teachers and families.

The first theme shows the strength of participants in facing teaching and learning activities during the pandemic. For example, Tin found it very difficult to teach Islamic education online but still provided the best material, and the data shows that the media used are WhatsApp and video learning.

Furthermore, participant Aya being an adolescent, felt deeply disappointed, as revealed by Saefullah that one of the most difficult developmental tasks of adolescence is related to social adjustment. Similarly, Panewaty & Indrawati, (2018) stated that adolescence is a period whereby individuals begin to experience complex problems in the form of conflicts with parents, self-concept, and low social adjustment. The study further explained that adolescents do not have many problem-solving abilities; therefore, their social relationships are often vulnerable. Meanwhile, Aya has recently been studying online but has not been able to build social relationships. Before the pandemic, Aya has been going to different places to sing but has now been sitting at home and suffering from severe boredom. This often results in fights with the mum, which shows that Aya is feeling disappointed due to the changes that occurred forcibly because of the covid-19 pandemic. However, these overflowing emotions of adolescents need to be managed and channeled towards positive and productive activities (Azmi, 2015). Therefore, even though online learning activities need to be carried out with various existing methods and media, supports from teachers at school and parents at home is the most valuable motivation for students (Emda, 2018). The data from the findings show that principals hold meetings via Zoom with students and teachers, which is not only intended to let go of longing but also to establish communication with students and parents in a safe way. The example of parents’ support in the form of their attention to the tasks of their children is seen in how Tara’s parents took her to school and waited until the exam was over and went home together. Also, Tara departs to school when there is a need for teachers or learning activities.

CONCLUSION

The empirical contribution of this study is that one's experience is used as data to find steps and strategies to get a way out of the problems at hand. Meanwhile, the contribution of praxis is shown by the ability of analytical tools that combine language evaluation (appraisal) in LSF theory which is related to cultural capital and self-structuring. This is used as a reference to reveal the participants’ decision-making strategies in dealing with the pandemic.
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